EUGENE O'NEILL'S ORIENTALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR LIFE: AN AMERICANIZED TAOISTIC RESPONSE

by

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PREFACE

My interest in Eugene O'Neill was sparked by my preference for American drama during my graduate study in China. In my studies in the United States, my Chinese ethnic heritage has made the Oriental dimension of O'Neill's works especially attractive. Dr. Joseph M. DeFalco reconfirmed my interest in O'Neill's drama by means of a course of independent study. He opened different perspectives for me, which I narrowed down to the Taoistic influence in the works of O'Neill.

For the completion of this dissertation, I am grateful, first and foremost, to Dr. DeFalco. To him, I owe a two-fold debt: his confidence in me and consistent encouragement to go through the Ph.D. program; his insightful advice and generous help through the difficult times of the last year. From the search for a subject concentration to the actual completion of the project, he provided guidance and intelletual sustenance. He is my mentor and always will be.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern criticism of Eugene O'Neill's drama focuses on his Irish Catholicism and tragic vision, or it concentrates on the psychological dimension and theatrical experiment. While these approaches have provided the framework for the establishment of O'Neill as the primary American dramatist of the twentieth century, there still remains profound significances that need to be retrieved. Orientalism provides the ground for a more meaningful approach to values and significances in his works, and it is an analytical instrument through which O'Neill's philosophical and religious representations of modern society can be profitably seen. Because O'Neill's works contain Darwinian recognitions, he has been believed to belong in the camp of literary naturalism. His Orientalism, however, allows us to see these works as something other than naturalistic parables. O'Neill departed from bleak Darwinian resolutions by investing his characters with a religious sensibility. When his characters find themselves in severe crises, they never look to themselves or to nature for respite. Always their glance is vertical toward an imagined providence that might save them if it would. Taoism puts a name to that imagined providence.

O'Neill's Orientalism derives from his poetic mysticism which is tinted with Oriental color that is mainly Taoist.

This mystical tendency emerged at the beginning of O'Neill's writing career when he experimented with theatrical techniques, themes, and artistic expression. In his pre-Taoist dramas, he had intuitively grasped and incorporated some of the key Taoist doctrines--non-interference, non-contention, Wu-Wei, quietude, and others. His dramatic projection of these qualities signaled a predisposition that led to his enthusiastic embrace of Lao-tse's Taoism after what he called a "considerable study" of Oriental philosophy and religion in the very early 1920s.

In the years following that study, O'Neill continued to be fascinated with Taoism, and his plays show an increasingly progressive understanding and interpretation of that philosophy. In 1937, O'Neill built a pagoda-style Chinese house in California. This house which he called "Tao House" was his retreat. During what became a eight-year withdrawal into Tao House, O'Neill discovered for himself a Taoistic unity through his artistic cultivation of Tao.

If O'Neill's technical experimentation with European literary modernism is his effort to reform American theater, his exploration of Oriental philosophy and religion constitutes his determination to broaden American cultural perspective. Through that expanded vision, O'Neill views American society with a detachment that frees him from a narrow nationalist cultural bias.

O'Neill's first contact with the American theater was the theater of "The Count of Monte Cristo" of his father's generation. That theater had exhausted the conventional European theater which itself reached the point of mediocre repetition. The obvious decline of the theater art may have compelled O'Neill to rebel and attempt a reform. While on the one hand, he learned the craft of theater by writing different, shockingly innovative pieces that separated him from the old theater, on the other hand he probed for subjects and themes that would fit into an equally new ideological framework. Because of his self-conscious mission to improve American theater, O'Neill's turn to the East for spiritual inspiration was an historical and social necessity. The material researches of primary and secondary sources discovers O'Neill's conscious quest for guidance from Eastern philosophy and religion. The intuitive groping of his early, middle, and late theatrical practices reveal O'Neill to be a spontaneous, self-educated, Western Taoist. Through some three decades of continuous study and meditation, O'Neill developed an Americanized Taoist system which constitutes an organic part of his dramatic art.

Because of his commitment to conscious theatrical artistry, O'Neill came to understand that various Oriental philosophies and religions, and especially Taoism in this instance, could expand the ideological horizons of a Western point of view and furnish him with a perspective which would

uniquely expand his artistic vision, but it did not provide a pragmatic solution to actual problems. As a result of this insight, his art furnished deepening penetration into the core of Taoism. His personal identification with the validity of the East and Taoistic perspective became so profound that the quest for a literary, philosophical, and religious authority merged harmoniously into his theatrical art.

The unique Eastern dimension of O'Neill's theatrical aesthetics renders the development of his Taoism almost independent of external events that so dominated the thought of his contemporaries. O'Neill's understanding and interpretation of Taoism parallels the expanding of his own mysticism into an intuitive acceptance of the mysticism of Lao-tse. To understand his life-long fascination with Taoism is to understand the confluence of his own mysticism and that of Lao-tse. Lao-tse's ready-made system helps O'Neill to perfect his own mystic approach, and at the same time, his Western mind constantly shapes or Americanizes Lao-tse in his dramatic practice. The resultant dialectic incorporates the vestige of O'Neill's own mysticism, the study and interpretation of Lao-tse, and the actual action of modern American reality. It is precisely here that O'Neill's mysticism and that of Lao-tse enters a smooth transition into authentic Taoism.

In a manner in harmony with both his theatrical experimentation and the focus of his artistic expression and theme, O'Neill targeted his drama in the expression of the mysterious force behind life. My Third Chapter focuses on O'Neill's pre-Taoist dramatic works and illustrates the mysterious attributes with which O'Neill endowed the life force parallel the concept of Tao in Taoism.

With artistic maturity and the discovery of Taoism, O'Neill's mysticism underwent a process that progressed from a random, undefinable aesthetics in his early works into a systematic, solid center of true Taoism which challenged his Western world view and life philosophy. The incessant conflict between the Western advocacy of action, individualism, contention, and desire and Eastern Wu-Wei, impersonality, non-contention, and elimination of desire, often challenge the validity and authority of both systems. More often than not, the Taoistic perspective serves as a redemptive balance of the tragic endings of his plays. This challenging spirit demonstrates itself in the Taoist plays of the early 1920s to mid 1920s. The plays of middle period manifest O'Neill's application of almost all the important Taoist tenets in his dramatic integration in the structure, characterization, dialogue, and imagery of his dramatic works.

As one's journey to be in harmony with Tao goes more and more inwardly, O'Neill's drama reflects an inward

transformation toward a more authentic Taoism. This is what Chapter Five demonstrates in its focus on the distinctly high quality of Taoism in O'Neill's late "Tao House" dramas. These autobiographical plays illustrate movement toward Taoistic harmony with nature and with one's self. O'Neill, in writing them, experienced artistically a cathartic process of getting rid of the disturbing emotions by reliving his early years of growing pain and familial chaos, thus attaining the Taoistic return to origin--the serenity of soul--which is the ideal state of Taoism. The same chapter describes the open-ended Taoistic return in O'Neill's dramatic creations which in its unique way anticipates the post-modernist sentiment. Shaped by his insatiable desire for artistic exploration of the unknown in human nature, O'Neill began by questioning the mystery of life and ended with a tentative acceptance of life through his intellectual acceptance of the mystery and infinitude of Tao.

I. Eugene O'Neill's Position in the Tradition of Literary Orientalism in America and China

American literary Orientalism has its origins in mainstream European Orientalism, and it is characterized by an inquiring and pioneering spirit which is uniquely American. As part of that nation-building inquiry into the spiritual verities of existence that began with the early Puritans, American thinkers and artists probed the near, the far, the familiar, and the exotic in their quest to find the spiritual inspiration that would support the enterprise of establishing a new country with a new literature completely independent from Europe. The religions and philosophies of the ancient Far East were among the most prominent and appealing of those investigated.

In the twentieth century, Eugene O'Neill stands as a strong and powerful link in that strand of the American literary tradition which was nourished by Transcendentalist Orientalism, and which, in turn, greatly influenced subsequent twentieth-century interest in the ancient East as source and subject of some of the most celebrated modernist art.

Among the American moderns, O'Neill with his more than intellectual fascination with the Orient contributed to the transformation of American Orientalism from certain undefinable ideas of the East to the definable and concrete

conceptualization of Oriental philosophy and religion. In his long-time study of these writings, O'Neill particularly immersed himself in Taoism through his artistic practice and his own inner spiritual cultivation. The harmonious integration of Taoism in his works is but the external manifestation of the degree of Tao that he had artistically attained.

Because of O'Neill's immense artistic achievement and his lifelong fascination with China, O'Neill's Orientalism has been a great interest to Chinese Scholars. Through his artistic creations, O'Neill was able to reach the core of the ancient philosophical legacy of China, while his dramatic achievement, his study and interest in Taoist philosophy has been enthusiastically received by the Chinese. In the late 1980s, in particular, he received more critical and scholarly attention in China than any other foreign dramatist, including Shakespeare.

The most succinct summation of the meaning of the East to America up to and including the nineteenth century appeared in Walt Whitman's "Specimen Days," when he eulogized the mysticism and beauty of the East in this way:

> The East--What a subject for a poem! Indeed, where else a more pregnant, more splendid one? Where one more idealistic-real, more subtle, more sensuous-delicate? The East, answering all lands, all ages, peoples; touching all senses, here immediate, now--and yet so indescribably far off--such retrospect! The East--long-stretching--so losing itself--the orient, the

> gardens of Asia, the womb of history and song--forth-issuing all those strange, dim cavalcades--Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion, /Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments, /With sunburnt visage, intense soul and glittering eyes. /Always the East--old, how incalculably old! And yet here the same--ours yet, fresh as a rose, to every morning, every life, to-day--and always will be. (669-70)

In this expression of the aspiration for ultimate fusion of the West and the East, Whitman was carrying on the tradition begun by his European precursors who initiated contact with the East long before the Christian era. Through centuries of exchange, the East proved to be not only a great subject for a poem but also for novels and drama, and even more so, it turned out to be a long-lasting fascination with a spiritual ideal opposed to the materialism of the West. The fascination with the East has gradually established itself as Orientalism, a commonly recognized and accepted cultural phenomenon. It has permeated the fields of philosophy, religion, architecture, literature, and many other western human, creative activities. In literature, Orientalism as it exists to this day has been the joint effort of European and American writers, generation after generation, to explore and inquire into the secrets and mystery of the universe and humanity in the light of Oriental philosophy and religion. In the United States, literary Orientalism was transformed into a uniquely Western tradition by such Orientalists as Emerson,

Thoreau, and Whitman, and later Ernest Fenollosa and Lafcadio Hearn. O'Neill, Eliot, and Pound became part of the modernist American Orientalism. For O'Neill, Orientalism had already become a very significant and distinctive part of the American experience. Explored by the English in the eighteenth century and passed on through translation to Americans of the nineteenth century, Orientalism contributed to the transcendence of a restricted American perspective.

America's response to the Orient began in its early colonial stage in the literary practices of the Puritan settlers. Anne Bradstreet's poem, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," provided the earliest idea about the East that developed from a vague awareness to an expanded and deepened interest and understanding of the Orient. In her poem, she casts her love for her husband in terms of the exotic East, saying "I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold / Or all the riches that the East doth hold." Abstract and sketchy as it is, the East here is alluded to as a land of wealth and hidden treasure. The early Puritan immigrants of the seventeenth century were too much engaged in the urgent task of settlement in the New World to explore the East further, yet they were the torch-bearers of American Oriental exploration.

Eighteenth-century America, however, consciously reached out to the East in its own social and political

experiment as a new nation. And it was from this time on that America's response to the East began to take on its distinctive American feature. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson are representative founders of the new country. At the time of the foundation, they were determined to search around the world to find anything good, anything which held referential significance and value. In order to help them implement their plan for a new country, the ancient East offered a profound reference from its old wisdom. Franklin, with the practical and rational mind of a man of the Enlightenment was naturally attracted to Confucius who offered a philosophy of practicality. In a letter to George Whitefield in 1749, Franklin discussed the function of the leadership of a great mind in an unstable historical stage. Citing Confucius's response in facing the political chaos in ancient China, Franklin said that he was glad Whitefield had frequent opportunities of preaching among the great, and "On this principle, Confucius, the famous Eastern reformer, proceeded. When he saw his country sunk in vice, ... he applied himself first to the grandees; and having, by his doctrine, won them to the cause of virtue, the commons followed in multitude. The mode has a wonderful influence on mankind; ... Our most western reformations began with the ignorant mob; and when numbers of *them* were gained, interest and party views drew in the wise and great" (Jorgenson 198). What Confucius did in the

political chaos in China inspired Franklin to find ways of accelerating reform, and of preparing for the Revolutionary War in America.

Jefferson was no less active in consulting the East for better ideas for the new country. According to H.G. Creel, the author of Confucius and the Chinese Way, Jefferson once proposed, as "the keystone of the arch of our government" an educational system that shows remarkable similarities to the Chinese official examination system (5), and he even projected the opening of the trade route to the Orient. Franklin and Jefferson's response to the Orient, though largely in the domain of social institutions, had already demonstrated a distinctive sense of America as a new nation independent of Europe as well as a sense of experiment, as Beongcheon Yu sees it in his The Great Circle, "the pioneering spirit characterized the American response to the Orient" (22). This pioneering spirit that Yu points to is carried on and enhanced by later generations in their expanded Oriental exploration.

The American Transcendentalists were the most faithful carriers of "the pioneering spirit" in their fusion of the East and the West on a spiritual and mystical level. As the most articulate leader of the movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson led the way in the search for a wide range of sources in the Orient: from Indian philosophy, Arabian literature, to Chinese literature and Confucianism. Both Frederic I.

Carpenter's Emerson and Asia and Arthur Christy's The Orient in American Transcendentalism contain detailed studies of the Orientalism in Emerson. Carpenter suggests that Emerson reaches Indian Brahmanism through his interest in Plato who leads him to Neo-Platonism and then to Orientalism. While agreeing with Carpenter on the primacy of Indian philosophy in Emerson's Orientalism, Christy emphasizes the stimulating role of Emerson's contemporary intellectual atmosphere, and concludes that there is Confucianism in Emerson's ethical writings and Persian influence in his poetry. Emerson had indeed incorporated Oriental thought in his own writings, particularly in such poems as "Brahma," "Maya," and "Hamatreya," and in his essays "Circles" and "Oversoul." As Yu observes, "For good reason Emerson has been regarded as the first Orientalist, and indeed the Orientalist *par excellence* of American Literature" (26). With his own enormous study and integration of the Eastern philosophy and religion as a whole, Emerson attempted self-liberation from the old, European religious and philosophical confinement in order to find his own mind. By so doing, he opened up the intellectual and literary horizon for his fellow New Englanders in the common enterprise of establishing an authentic American literature independent of Europe.

Emerson was not alone in his exploration of the Orient, and in following suit no one was closer to Emerson than Henry David Thoreau. According to Robert Spiller, Thoreau

had shared the reading of Oriental books with his master, although there is doubt about which part of the Orient constitutes the major source of Thoreau's Orientalism. Many scholars, however, have seen the Oriental influence in Thoreau in the positive. Christy points out that Thoreau's interest in the Orient was, like Emerson's, centered on India, though there was a mixture of all the major Oriental philosophies. Thoreau learned a mystic love of nature from his critical reception of Confucianism, Hindu asceticism, and Hindu pessimism. And it is just this love of nature that makes his works open to Zen and Taoist interpretation. In fact, the Taoist aspect of Thoreau has long been recognized. Yutang Lin, in his book The Wisdom of Lao-tze, mentions Thoreau's affinity with Taoism, comparing him to Lao-tse's disciple Chuang-tse and saying: "Chuang tse was like Thoreau with the ruggedness and hardness and impatience of an individualist" (8). In brief, Thoreau's nature mysticism, love of the simple and primitive life, and dislike for conventions and governmental interference, which were concretely illustrated in his Walden and A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, all absorb a Taoist tone in the American context. Not all American writers exposed to Oriental writings are Taoists, although their works share some Taoistic views. Yu has found, for example, that "there is no evidence whatever that Thoreau had even heard of Taoism" (44). The similar approach shared by Thoreau and

Taoism should more appropriately be called a "parallel" rather than an influence.

In "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," Whitman wrote that he had read "the ancient Hindoo poems" in examining his journey of growing in the Leaves of Grass. Although there might be some controversy over the source of Whitman's Orientalism, most modern critics and scholars followed the pattern set by Edward Carpenter, an English poet and Orientalist himself who noticed a parallel between Whitman and the Upanishads. V.K. Chari, in his Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism (1964) explored in depth Whitman's parallel in Indian philosophy and observed that Whitman's thought was more Indian than Hegelian, and Whitman's concept of the self could only be better understood in the light of Vedantic mysticism, especially because Whitman's sense of the self was "the dynamic, cosmic 'I' of the Upanishads--...attained through a process of universalizing the 'ego'" (106). If the concept of the self in Leaves of Grass transcends any individual, national, and racial sense of the word, then his "Passage to India" is a chant of the urge and desire for the final fusion of the West and the East, which in these themes represents the cradle of human wisdom and the final home for humans' long quest, both spiritual and physical.

Whitman and other major figures of Transcendentalism form key links in the chain of American Orientalism. Theirs

was the time when America was awakened to its sense of a new country, and the call for a distinct American literature was heard throughout the country. In order to make their glorious mission a success, the Transcendentalists searched far and wide around the world to discover Oriental philosophies, religions, literature and art. The Orient was not a simple name, nor a mere topic for a poem or novel, it was an ever-expanding national consciousness reflected in the constant endeavors of that generation to enrich and strengthen their national culture.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries experienced a vogue of Japanese art and decorations spreading from France to England, and America's response to Japan, though a bit late, was very enthusiastic. Edward Morse, a famous New England zoologist, and Percival Lowell, the brother of Amy Lowell, both went to visit Japan. They afterward both brought the East to America through their books and publications. Lowell's The Soul of the Far East (1888) and Morse's Japan Day by Day (1917) are the best known of their studies of the Orient.

One very important figure in this vogue is Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), a man made famous through Ezra Pound's reference to his works. Fenollosa started his Oriental journey at the invitation of Morse to teach philosophy at Tokyo University. A self-educated artist and self-trained connoisseur, he had actually discovered and

helped revive the Japanese interest in their own traditional art. Possessing a profound appreciation of both Japanese and American art, Fenollosa envisioned the future union of Eastern and Western civilization in his lecture series "History of Japanese Art."

While teaching and doing his research in Japan, Fenollosa began to study Chinese philosophy and Chinese poetry out of which developed Cathay, a small volume of fourteen "Chinese" poems. His effort served as a bridge between Chinese literature study and modern American Oriental study through Pound who was given Fenollosa's manuscripts by Mrs. Fenollosa. In studying Chinese poetry, Fenollosa wrote "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" which tackled the most difficult task in studying the Chinese ideogram. He detected the unique quality of Chinese ideographic character as being concrete, particular, and strong, and, at the same time, it also remained capable of expressing unseen scenery, emotions, and psychological activities, or the qualities that the best poetry must possess. Fenollosa's own poetic practice also incorporated his global vision about the future of the modern world. His poem, "East and West," traces Alexander's dream of unifying East and West, to the future fusion of the entire world.

Fenollosa's contribution to Oriental study marks a new stage in the stream of cultural exchange between the East

and the West, especially his study of Chinese poetry and the Chinese language itself, which through continuation by Pound helped to establish a more crucial link in the tradition of literary Orientalism in America.

Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), and Irving Babbitt (1865-1933) are two representatives from the turn of the century who carried on the tradition of Oriental study in depth and breadth, though by pursuing separate ways. Hearn taught English literature in Japan and he used his teaching as a tool to illustrate English culture to Japan. On the other hand, he also presented Japan, the whole Japan to his readers back in the United States. He went beyond the former Yankee commentators who merely gave introductory impressions, and attempted to penetrate into the inner life of Japanese culture. The titles of his works illustrate as much: "Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life" (1896) and "Gleanings in Buddha-field: Studies of Hand and Soul in the Far East" (1897). All his studies had the unified goal of serving his own country--studying the difference between East and West for the intellectual and spiritual health of Western culture.

Without going on a physical pilgrimage to the East, Irving Babbitt reached the East mainly through his assiduous study and advocacy of New Humanism in opposition to literary naturalism. Through his translation of Dhammapada, a volume on the essence of Buddhist ethics, Babbitt's Orientalism

reveals its historical origin, for he read Sanskrit and Pali when he was at the Sorbonne and Harvard. The Orient abounds in his works and essays: "Romanticism and the Orient" (1931) and Buddha and the Occident (1927). Even Rousseau and Romanticism (1919) traces the possible origin of Rousseau's return to nature in Taoism. These works offer Babbitt's critical view of Western culture in the light of Eastern philosophy.

Early in the twentieth century, the younger generation of American writers launched another resurgence of exploration of the Orient. T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound turned respectively to India and China. Like Babbitt, his mentor, Eliot had a two-year academic study of Sanskrit and Pali with Professor Charles Lanman at Harvard, and he then took Indian philosophy in the second year. The difference between Eliot and other American Orientalists is that his study of Oriental philosophy is a conscious act of free will, nearly without any suspicion of chasing the fashion, and from the beginning he also is intellectually aware of the danger of losing his identity as an American. This awareness stands in sharp contrast to Pound's complete devotion to China and to the writings of Confucius. Always retaining a bit of detachment in his absorption of the Orient, Eliot's works do show exclusively the influence of Indian philosophy. He himself admits this in the "Appendix" in Christianity and Culture: "Long ago I studied the

ancient Indian languages, and while I was deeply interested at that time in Philosophy, I read a little poetry too; and I know that my own poetry shows the influences of Indian thought and sensibility" (190-191). His masterpiece, The Waste Land, is an artistic mystification of interweaving classic mythology, Christianity, and Oriental religions. Critics and scholars have never ignored these references to Indian rituals and Buddhist sermons. G. Nageswara Rao, in his "The Upanishads in The Waste Land," gives careful reading of the poem, and concludes that the Indian references in the poem constitute part of the poem's structural design, and he also suggests that the design is primarily Upanishadic. The third section of The Waste Land, "The Fire Sermon" contains major Oriental references. Eliot's own notes on Buddha's sermon helps the reader greatly in understanding the theme in reference to the Buddha's sermon, which sees the secular world being ruined by human burning desire as in the case of the typist and the clerk. Their burning lust is the epitome of the spiritual and moral sterility of modern world where faith, hope, and love have been consumed.

Ezra Pound approached the Orient in a different way. His fascination with China and Confucius seemed a kind of religion, to which he devoted his time, energy, and talent without reserve, because he once believed that the twentieth century "may find a new Greece in China" (Essays 215).

According to Noel Stock's The Life of Ezra Pound, Pound's parents may have influenced him in his interest in China, and Pound had "read a little of Confucius as early as July 1907" (175). Fenollosa, nevertheless, had posthumously led Pound further into China through his manuscripts which, in a way, directed Pound to a shortcut for his further exploration. Several years of immersion in the manuscripts enabled Pound to finish Cathay (1915), Certain Noble Plays of Japan (1916), and "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" (1919). For instance, Cathay, with Fenollosa's notes, Pound translated the fourteen poems in the light of his own poetics and aesthetics as an imagist. Reading the poem "Separation on the River Kiang" in the original Chinese version in comparison to Pound's translation, I should say that, with the liberty he takes with omissions, changes, and even additions, Pound's translation is actually a re-creation by an American poet who tries to work in the framework of the Chinese ideographic language. His ignorance of the language does not hinder him from grasping the central meaning of the poem, however, it rather frees him from being too constrained by its literal meaning. His Cantos, whether a poetic failure or success, demonstrate Pound's magnificent attempt to represent a global perspective fusing East and West. Its epic grandeur and structure includes a history of the entire mankind, where moderns meet with ancients and

where Orientals meet with Occidentals. Throughout the Cantos, all sorts of European languages appear, both ancient and modern, and there are also such Asiatic languages as Chinese. What we have in Pound is more than Orientalism, it is cosmopolitanism. The history presented in the Cantos transcends race, religion, time and space. As Pound confessed in 1944: "For forty years I have schooled myself, ...to write an epic poem which begins 'In the Dark Forest,' crosses the Purgatory of human error, and ends in the light" (Stock 15). His artistic creation substantiates his forty-year devotion to a Dantean arousing of his generation and fellow Europeans from their moral slumber to face their "error."

After Eliot and Pound, American fascination with the East continued in the Beat Generation and in the works of J.D. Salinger. The Beat Generation's special interest in religion and their rebellious withdrawal from the establishment turn them naturally to Zen Buddhism which seemed to offer freedom and liberty of the mind from society. As a representative figure of the Beats, Jack Kerouac was equally representative for his interest in Buddhism. In 1954, he began to study Buddhism, from which he produced Dharma Bums. According to Robert A. Hipkiss, most of Kerouac's works published after Dharma Bums were heavily imbued with Buddhist thought. Compared with other Beat members, Kerouac was more selective toward Buddhism,

for he did not embrace the entire mythology of Buddhism. What really interested him was the first and fourth of the "Four Noble Truths": all life is suffering, and the suppression of suffering can be achieved. Since human mind is all there is in the world, humans can transform pain and suffering through mind interpretation. Dharma Bums (1958) is a novel of Zen life. Living a Thoreauvian life, the narrator attempts to shun society and authority. Kerouac's Oriental interest was not merely selective, it was also a practical way to help his generation find a way to deal with daily reality.

In the tradition of the American Orientalism, Eugene O'Neill stands as a powerful and unique link. His fascination with the Orient is more than an intellectual affinity. O'Neill elevated his Orientalism to the degree that it interfused his dramatic art and Oriental thought harmoniously through his artistic and spiritual cultivation. The frequency, quantity, and harmonious integration of Oriental elements in his plays lead to the possibility of significant re-interpretations of O'Neill's dramatic works. Past commentators, however, have not agreed upon the nature of O'Neill's Orientalism. Irving Babbitt, the most prominent member of the Neo-humanist school of criticism, in his book On Being Creative and Other Essays (1930), denied the existence of any Orientalism at all in O'Neill's dramatic works, saying: "One may indeed affirm almost

anything of Asia in general compared with the Occident in general. One may even, like Dr. Frederic Ives Carpenter in his recent volume, Emerson and Asia, discover an oriental element in the dramas of Eugene O'Neill!" (237). Although Babbitt's comment is incredible, he is not alone in dismissing the Oriental elements in O'Neill. Frank Cunningham's essay "'Authentic Tidings of Invisible Things': Beyond James Robinson's Eugene O'Neill and Oriental Thought" (1989) continued to question the validity and significance of the Orientalism in O'Neill. Cunningham argues that the literary mysticism of the nineteenth-century Romantic poets is much more important to O'Neill's work and philosophy than is Orientalism. For him, O'Neill's plays contain "frequently celebratory and life-affirming vision of things" which cannot be "exclusively explained by the passive ideologies of the East" (36). Cunningham's argument needs some clarification of the word "exclusively." Like any other critical mode, Oriental criticism provides, in the O'Neill scholarship, one particular approach which does not and cannot exclude any relevant and substantial approach. It may, on the contrary, shed light and stimulate fresh ideas for other different perspectives. The incremental attention to Orientalism in O'Neill over the years tended to validate the accuracy of Carpenter's earlier prediction: "Perhaps, before the end of the century, a study of the Orientalism of O'Neill may be undertaken" (254).

After 1930, Carpenter himself continued the study of O'Neill following along the lines of Orientalism. In his second book, Eugene O'Neill (1964), he attributes O'Neill's mysticism largely to the influence of Oriental philosophy. Although the book is a general study of O'Neill, the man and his work, it offers an affirmative extension of Carpenter's initial discovery of O'Neill's Oriental element, with frequent references to philosophies and religions of the East. Carpenter's later essay, "Eugene O'Neill, the Orient, and American Transcendentalism" (1966) is, as he remarks at the beginning, an essay to confirm O'Neill's sustained interest in the Orient in relation to American Transcendentalism. Here Carpenter asserts that the Orient is the common interest shared by the Transcendentalists, while he argues that "O'Neill's Orientalism was less literary than Emerson's" (211) because O'Neill is "more concerned with internal feelings and attitudes" (211).

Doris M. Alexander is another prominent figure in the Oriental criticism of O'Neill. In a 1956 article, "Lazarus Laughed and Buddha," Alexander points out that the Buddhist qualities in Lazarus Laughed are indispensable for a full understanding of the play, especially in the characterization of Lazarus. In a 1960 study, "Eugene O'Neill and Light on the Path," Alexander furthers her study of O'Neill's Orientalism by focusing on its formation. Alexander asserts the importance of Light on the Path, the

Like other literary Orientalists in America, O'Neill's fascination with the East can be traced to its historical, social, and personal sources. Born into an American culture which was greatly influenced by American Transcendentalism, O'Neill could not be immune to its influence. The subjects and philosophical perspective of American Transcendentalism may be seen throughout his works. His feelings toward American Transcendentalism, however, are often ambivalent according to Carpenter (204). O'Neill's critical attitude toward his cultural heritage tints his Orientalism with an historical difference. As Carpenter has pointed out, O'Neill's Orientalism is "the most important and distinctive aspect of his art, and yet the most difficult to define" (208). However difficult the defining may be, O'Neill's Orientalism differs from that of the major Transcendentalists in being more temperamental and personal in origin. There seems to be an innate and mysterious connection between Oriental mysticism and O'Neill's mystic nature which makes his turning to the East an inevitability. His lifelong personal interest in the Orient symbolizes a deeper inner affinity with Oriental culture, as opposed to the expedient studies and interests of Emerson. In this sense, O'Neill is more Oriental than most of the Transcendentalists. Furthermore, while sharing the Transcendentalists' interest in Oriental philosophy and religion, O'Neill rejects their pragmatic interpretation of Oriental idealism, the feature of Transcendentalism that Carpenter points out (207). Living in a modern America which is

different from that of the Transcendentalists, O'Neill was caught in the web of modern society where the pursuit of money, material gain, and the urge for scientific advancement threatened to prevail over the essence of the living of human life. Carpenter also asserts that Transcendentalists attempt to ameliorate almost all the material achievement through scientific progress at a time of great expansion, but O'Neill embraces Orientalism with a stress on spiritualism and he does not completely deny material gain as much as give a serious warning against the destructiveness of crass materialism. For O'Neill, Oriental quietism and concern for the soul's benefit might serve as a balance between the spiritual and the material, and his attitude toward material development is more historical than personal.

Such literary contemporaries as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot who turned respectively to China and India in the first decade of the century might have influenced O'Neill in some way, or again there might have been an inter-influence among them. World War I stripped the modern European civilization to its bare reality of moral poverty and unbridled worldly pursuit. In rebelling against the stark materialism of American civilization, O'Neill is aligned closely with Pound and Eliot in emphasizing the Oriental spiritual and internal cultivation of the soul. Their unanimous turning to the East indicates strongly a social orientation of that generation which was driven to go beyond the American boundaries in order to face the problems of their age.

Besides sharing emphasis on spiritual and inner feelings in their approach to Oriental thought, O'Neill also shared their highly evolved Orientalism which gradually fused with American culture instead of remaining an alien ideological force. Much like the rich Oriental suggestiveness of Eliot's The Waste Land, O'Neill's Orientalism has transcended its native border to express the American civilization and the human condition of the modern world. Marco Polo of Marco Millions does not die in thirteenth-century Italy, and he still lives in modern America; instead of pidgin English, Kublai Khan, Chu-Yin, and Princess Kukachin all speak standard American English in a way which liberates them as characters from their limited Chinese attributes and identity; the sage Chu-Yin and the philosopher King Kublai no longer merely belong to China. They come to symbolize supreme wisdom and moral cultivation instead, and they belong to all humankind, ancient and modern. The harmonious integration of Oriental elements in Marco Millions is only one example of O'Neill's developed Orientalism. This incorporation in O'Neill's works, especially in those works of the middle and late stages, tends to gravitate toward an emphasis on the inner and harmonious fusion with Occidental culture to form an organic part of his art. In this sense, O'Neill, like Eliot, has endowed Oriental thought with universal meaning and significance.

O'Neill's early and continuous working within the tradition of literary Orientalism is, like that of many artists in their final artistic and philosophical maturation, an inevitable

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O'Neill's early and continuous working within the tradition of literary Orientalism is, like that of many artists in their final artistic and philosophical maturation, an inevitable outgrowth of a mixture of his life, disposition, and his varied education in philosophy, religion, and Oriental culture. A brief comment on the biographical aspects of O'Neill's life re-emphasizes the reasons which turn O'Neill toward the East.

O'Neill's special family background played a crucial part in the formation of his personality and his mysticism. Born in an actor's family, O'Neill grew up in an always moving and rootless environment and with a mother who changed moods radically between her doses of morphine. Early from his childhood, O'Neill had a strong yearning for home. During his lonely and shifting childhood, he tended to withdraw into himself. While sitting on the edge of a crag near his home, he would often meditate upon the mysterious and the far away beyond the sea, just as Robert Mayo does in Beyond the Horizon, or he would read, when he was old enough, whatever he could get hold of from his father's library which, according to Gelb, included "rare acting editions of old plays, and prompt books of distinguished value" (84).

Apart from the formal college education he had between 1906-1907 at Princeton University, and one course taken from Professor George Pierce Baker at Harvard in his "English 47

Workshop" in 1914, O'Neill can be said, beyond his high school, to be a self-educated man. Since he was a young boy, he had lived in his lonely self-isolation, which one might call an "education" of his own kind as part of his growing up. As Croswell Bowen said in Conversation with Eugene O'Neill, "In addition to that part of Eugene's boyhood that was spent away from the theatre centered around the waterfront in New London, Conn., where he could absorb the romance of the sea" (203). In another sense, this also describes O'Neill's temperament and innate tendency to stay away from people and companionship, and his attempt to find comfort and solace in nature and solitude.

Religious belief might have offered some form of spiritual support to O'Neill, but this was taken away from him when he was about fifteen years old. His boarding school experience at a non-Catholic school in New York city resulted in his loss of the Catholic faith completely, and he never returned to it in his lifetime. Almost at the same time, he had found out about his mother's drug addiction, which furthered his withdrawal into himself. The three-fold isolation, from the outside world, his mother, and God, made him almost desperate to search for some form of spiritual and emotional sustenance. Reading became not only a pastime and companion in a lonely boyhood, but also a necessity and means of survival. Moreover, what he found in his readings paralleled his search for a substitute faith. By the time

he was about fifteen years of age, "he had swallowed large doses of Tolstoi and Dostoevski, as well as Kipling and the modern French writers, and he discovered Oscar Wilde. Joseph Conrad and Jack London fascinated him, and he dreamed of going to sea" (Gelb 79). According to James Robinson, O'Neill himself also owned a large collection of books on the East--including books on Indian Hinduism, Chinese history, philosophy, and Chinese drama and poetry, and above all, Lao-tse's Tao Te Ching translated by James Legge. Although there is not much information about his systematic study of these books, he had read them considerably in the early 1920s by his own admission, and these books held his attention throughout his life. The Western philosophers and writers that influenced him greatly were Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Freud, Jung, and Strindberg, each of which had a bent of mysticism in his own right, yet his interest and study of the Taoist text Tao Te Ching was an enduring factor. The actual reading and studying of Eastern books cannot be stressed too much in the formation of O'Neill's Orientalism because at the time when he found his spot of interest in China before his Asian trip in 1928, books on Chinese philosophy, history, and religion were the only means through which he could establish the connection with his dream land. By reading the books, the East was thus conceptualized as the very embodiment of his longing for permanence and home. With time and his maturation as a

dramatist, this longing eventually found concrete and adequate expression in his dramatic works.

Behind O'Neill's considerable reading into Oriental philosophy and theology is his own unique disposition that drew him to the Orient. For spiritual inspiration, not all Western artists turn to the East. What matters here is O'Neill's unique personality. Arthur Hobson Quinn, in 1926, asserted that the qualities of "poet and mystic" in O'Neill constituted the profoundest part of his temperament (201-2). Croswell Bowen also pointed this out in Conversations with Eugene O'Neill, "But most important of all was the disposition through which Eugene always viewed the world" (205). He cited the story of "Captain" Thomas Francis Dorsey who was an intimate friend of O'Neill's father and who had known O'Neill well as a boy. Captain Dorsey described Eugene as "always the gloomy one, ...always the tragedian, always thinking. ...Brilliant he was too, always readin' books. We're all Irish around here and knew the type. He was a real Black Irishman" (205). According to the Irish definition, Bowen continued, the Black Irishman is an Irishman who has lost his faith and who spends his life searching for the meaning of life, for a philosophy in which he can believe again as fervently as he once believed in the simple answer of the Catholic catechism. He is said to be a brooding, solitary man set apart from other Irishmen by his black hair, dark eyes, but most important of all by his

mystic nature. O'Neill falls into that category in every sense of the word, and he is even more strongly driven by his mystic nature to commit himself to the whole-hearted search for the meaning of life, and for a mystic faith to replace the Catholic religion he lost at the age of fifteen. For the "Black Irishman," the dogmatic approach to the spiritual questions of Western religion runs contrary to his sensitive and free spirit. Like Pound and Eliot, O'Neill saw the staleness and decadence of traditional Western culture, and he turned inevitably to seek solace in the serenity of Oriental mysticism.

Among American Orientalists, Eugene O'Neill is the only one of major literary stature who not only maintains a lifelong interest in the Orient, but who also actually lived out that fascination in many ways. China, as "the pivotal country of the Far East" in Babbitt's words (240) stands out distinctively as a special attraction to O'Neill. In his works, especially those of the middle and late periods, O'Neill repeatedly alludes to the "the far East," "the East," "Cathay," and eventually these converge to the definite notion of China as early as 1917 when O'Neill wrote The First Man, in which Curtis Jayson is ready to set out on an expedition to discover the First Man in Yunnan, China. Marco Millions (1925) is set in the center of the Yuan Dynasty in China.

O'Neill's aspiration for the Orient goes beyond mere idle imagination as these instances reveal, and in 1928, O'Neill went to visit Asia, and planned to live in China for a year. Before the trip, he wrote to Richard Madden, his agent, telling of his excitement and the anticipated significance of the immanent trip to the East (Gelb 678). He described it as the dream of his life, and the trip would be "infinitely valuable" to his future work. That the trip was a lifetime dream had been verified by Agnes Boulton, his second wife, in an early 1928 interview with critic Kenneth Macgowan, where she confirmed that O'Neill's dream in the past had been centered on "going to China" (Gelb 669). In mid-November of 1928, disguised as Rev. William O'Brien, O'Neill arrived in Shanghai with Carlotta Monterey. Although the trip was made disastrous by a drunken bout and a bad quarrel with Carlotta, and by the fact that he failed to find "peace and quiet" there as he had expected, O'Neill still thought it a wonderful trip and felt "as if a million impressions had jammed into" his brain which he would need more time to digest later on (Gelb 684). According to Gelb, around 1935, the O'Neills met with Somerset Maugham, who had also been a playwright of the Provincetown Players, the second of America's most famous "Little Theatre" groups, and talked about the possibility of making another trip to China. Carlotta immediately ordered a book on Peking recommended by Maugham. The serious intention and desire to

go back to China for a second visit tells us clearly of O'Neill's sustained fascination with China, which came to symbolize to him the central dream-land of beauty and serenity in the East.

Apart from his dramatic creations, O'Neill tried through reading about China to satisfy his fascination with that country. O'Neill admitted in a letter to Carpenter in 1932 that many years before, he did "considerable reading in Oriental philosophy and religion" (Bogard 401). The time period is most likely around 1921 according to James Robinson. At the time he studied with the immediate need to gather material for writing The Fountain and Marco Millions on the one hand, and on the other, it was part of a long-term intention to provide himself with a broader spiritual and philosophical perspective. That O'Neill was reading the Eastern books in 1925 is indicated by a work-diary entry he had for the idea of "Career of Shih Huang Ti," the plan for a play on the first Emperor in the Chinese Qin Dynasty (c. 221 B.C.). As late as November 1934, he made another effort, though futile, to work out the play (Floyd 114). This diary further indicates O'Neill's continuous, though sporadic, reading of Chinese books and his imaginative fascination with China.

O'Neill continued to live out his fascination with China through other means in his life. In 1937, for instance, moving to California from their house Casa Genotta

in Georgia, the O'Neills had a house built in Danville, about 35 miles away from San Francisco. Failing to realize the original design to "build a Chinese house" because of shortage of money, the house turned out to be a "pseudo-Chinese house," as Carlotta described it (Gelb 824), and she specially demanded "a Chinese interior" (Sheaffer 427). The O'Neills named their new house "Tao House," and decorated it with both authentic and imitation Chinese furniture, but on the outside they followed the Chinese house design down to the minutest detail. The general Oriental tone of the Tao House near San Francisco was continued after the O'Neills moved back to New York in 1945. Their small house by the sea was furnished with "things O'Neill had gathered from all over the world. The dominant note is Chinese" was the impression of Hamilton Basso of the New Yorker after his visit to O'Neill's house in 1948. Basso also noticed some ancient Chinese prints on the walls of the living room. Trivial as these displays of Chinese imitation and Chinese taste may seem, they do indicate the extent of O'Neill's lifelong fascination with Chinese culture.

Eugene O'Neill's talent as a playwright and his lifelong fascination with Chinese culture have long been recognized and appreciated by the Chinese people. As early as the 1920s, the Chinese critics had hailed him as one of the most promising American dramatists at the beginning of his career on the other side of the earth. Since then his

reputation has undergone the vicissitudes of popularity and oblivion in China, along with the drastic changes in the international political situation.

The time between the 1920s and 1940s saw the first crest of popular interest in O'Neill in China. In 1922, *Xiao-Shou-Yue-Bao* (Fiction Monthly), the most authoritative magazine which came into being under the influence of the May 4th Movement of 1919, the Chinese Renaissance, was the first to introduce O'Neill to China. After discussing the novels of John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, and Sinclair Lewis, the essay concluded, "As far as drama is concerned, the young playwright Eugene O'Neill is very popular and might well be considered the foremost dramatist in the United States today,"[1] although his name did not yet have a Chinese translation and none of his plays were mentioned at this time, the Chinese literary critics almost immediately caught the spark of interest in the young American playwright at the very early stage of his career. In the same year, Mao Dun, a very famous Chinese novelist who translated and staged The Emperor Jones, introduced the play in detail, which impressed the Chinese who had never known literary expressionism in theater before. The successful production of the play in Shanghai paved the way for subsequent productions of O'Neill's plays in the 1920s and 1930s. Soon after, several of his one-act plays together with Beyond the Horizon were translated and published, and

some fifty critical essays appeared in Chinese newspapers and periodicals all over the country. Some saw him as "a poet, an observer of human nature,"[2] and others regarded his plays as different from those of Ibsen and Shaw which portrayed their characters in terms of social relationships, while O'Neill depicted his as isolated entities. Others noticed his courageous theatrical experimentation, and greeted him as "an important innovator" in the history of American drama who "smashed many of the fixed rules of the stage, but never violated the fundamental principles of drama."[3] In retrospect, these critical views had intuitively grasped the essence and keynote of most of O'Neill's early works with sound, accurate, and insightful prediction about the potential talent of O'Neill, considering that these critics did not have the chance to read the later O'Neill. Although these critics gave introductions and simple evaluations of O'Neill's works, they were nevertheless ground-breaking *avant-gardes* who first brought O'Neill to the Chinese people and paved the way for more later studies of O'Neill.

Between 1945 and 1979, O'Neill studies experienced a temporary suspension. For almost three decades O'Neill was virtually unheard of in China. Affected by the changes in the international political situation, socialist China not only closed its door to the Western world, but also it grew an hostile attitude toward modern Western literature and

arts. Needless to say, no real cultural exchange of any kind was possible under such circumstances, and what happened then was that works which could be interpreted as political propaganda rather than works of art were circulated in China. Among American writers, only Mark Twain, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, John Steinbeck, and a very few others were published and studied. The criticism and research on these writers were done almost with the sole intention to extract thematic connotations of their exposure of capitalist evils, decadence, and corruption. Nearly no or very little attention was paid to the technical and stylistic side of the works. Consequently, O'Neill was neglected along with many other great masters of Western literature. None of his late works were translated and almost no critical study of his works was possible. Stage production was even more out of the question. O'Neill, however, was granted an entry in 1961 in the Chinese encyclopedia, *Cihai*, where he was introduced as "a well-known and prolific American playwright. His representative works include Beyond the Horizon, The Emperor Jones, and Strange Interlude, etc. These plays reflect various problems of American capitalist society, such as murder, poverty, power of money and racial discrimination. These plays, however, are extremely pessimistic and despairing, full of decadent sentiments."[4] Moreover, in 1957 there appeared a book called Reference to Foreign Literature,

published by the Department of Chinese, Beijing Teachers College. In this book O'Neill was once again described as "a corrupted element in the American literary circle," and his plays were "full of totally decadent ideas of life," "one hundred percent fascist." These remarks stood for the political bias and narrow patriotism of the time.

Since 1979, a resurgence of O'Neill's popularity has taken place in China. With the renewed interest brought about by the normalization of relations between China and America, O'Neill's works returned to China with those of other American writers who had been neglected and ignored in the previous decades. During this period the Chinese scholars and critics have translated or retranslated his works, especially his late drama. Around two hundred critical essays on O'Neill have been published in various publications nationwide. The 1980s have the richest harvest in O'Neill criticism and translation. Because of the former decades of suppression, it is not surprising that more has been written on O'Neill in China than on any other foreign dramatist, including Shakespeare. Anna Christie and Beyond the Horizon are Chinese favorites, and have been put on stage again and again. Welcoming O'Neill back has also been compounded with the popular affection of the Chinese for American culture in general. Critical studies of O'Neill and his popularity reached its peak in 1988, the occasion for the celebration of O'Neill's centenary. Besides the

O'Neill international conference which was held in Nanjing, there were two other grand symposia held in Tianjin and Beijing. Three major conferences for one single foreign playwright within one year clearly indicates the unprecedented enthusiasm of the Chinese O'Neill scholars and critics.

O'Neill's continuous attraction to both Chinese literary scholars and amateurs in general comes mainly from both his extraordinary achievements in exploring human nature and his mastery in theatrical experimentation. His effort to reform American theater showed the Chinese a theater of unlimited possibilities.

From the very beginning, the Chinese were very much impressed by O'Neill's enthusiasm for theater art. His adventurous experimentation with European expressionism, symbolism, impressionism, and even the technique of stream-of-consciousness, and his successful experience in elevating the American drama from almost nothing to serious art have become the true inspiration for the Chinese in their theatrical practice. This second upsurge of O'Neill's popularity has encouraged and prompted a theater innovation in China in recent years which has inspired the production of many outstanding "exploration plays," such as Pan Jin Lian and The Nirvana of Grandpa Doggie. These plays are stunningly new and anti-traditional in theme and structure, but they have greatly appealed to the audience whose

unspeakable or inexpressible feelings meet the most appropriate expression in these plays.

The resurgence of O'Neill's popularity in recent years also opened new perspective in the study of O'Neill. The Chinese scholars and critics have reached better and deeper understanding of his works. Trying to shed the former preoccupations with class-conscious interpretations and political bias in the evaluation of O'Neill's works, they now can see the existential, psychological, and even abstract humanistic dimensions of O'Neill's drama. The Emperor Jones, for instance, now reveals its psychological implication of the collective consciousness as opposed to the simple previous conclusion that the corrupting influence of American society breeds Jones' outlook that he is proud of doing the "big stealin'." Yank in Hairy Ape is seen to stand for not only the position of exploited workers in a capitalist country, but also a symbol of the dilemma of modern humanity in the industrial age.

Scholars and critics in China have written a large body of criticism on O'Neill in the past few decades. A generous sampling of all the criticism and research in China reveals a unanimous recognition of the Taoist influence on O'Neill's works. Chinese scholars are very proud of discovering the admiration and deeper understanding of Taoism in a foreign playwright. Ji Oyang and Kedui Liao serve as examples. Oyang's "The Philosophical Thought of Laozi and American

Playwright Eugene O'Neill" sees the application of major Taoist tenets such as Wu-Wei, non-contention, quietude, and non-interference, etc. in O'Neill's plays. He also gives a detailed analysis of the Taoistic return in Marco Millions. Liao's "On Marco Millions," aiming at a criticism of the entire play, puts the conflict of Western pragmatism and Eastern mysticism into the larger framework of the conflict between the Taoistic Yin/Yang dynamic. Haiping Liu's essay, "Taoism in O'Neill's Tao House Plays," treats the Taoist elements in O'Neill's final works, such as A Moon for the Misbegotten, Long Day's Journey into Night, and The Iceman Cometh. According to Liu, Taoism exerts a healthy impact on O'Neill, and it helps him reach a spiritual and emotional reconciliation with his family, his friends, and himself.

This research of the criticism of O'Neill shows that Chinese scholars align themselves with the American O'Neill scholars in the evaluation of his plays. O'Neill's international popularity once more attests to his position as the "greatest dramatist" of America (Carpenter 168). In his artistic creations, O'Neill's interfusion of a Taoistic perspective with American life and reality makes Taoism a part of American culture, and by so doing, he also endows his drama with added universal significance that expresses the general human condition in the modern world.

Notes

1. Monthly Fiction (China) 13:5 (1922).

2. Jiazhu Zhang, "O'Neill," *Xin-Yue* (The New Moon) (China) 11:1 (1929), 12-15.

3. Zhongyi Gu, "O'Neill, the Playwright," Modern Times (China) 5:6 (1934).

4. *Cihai*, Trial Ed. Beijing: Beijing Zhonghua Book Company, 1961, 206.

II. Rediscovering and Redefining: The Revelation of Tao Te Ching

Eugene O'Neill's Orientalism rests on the powerful and sustained influence of Taoism in his dramatic works. The single, original, and comprehensive text of Taoism in China is Lao-tse's philosophical work, Tao Te Ching. As the embodiment of Taoism, it served as the key document that guided O'Neill in his Taoistic exploration. The introduction and promulgation of Tao Te Ching in the West came about by many different translations. The first reached Europe in the late eighteenth century, and the first that reached America was James Legge's Tao Te Ching in 1891. As one of the earliest English translations, Legge was Eugene O'Neill's source in his study of Lao-tse's mysticism. The special nature of the book--its use of Classical Chinese which is very different from modern Chinese, and Lao-tse's unique style, causes certain difficulties and misconceptions in the translation and the understanding of Taoism. Without the knowledge of Chinese, amazingly enough, O'Neill overcame the textual difficulties through collateral study and an almost religious contemplation of the essential tenets of Taoism. Such an apprehension licensed O'Neill to penetrate the interpretative mask of translation and encounter the Chinese text directly.

Taoism holds a special attraction for the West and for O'Neill, in particular, because of the practical nature and the sense of modernity of the philosophy. Tao Te Ching begins with an exposition of the law of nature and its mysterious operation, and it ends by presenting analogous lessons and guidance to humankind on how to live a better life. It also touches issues which hold immediate significance for modern life. It advocates human rights, love of peace, anti-violence, anti-governmental corruption, and other virtues. Throughout his entire career, O'Neill incorporated these important doctrines of Taoism in his works as a grid of Eastern values against which he set an exaggerated contrast that exhibited the problems of modern Western society more clearly.

In the positive philosophy of Tao Te Ching, O'Neill finds a timely guidance for the spiritual lostness of his generation. In as much as O'Neill's dramas treat the plight of that lostness, he incorporates his Taoistic discoveries as a consolatory bridge between the dysfunctional Christianity of his generation and the bleak reality of the modernist world. Wu-Wei or non-interference is the most explored element of Taoism in his plays. This doctrine is reflected in the characters' wise withdrawal from futile action and careful scrutiny of circumstances. The Taoistic oppositions of Yin and Yang is another central tenet that examines the balance and harmony of human beings with each

other and with nature. This Yin and Yang rhythmic movement is at the operational center of the entire universe, and all creatures must respond to the irresistible tendency to return to their origins. Taoist unity of universal existents includes the unity between life and death, time and space, and many other antitheses. The Taoist teaching of moderation, elimination of undue desire, and the image of water and the posture of lowliness are especially incorporated by O'Neill in his late plays.

James Legge's version of Tao Te Ching contains writings of Chuang-tse, the most faithful disciple of Lao-tse. Chuang-tse's writings are annotations and additions to his master's work. Because of the close relationship between the two, Taoism is usually referred to as "Philosophy of Lao-Chuang," and Tao Te Ching and the writings of Chuang-tse are regarded as an organic whole. Although not free from the usual errors that arise from literal translations, Legge's work was not only one of the earliest translations but also it was the best available.

Legge's translation first appeared in Sacred Books of the East, edited by F. Max Müller. The initial introduction and study of Tao Te Ching in the West, according to Müller, began with the Roman Catholic missionaries' religious expedition to the East in an attempt to show how "the Mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Incarnate God were anciently known to the Chinese nation" (xiii).

Although the earliest translation of Tao Te Ching in Latin was brought to England and was presented to the Royal Society on January 10, 1788 (xiii), the text of Tao Te Ching did not receive significant attention in the West until Legge's translation in the nineteenth century. Since then, many scholars and commentators in the West have attempted to illuminate the writings of Lao-tse. According to Henry Wei in his The Guiding Light of Lao-Tzu, there were at least forty-four English translations of Tao Te Ching up to 1982, though the list given in his book is by no means complete. The on-going studies and translations since Wei's summary continue to accumulate.

Popular as it is in the West, Tao Te Ching naturally has always been a topic of great interest in China. There are approximately 700 modern commentaries and annotations on Tao Te Ching in Chinese, which attest to the enormous interest and importance of the work. In recent years, Western interest in I Ching (The Book of Changes) and the philosophy of Lao-tse along with O'Neill scholarship have contributed further to the Chinese interest in Tao Te Ching. Through centuries of controversy and research, most of the Chinese Tao Te Ching scholars agree that Lao-tse is *the* author of Tao Te Ching, though there is not much biographical information about him, except that he was born around 571 B.C. The time of Lao-tse was one of great turmoil and tangled warfare among the independent States.

Intellectuals and social reformers all tried to find solutions to the social chaos. Tao Te Ching, Confucianism, and Mencianism were among the few surviving ideologies from the "one hundred contending schools of thought," a special term to describe the ideological prosperity of the time. Confucius advocated an active involvement in social and political service as his solution. The key to Confucianism was the maintenance and improvement of the various relationships between authority and those subject to authority. Such relations ranged from those between a monarch and his subjects and between a father and his sons. Ideally for Confucius, if everyone would do one's duty well and properly treat one's superiors, inferiors, and equals, the country then would be orderly and peaceful. Contrary to Confucianism and others that advocated the establishment of new laws and new social institutions, Lao-tse attempted to restore social order and peace by working from within. For him, the inner cultivation of virtues was the best solution, and he advocated a system of returning to the original state of things. What concerned him was how to wipe out the conflict between the individual human being and society, and how to make people live happily in peace. He hoped that people would follow the Tao's natural tendency and spontaneity, and that government would learn not to interfere with ordinary people's lives and work instead toward the extermination of war. Denouncing waste and

luxury, he looked for the days when rulers would eventually lead the common people to return to nature and to the simplicity in life.

Tao Te Ching is a short book of about 5,300 words. It ranges from comments on personal moral cultivation to political ideals. Its focus is the exposition of the mystery and infinitude of Tao. Written in poetic form, it is a volume of philosophy. As Yutang Lin described it, "Lao-tse's epigrams are flashes of insight and genius, like some of the best intuitive passages of Emerson" (5). Other commentators noted that Tao Te Ching embodied not only the spiritual insight of Lao-tse but also epitomized the collective wisdom of ancient China in a profound meditation upon humanity and nature. Philosophically rich as it is, Tao Te Ching deals mainly with two issues: nature and humankind. Nature is the starting point and its ultimate goal is to serve human beings.

In its cosmology, Tao is a formless and unnameable reality. Tao Te Ching opens with the paradoxical explication of Tao, "The Tao that can be spoken of / Is not the constant Tao; / The name that can be named / Is not the constant name./ (Conceived of as) having no name, / It is the Originator of heaven and earth; / Having a name, it is the Mother of all things" (Müller 47). As the verses indicate, there is no name for Tao because language is completely inadequate for such a purpose, yet Tao is the

creator of the universe, and as such intends to inspire in human beings a profound sense of awe. Thus it ushers them into the realm of mystery. In turn it is intended to elevate the powers of imagination. According to the verses, if Heaven and Earth are created by Tao, and cannot be free from Tao, there is no other way for humanity but to obey and depend on Tao for one's own well-being.

As an unnameable impersonal force behind and beneath all, Tao possesses a feature which is one of more attractive elements to O'Neill. Chinese Tao Te Ching scholars, especially those who speak English, stress this feature of Tao. Guying Chen, an acclaimed authority and expert on Tao Te Ching in both mainland China and Taiwan, especially emphasizes that Tao is an impersonal, natural force (36). Yutang Lin gave O'Neill two of his own books, and one of them, A Philosophy of Living (1937) contains Lin's repeated emphasis on the difference between Tao and the Christian God. It is the Tao as a natural force that made all the difference in its appeal to O'Neill, who had originally turned away from the Christian personal God when he was a child. As a profound mystery that is immutable, subtle, and ineffable, Tao is vital and all-pervasive with an inexhaustible potential and creative power. All the things in the universe that exist harmoniously side by side are the very embodiment and incarnation of Tao. Its mysterious attributes parallel those of the mysterious life force that

was conceived by O'Neill in his drama. The parallel between this life force and Tao is not quite complete, since O'Neill's mysterious force seems to be a partial and a hostile one that condemns the poor, the low, and the helpless. In Taoism, Tao is eternally neutral and impartial, unseen, and inevitable in the nature of things.

Taoism provides a highly philosophical principle for human conduct. Rulers and ordinary people alike are ethically admonished to keep their lives in harmony with nature and with Tao. In Tao Te Ching, humanity is the true center. The strong humanistic dimension and positive view of life in Tao Te Ching appeals to O'Neill's own belief that Western people need not deny life but they need to put a moderating check on twentieth-century materialism instead.

Unlike some Western religion, Taoism is free from dogma. This must have had a natural appeal to the free soul, as O'Neill imagined himself to be. Lao-tse's critical attitude toward social evil stresses human spiritual cultivation. War, violence, official corruption, exorbitant taxes, and improper governmental interference with the lives of people are all symptoms of the evils of modern society. Lao-tse's attitude clearly struck a sympathetic chord in O'Neill's social conscience, as his problem plays manifested. His understanding and interpretation of Taoism, especially in his middle and late dramas, revealed that he gradually came to take Taoism as a possible solution. Of

the Oriental philosophies, only Taoism suggests ways that directly deal with the daily life of this world. Like Christianity, it is easily acceptable to Western minds.

Although the practical nature of Tao Te Ching makes it accessible in different cultural contexts, it is not an easy book to study because of its use of Classical Chinese and Lao-tse's unique style. The book is written in poetry, and is extremely condensed, pithy, and deliberately paradoxical. Because mistranslations have led to distortions of certain doctrines, some need to be redefined.

Wu Wei, is the most important doctrine of Lao-tse's philosophy, and it is almost synonymous with Taoism. As a wise and strategic measure of doing nothing rash and overreaching, it is closely connected with the individual's personal cultivation of being and Tao, and it does not interfere with the natural flow of Tao. In the Taoist system, humanity is part of the unity of Tao, and so should act according to Tao, "Whatever is contrary to the Tao soon ends" (Müller 99). Among all the doctrines of Taoism, the notion of Wu Wei probably has been misconceived more than others. Due to its English translation as inaction or nonaction, Wu Wei has very often been interpreted as "actually or literally doing nothing at all," or as a state of complete passivity. Many English versions of Tao Te Ching have this literal translation. In accordance with the Taoist positive view and celebration of life, it is

impossible that Taoism could take a negative view. Lao-tse's Wu Wei is directed against the excess of blind action and desire. It is meant to be a call for balance, a preaching of life in moderation and never as a stark negation. The most acceptable annotation of this point is given by Guying Chen. He explains Wu-Wei this way, "Wu Wei, or inaction is not meant literally 'inactivity' or 'doing nothing,' but 'taking no action that is contrary to Nature'" (67). In other words, taking no blind, impetuous, and rash action that interferes with the law of nature, but doing what is necessary in tune with nature at the right time is the appropriate interpretation of Wu Wei. Chen's definition has received very enthusiastic response in both China and Taiwan. In D.C. Lau's version, as well as in Yutang Lin's, the literal meaning of the text is based on the word-for-word translation from the Classical Chinese. Legge's notes shed some light on the proper understanding of a doctrine that, when rendered literally, makes no sense in English. This mistranslation is not a surprising mistake because Lao-tse's oracular wisdom lends itself to many diversified interpretations, even in Chinese--much more so in the many different translations from Chinese to English. With the removal of this long-imposed passivity, we know that the Taoist code of Wu Wei only advises people not to take restless, unwise, and futilely impetuous actions with no regard to the actual circumstances. So long as one does not

interfere with the natural tendencies and does what is right and in tune with Tao, one is already being Wu Wei.

Next to Wu Wei, the Taoist emphasis on the quality of being weak, gentle, and soft, the so-called feminine or Yin attributes leads often to the conception of Tao being female. Actually these are two different categories. In Tao Te Ching, Lao-tse has elaborated on the strength of being weak, gentle, and soft: "Man at his birth is supple and weak; at his death firm and strong. [So it is with] all things. Trees and plants, in their early growth, are soft and brittle; at their death, dry and withered" (Müller 118). Based upon the analogy drawn from nature, Lao-tse concludes that firmness and strength are the concomitants of death, while softness and weakness as the concomitants of life. These features, if overemphasized, would seem to be effeminate ones, when in fact they are life-preserving qualities preached in Taoism. Nevertheless, Lao-tse's admonitions are directed against too much stress on toughness and physical power in society, and this extremity permeates humanity's life, social behavior, and governmental administration. Driven blindly by this social tendency, people strive to be the strongest and the most powerful persons they can be. Sometimes they have to resort to violence--crimes and wars--thus the chaos in the world among people and between nations. From O'Neill's presentation in his dramatic works, we can see that the twentieth-century

human condition is no better, and in fact, O'Neill strongly detests the serious imbalance of too much physical power, too much material worship, and too little spiritual gentleness. In September 1946, O'Neill elucidated his ideas about America:

> I am going on the theory of the United States, instead of being the most successful country in the world, is the greatest failure....It hasn't acquired any real roots. Its main idea is that ever-lasting game of trying to possess your own soul by the possession of something outside of it, too. America is the prime example of this....We are the greatest example of 'For what shall it profit a man, if we shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Clark 152-3)

According to Clark, O'Neill especially mentioned the soul-nurturing nature of Taoism to him. Taoism articulates the balanced and harmonious composition of the Yin (female, passive, gentle) and Yang (male, active, firm) principles. Seeing too much stress on physical power, Lao-tse pays more attention to gentleness, softness, and stresses the spiritual strength to balance the disharmony. He never attempts to emasculate humanity, community, and government. In a similar fashion, O'Neill attempted to demonstrate the destructiveness of stark physical power in his dramatic works. Some critics, however, attempt to stress the feminine qualities in their works and believe that the female represents Tao, An-min Hsia for instance. In his The Tao and Eugene O'Neill, Hsia observes that "The female is

thus an image of the Tao, the mother of all things, and the force that draws all things to it" (139). Hsia is wrong because his conclusion runs contrary to the well-known Taoist doctrine of the unity of Yin and Yang as the core of universal composition and harmony. Disagreeing with Hsia, Chen also notices the confusion caused by the stress on the feminine qualities. Lao-tse does sometimes use "mother" to indicate the creator but it is only in the sense of a progenitor, or originator, never in the sense of a female. The word "mother" is like the word "Tao," which is only an expedient appellation to name the unnameable for convenience's sake because language is incapable of conveying the meaning. Tao in Taoism is the prototype of the best combination of Yin and Yang in perfect harmony. Neither Yin nor Yang can stand for Tao alone. If Tao contains only the Yin, then it can not be Tao.

O'Neill's discovery and study of Lao-tse's Taoist philosophy in the very early 1920s greatly influenced his artistic creation. His dramatic works written after that show almost all the major doctrines of Taoism. Legge's version provided O'Neill with both a primary knowledge of the book and a scholarly explanation of Taoism. According to Robinson, O'Neill studied the very text itself, not just a second-hand commentary on Taoism. This first-hand knowledge of a new philosophy, in many ways, facilitated a better absorption of Taoism for O'Neill, and it also opened

wider perspectives in O'Neill's philosophical vision and dramatic expression.

O'Neill's more than intellectual affinity with Taoism is rooted mainly in those Taoist perspectives in Tao Te Ching that seem to transcend time and space and reach the twentieth-century American playwright. The mysterious faith of Taoism in its perception of the Eternal Tao and the intuitive attainment of Tao became manifest in a theoretical and systematic extension of O'Neill's own mystic view about the mysterious life force. A strong strain of mysticism is evident in such early one-act plays as The Web and Fog, and it continued to pervade O'Neill's plays of the middle period: Beyond the Horizon, Lazarus Laughed, The Fountain, and Marco Millions. In these works, the protagonists all experience a mysterious connection with the unknown, and such an emphasis reveals pointedly O'Neill's concern with the mystical in his works.

The sense of modernity in Taoism probably appealed even more to O'Neill because Taoism provided a timely spiritual guidance that was applicable to contemporary problems. Stripping off its surface as an edification for rulers, Taoism contains the modern democratic notion of benefiting the common people, which supports modern democratic theory. Taoism *per se* from Tao Te Ching, as the philosophical guide for governmental administration and as a moral principle for individual conduct, contains down-to-earth practical

teachings that touch many concrete aspects of modern life. Different from such Oriental religions as Buddhism with its complete detachment from life, Taoism is engaged in the active reformation of society. It is distinctly against war, violence, and all other modern social evils. Its rejection of excessive pursuit of material goods at the cost of one's soul still provides moral guidance for a modern society in which God may "be dead." At the bottom of Taoism is a celebration of life which differs from the Buddhist and many Western secular views which perceive life in this world as illusions. Taoism realistically affirms life in this world, and life beyond death is as real and good as this one, so long as one does not go against Tao. Taoism preaches moderation in life only to check humanity's irrational extremes in action. This moderate, active, and celebratory vision of life appealed to O'Neill's Western philosophy of active life, and the Taoist balance is just what O'Neill needed for the materialistic excesses of the modern American life style which threatened to replace the essence of living. Consciously or not, the complementary bond between Taoism and O'Neill's own vision of reality drew O'Neill naturally closer to Taoism than to the other Oriental philosophies.

O'Neill did not come to Taoism with a *tabula rasa*, and his ingrained Western philosophical and religious views maintained a place in his mind. The study of Oriental

philosophies together with his Western vision provided him with a perspective through which he could comprehend the mysterious life force. In the process, Taoism not only formed the center of his studies, it also established the center of Oriental influence in his dramatic works. In these works, O'Neill displays a progressively deepening understanding of Taoism. In his early Taoist plays, O'Neill's understanding and interpretation of Taoism presents itself through the overt manifestation of such easily detectible Taoist doctrines as the Yin/Yang dynamic. The middle plays, Lazarus Laughed and Strange Interlude, present a comparatively deeper comprehension of Taoist thought through the harmonious incorporation of Wu-Wei, non-contention, non-interference, and the movement toward Taoist harmony with nature. O'Neill's late "Tao House" dramas, A Moon for the Misbegotten and Long Day's Journey into Night, show that O'Neill went through a personal cathartic process by reliving his early years of growing pain and familial chaos through his dramatic creations. Frederic Carpenter and James Robinson argue for the importance of O'Neill's treatment of these autobiographical subjects in the light of Oriental philosophy. These plays show O'Neill's more than intellectual Oriental commitment and reflect his attempt to achieve the Taoist ideal of returning to the serenity of soul and origin of his own life.

III. Eugene O'Neill's Pre-Taoist Dramatic Works

Eugene O'Neill had come a long way from his own inquiry into the mysterious force before he discovered that, as he stated in a letter to Frederic Carpenter, "the mysticism of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu probably interested me more than any other Oriental writings" (Bogard 401). O'Neill's attraction to writers and philosophers who expressed an awareness and notion of the mystical in their works is a given fact of O'Neill studies. What interested O'Neill in Conrad, for example, was Conrad's depiction of the darkness of the human heart and his awareness of mystery in works like The Nigger of the Narcissus. Schopenhauer's vision of human will to live in The World as Will and Idea as well as Nietzsche's vision of human will to power in Thus Spake Zarathustra all contributed to O'Neill's final formation as a mystic in his writings. Carpenter, James Robinson, and Beongcheon Yu insisted on the additional importance of Light on the Path, a book given by Terry Carlin. Doris Alexander in her essay, "Eugene O'Neill and Light on the Path," calls this book a major source for the formation of O'Neill's mysticism. According to her, this book fascinated O'Neill so much that he wrote the first paragraph on the rafters of his apartment in Provincetown. Presenting the typical Oriental wisdom, the paragraph states, "Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears. Before the ear can hear, it must have

lost its sensitiveness. Before the voice can speak....it must have lost the power to wound" (15). Light on the Path not only made O'Neill certain of his choice to become a mystic, but the book's strong resemblance to the mysticism of Oriental faiths also turned O'Neill toward the East. Alexander further relates that Light on the Path was originally written by two mystics who died in ancient times, and one of them claimed to have the rules of the Atlantean writings from the lost continent of Atlantis, fragments of which, the theosophists believed, had survived in the Upanishads, the Bhagavat Gita, and the texts of Taoism in China. Whether O'Neill believed the legend or not, there is a close resemblance between the teachings of Light on the Path and Tao Te Ching. In this sense, we may say that when O'Neill studied Oriental philosophy and religion in the early 1920s, he found in Tao Te Ching not only a supposed extension of Light on the Path, but also a philosophy that satisfied his personal needs. His fervent interest in Taoism followed both naturally and inevitably.

The one-act plays and early full-length plays which were written before O'Neill's discovery and study of Taoism in 1921 might be called his pre-Taoist plays. These dramatic works were his artistic and thematic preparations for his future Taoist integrations. The one-act drama period (1913-1918) in O'Neill's career is not only one of a self-imposed apprenticeship in theatrical craft, it is also

one of a painstaking search for a focus of thematic expression. Although dealing with the relatively simple dramatic form at first, it was not long before O'Neill found the major focus of his artistic creation. In 1919, he told Barrett Clark that he wanted to explain the nature of his feeling "for the impelling, inscrutable forces behind life" in his plays (59), and in 1925, he wrote to Arthur Hobson Quinn that "I am always acutely conscious of the Force behind--(Fate, God, ... whatever one calls it--Mystery certainly)" (199). As an exponent of his own artistic expression, O'Neill emphasized the mystical focus of his drama because of his decision to portray the "inscrutable" and mysterious life force.

During his whole career, O'Neill experimented with modern theatrical techniques, but he always kept at the center the major theme of the exploration of the mysterious life force he believed ruled everything in the universe. Indeed, from the beginning he directed his attention to the portrayal and exploration of that mysterious force. By consciously naming the universal ruling force a mysterious "Force behind" life, O'Neill reconfirmed his break with the personal God of Christianity from which he had turned at the age of fifteen. He subsequently affirmed an affinity with the impersonal God of the East when he first read Light on the Path.

O'Neill was aware of the dramatic possibilities inherent in the chief attributes of the force. Its omnipresence, for example, is illustrated in the varied settings and situations of his plays: a gold-mining camp, a filthy slum, a tossing sea, and between couples joined without love. In short, he depicts that force in every aspect of human life. As if it had a purpose of its own, the omnipotent power of that force compels the characters to obey or follow in order to survive. Their prosperity resides in obedience to that force, whereas they perish in resistance. This powerful force with its omnipresence, mystery, and domination closely parallels the essential attributes of Tao and appears from the beginning in O'Neill's pre-Taoist dramatic works. O'Neill's assiduous exploration and probing into the operation of that force and his intuitive grasp of its essential attributes might have been simply the natural product of his meditative temperament, but it is definitely the embryonic form of his Taoistic ideas that took shape even before his formal knowledge of Taoism. After his early works, the O'Neillian pre-Taoist thought merged with authentic Taoism after he discovered the profundity of the mystical sources of that thought in the early 1920s. O'Neill gives the force such names as God, Fate, or Providence to suggest its mystery and unintelligibility. Under the rule and domination of that force, the characters in his works are either intuitively

obedient or they blindly struggle against it, although their responses vary from agony, suffering, and even cursing to bland acceptance.

The one-act works written between 1913 and 1918 are characterized by O'Neill's spontaneous conception of that force as mysterious and incomprehensible. Except for a few plays that are pure apprentice exercises, the works of this period provide a basis for his later full incorporation of Taoism. Abortion (1914) and The Dreamy Kid (1918) are two such apprentice exceptions. According to most biographical criticism, Abortion represents O'Neill's guilty preoccupation with his responsibility before their marriage of the pregnancy of Kathleen Jenkins, his first wife. The Dreamy Kid is O'Neill's early attempt to engage racial issues and provide serious roles for Black characters, a principal feature of such late plays as The Emperor Jones and All God's Chillun Got Wings.

At this early stage, O'Neill committed himself to the depiction of important issues which contain the essence of Taoism. Important issues that anticipate their later appearance are acceptance of the mysterious force, the withdrawal from contention, non-interference, danger of excessive desire, and from the compositive of these emerges a dualistic view of the conflict of opposites. All these are essential Taoist doctrines expressed in humanistic terms. Underlying these primary issues is O'Neill's own

critical and inquiring spirit, a spirit that is primarily Western and constantly questions the mystery and operation of forces that control life.

O'Neill's very first play, A Wife for a Life (1913) began his inclination toward Taoist thought and its search for a better life. Set in the middle of the Arizona desert where there is no law or social rules, this play presents the life force at work in its mysterious ways through the lives of the protagonists. The two protagonists, Jack and a character O'Neill simply names Older Man are bosom friends. Jack reveals that the woman he loves is Older Man's estranged wife, and Jack is someone who Older Man has been chasing and plans to kill. Perplexed by the moral quandary in which he finds himself, Older Man offers a retort to the mysterious force, "What tricks Fate plays with us" (10). The force here is Fate, which comes upon humans with mystery and inexplicability. Older Man knows by instinct that he cannot kill Jack as he planned. Intuitively, he accepts life as it is by giving up the fight for his wife. Evaluating Older Man's response from what we know of O'Neill's fatalistic depiction, we can see Older Man's acceptance of life and his non-contention follows the tenet of Taoism called Wu-Wei. Older Man's willing resignation to fate indicates an early acceptance of the mystery of life in O'Neill's drama.

The "happy" ending of A Wife for a Life through Older Man's withdrawal from contention represents obedience to the life force, but wise passivity is not typical of the Western philosophy that O'Neill had studied in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche where the free will of individuals is celebrated. In the one-act plays written after A Wife for a Life, O'Neill transforms the fatalist acceptance of the life force into the individual's inquiry and questioning of its operation. The Movie Man (1914) is a supreme example of the Western hubristic attempt to control individuals and nations alike. The American movie man, Henry Rogers, contracts to film the Mexican Revolution with the Mexican Commander, Pancho Gomez, who is supposed to fight only when weather permits photography. The daughter of a prisoner comes to beg the Commander for her father's life, and Rogers wins the girl's favor by permitting Gomez to make a surprise attack at night in return for the prisoner's life. According to Margaret Ranald, the play is a satire on both Pancho Villa and American interventionism. One certainly cannot miss the critical questioning implied in Rogers' intervention. In order to show the meaninglessness of the interference, O'Neill contrives through the interference of Rogers that at the very moment the prisoner is pardoned and Virella, Gomez's right-hand man, is killed. The prisoner is saved because he has a young and pretty daughter who can beg for his life, but Virella has nobody to do the same thing for

him. After all, the intervention of Rogers and that of the United States in Mexico, does nothing but, like Rogers' profession, create illusions without changing reality.

The critical inquiry into the workings of the force in the one-act plays continues in The Web (1913), Thirst (1913), Recklessness (1913), and Fog (1914), where characters are cast in situations which force them to resist the powerful but hostile force behind phenomenal reality which O'Neill was later to describe as the "ironic life force." For some, any attempt to struggle against it makes things worse rather than better. The futility of their attempt is signaled by heartbreaking agony, anger, and stifling bewilderment. In The Web, for instance, Rose, a prostitute, when wrongly accused of murdering the only man who is kind to her, cries out "Gawd! Gawd! Why d'yuh hate me so?" (28). From the beginning, Rose tries to break away from the exploitation of her pimp, but in the end she is forced into a worse situation. No matter what form it takes, either Fate or God in this work, the force weaves a destructive web from which there is no escape. At the end of the play, Rose is overtly described by O'Neill in the stage direction as being "*aware of something in the room which none of the others can see--perhaps the personification of the ironic life force that has crushed her*" (27-28). Through suffering and despair, Rose becomes aware of the power, the mystery, and the cruelty of the

force, before which she is completely powerless. Another irony enters when her pimp gets everything by murder and robbery, and goes scot-free, as does another character in Recklessness, the play which follows The Web. In this play, after Arthur Baldwin is informed of his wife's love affair with a chauffeur, he tricks the chauffeur into driving a damaged car and killing himself. In the process, his wife commits suicide over the loss of her lover. The lovers could not hide their relationship from the house servants because, as O'Neill indicates in the title, they were driven by a compulsion to act recklessly. O'Neill would later see that recklessness as an equivalent force in Taoism. Baldwin sees the chauffeur "as reckless, especially about other people's property" (67). His remark reveals his impersonal commercial relationship with his wife, since he treats her as a piece of property. He is finally the truly morally "reckless" one. This recklessness is reflected in O'Neill's later works as the violation of the human bond that constitutes part of the eternal harmony of Tao. O'Neill presents the irony of these blind reversals again in Thirst (1913). The central character called "Gentleman" brings about his own death by preventing an act of cannibalism. Dying of thirst on a drifting boat with two other characters, Gentleman speaks out for humanity as he cries, "God! God! What a joke to play on us!" (38). The personification of the life force here does not establish

any affinity with a personal God. It reveals a natural force of power and mystery instead. O'Neill establishes the metaphor of thirst as a human longing to know the nature of that force which tortures and destroys humanity.

In Fog, O'Neill explores another sea metaphor to project the life force in its most mysterious and providential nature. Wrapped up in dense fog that blocks visibility, a Poet, a Businessman, and a Polish woman with her baby are adrift in a boat. The Poet saved the woman and her baby from drowning when their ship was about to sink, but neither the woman nor the baby escaped death. The source of the mysterious cry of the already dead baby that is heard by the life-boat officer remains a mystery, though it leads to the rescue of the Poet and the Businessman. Unlike the Gentleman in Thirst, the Poet here delivers a Homeric commentary about how all that happens "seemed Providential" (103). The thick fog further suggests the complete mystery of the workings of the force. Though illogical, the death of the castaways present the complete futility of human attempts to interfere with the operation of the force. This is the case in the plays that deal with the tragedies brought on by such natural disasters as the sinking of a ship.

For O'Neill, in ordinary life humans caught up in natural disasters do not escape, and they are equally at its mercy in disastrous situations inflicted by human beings

upon one another. In The Sniper (1915), a play about World War I, O'Neill depicts just such a situation. The protagonist, Rougon, a Belgian peasant, is driven by his situation to resist after his loved ones are all killed by German soldiers. The local priest, or "Priest" as O'Neill calls him, tries to persuade Rougon not to be rash and seek revenge, but taking up arms, Rougon kills several Germans in revenge. O'Neill forces us to realize that individuals are powerless. Viewed from Rougon's perspective, Priest's teaching seems ironic and ridiculous. O'Neill's own questioning of the peaceful acceptance of such cruelty is presented through Priest's lamentation when Rougon is executed by the Germans, "Alas, the laws of men!" (308), Priest says. This lamentation indicates O'Neill's latent inclination toward the Taoist law of nature that opposes the law of humans. In a later war play, Shell Shock (1918) O'Neill reveals again a lamentation for humans' inhumanity toward one another through the depiction of the psychological trauma of Jack Arnold. The timeliness of the work, the year that ended World War I, suggests O'Neill's sympathy with Taoist aspiration for a society of peace and order.

O'Neill's depiction of strife and disorder is not limited solely to such exaggerated circumstance as war. In Warnings (1913), Before Breakfast (1916), and Ile (1917) O'Neill creates a domestic world where disharmony between

genders leads either to constant strife or to complete disaster. Warnings illustrates how James Knapp is forced to go beyond the limits of his physical condition. Warned by the doctor that he might lose his auditory ability completely, nevertheless, he cannot resist his wife's complaints about poverty. He is forced to make one last trip, even though he knows himself that he is "hoping against hope" (90). The sudden loss of his hearing on the trip causes him to miss a warning that in turn causes a collision and the loss of the ship. Knapp then kills himself because of guilt. O'Neill's heavy irony here is that Knapp's suicide will leave his family in a worse situation. Knapp's last trip, though forced, is a attempt to ignore human limitations. O'Neill transcribes clearly that blind denial of limitations is, in Taoistic terms, a violation of the natural order of things.

The disharmony and conflict between the Knapps anticipates a series of mismatched couples presented in Bread and Butter (1914), Before Breakfast (1916),and Beyond the Horizon (1918). All these works convey, in the inevitable tragic ending, the imbalance of personalities, different pursuits in life, and the distorted roles of male and female. Here O'Neill does not accept the principle of the ultimate unity of opposites in life and dramatizes instead the inevitability and insolubility of life's exigencies. Most of these plays pessimistically illustrate

how the fulfillments of one of the parties necessarily comes at the expense of the other. On the surface, O'Neill's hope for the harmony between opposites rests on the institution of marriage, but as in James Knapp's situation, human fallibility introduces the disorder between genders that symbolizes the operation of eternal opposites in the universe. In his later works, when O'Neill's perspective is directly governed by a Taoist vision, the narrow marital disharmony achieves universal significance in its representation of larger conflicting forces in culture, religion, and nation. Without some sort of a transcendental monistic view, O'Neill could not confront the phenomenon and he thus ascribed the incompatibility of couples to such secular dilemmas as economic poverty or conflicting personalities.

The gender issue in Before Breakfast becomes more prominent as the dynamic of opposition. Here a loveless couple are set at odds, and the poet husband is unable to provide a living. The wife who does work pitilessly nags the husband until he is driven to suicide. This killing is redundant, for he was spiritually destroyed long before the scene of the play. Only through death does the husband assert his status as a man. O'Neill points out the pathos of the human condition that finds itself assaulted by the conspiracy of things of nature and the nature of things. Marital dilemma goes beyond economic concerns to an emphasis

on the innate difference between genders in Ile. O'Neill endows Captain Keeney and his wife with distinctively Taoist features like hardness and gentleness to sharply contrast the male and female principles. Gentleness is a typical Christian quality, but O'Neill's treatment of gentleness as being a life-nurturing principle, is specially brought into contrast with hardness. This contrasting treatment is O'Neill's conception of the Taoist Yin/Yang dynamic. Captain Keeney is described very often as "a hard man--as hard a man as ever sailed the seas" (113), possessing the quality of "a bleak hardness" (116), and he also knows himself as a "hard one" (121). The word "hard" as a synonym for firm, strong, and tough here opposes the feminine soft, weak, and gentle. His wife is just such an opposite. In the conflict between returning home and continuing to search for whales after being ice-bound, Captain Keeney overcomes the last streak of tenderness he has left for his wife and decides to go on whaling, at the expense of the sanity of his wife. Although the Keeneys love each other, no meaningful communication is possible, as Keeney himself asserts: "A woman couldn't rightly understand my reason" (127). A man like Keeney cannot understand a woman's longing for home, either. Endowing the relationship between the Keeneys with love and economic security, O'Neill definitely directs his emphasis toward the conflicting tendencies that exist innately in the opposite genders.

This belief in an innate conflict between male and female not only effaces gentleness as a uniquely Christian quality but suggests O'Neill's acceptance of Yin/Yang principles as the fundamental dynamic that operates at the center of the universe.

O'Neill not only depicts the conflict between human beings, but also the eternal conflict within themselves caused by their excessive greed. The Rope (1918) and Where the Cross Is Made (1918) are two plays that contain a potential Taoist warning against excessive desire for material gain. In The Rope, Old Abraham's daughter and son-in-law covet his farm so much that they pray for his death. Through their cruel but futile conspiracy, O'Neill reveals the destructiveness of undue desire in humans. The greed of the young Bentleys has transformed them from human beings to soulless manikins. They have long before lost themselves. Their greed, like the rope, has choked them morally to death. Where the Cross Is Made, which O'Neill adapted into a longer version entitled Gold in 1920, contains the same warning against the destructive effect of human unquenchable desire. The craze for the gold that is supposedly buried at "where the cross is made" on one of his trips becomes an obsession in the case of Captain Bartlett. This obsession is so rooted in his heart that he is ruined beyond redemption. Captain Bartlett's madness is contagious to those who are not immune to undue desire, and Nat, his son,

becomes crazy like him in the end. Through the experience of both father and son, O'Neill points out that human beings fall easy prey to the temptations around them.

In O'Neill's four plays of the sea, often called the "S.S. Glencairn cycle," Bound East for Cardiff (1914), Long Voyage Home (1917), In the Zone (1917), and The Moon of the Caribbees (1918), the sea serves as background and foreground and symbol of human fate. They contain some important views on death, home, nature, and human interference with the natural development of things. Bound East for Cardiff presents characters who are brought face to face with death. The sea symbolizes a naturalistic world that determines the fate of the characters. Although everything is seemingly controlled and pre-determined by the sea, O'Neill's characters are not prepared to meet death. In Bound East for Cardiff, when Yank draws near to his end, he resigns himself to the acceptance of his fate through suffering and reconciliation. Yank is not afraid of death, as he admits himself, only he is afraid of the loneliness. This fear prevents him from seeing beyond life and death. Yank died a sailorly death on the sea, but the sea remains indifferent and death fearful to the sailors. There is an unfulfilled longing for guidance or consolation to transcend the pain and suffering brought by death.

Another important issue expressed in the sea plays is the concept of "home," a strong Taoist unifying vision. The

Long Voyage Home depicts the desire to go home as the common human tendency to return to one's origin. In the play, Olsen is the only one who has a home to return to in terms of a physical actuality, but the desire and tendency to find a home and return to it belongs to all the sailors. Driscoll recognizes this primary human instinct when he expresses his admiration for Olsen's sound sense and preparation to go home. Through the sailors' many articulations of their desire to go home, O'Neill stresses this aspiration as a profound human psychological component. Not surprisingly, we find the same emphasis in Taoism which holds that all creatures in their nature possess the irresistible tendency to return to the root or to the spiritual simplicity of Tao. Lao-tse states, "The teaming creatures / All return to their separate roots.... This is what is meant by returning to one's destiny. Returning to one's destiny is known as the constant. Knowledge of the constant is known as discernment" (Lau 72). It is this early recognition by O'Neill of the primary human instinct to return that later he will connects to authentic Taoistic return.

Another way O'Neill presents the sea as symbolic of human fate is his repeated emphasis on the harm of human interference with nature. A strong non-interference theme is vividly manifested in In the Zone. Just as he does in an earlier play, The Movie Man, here O'Neill shows how the

brutal intrusion into another person's privacy not only hurts the victims but also harms the prosecutors themselves. All the sailors of the S.S. Glencairn, after finding that they are wrong about Smitty, whom they mistake for a German spy, fall into an awkward "silence, in which each man is in agony with the helplessness of finding a word he can say--" in a vain attempt to wake themselves "from a bad dream" (107). The double injury on both sides further reveals O'Neill's strong objection to human interference even under a special circumstance and for a good motive.

Noninterference is applicable not only to human relationships with one another, but also to that with nature. In The Moon of the Caribbees, O'Neill puts the crew of the S.S. Glencairn in the open sea which forms an expressionistic arena for the mysterious force with the native's song sending different messages to different people. To Smitty, the song is the reminder of an unforgettable past, while it impresses the Donkeyman as serene when he says it "seems nice and sleepy-like" (18). This emphasis on the inner aspect of the sea reveals O'Neill's early belief that nature, or the life force, does sometimes provide humans with ease and tranquility if they can approach it with wise resignation. Moreover, the song does not reach everyone in the group when most of them either ignore it, or do not notice its existence at all. The music, like a message from nature, can cause reactions

only in responsive minds. The composition of the crew members has an important meaning for O'Neill. They come from all over the world: Scotland, Ireland, England, Holland, Sweden, etc., and form a microcosm through which O'Neill mirrors the real world of daily life. People here are not so much divided by race nor nationalities as by their differences in responding to the song which transmits messages from life. The majority are not aware of it. Smitty has just started to feel responsive toward the music while the Donkeyman is the one who is at ease with himself and with nature. He feels "sleepy"--serene and at ease with the world as it is. These two are distinctly set apart from the crowd when everybody else is merrymaking and drinking. The Moon of the Caribbees is a contemplative play in which different attitudes toward the native's song opens the door for O'Neill's characters to know and identify with the life force.

After 1918, O'Neill wrote no more one-act dramas until the early 1940s. He finished writing Beyond the Horizon in 1918 and with its production in 1920, O'Neill's period of apprenticeship came to an end. Putting it in retrospect in 1924, O'Neill talked about the one-act play apprenticeship to the New York Herald Tribune, saying: "I am no longer interested in the one-act play. It is an unsatisfactory form--cannot go far enough. The one-act play, however, is a fine vehicle for something poetical, for something spiritual

in feeling that cannot be carried through a long play" (Clark 55). As intelligently clear about where he was and confident in his capacity, O'Neill was ready to commit himself to the writings of full-length drama.

With few exceptions, the early full-length works show a transition in O'Neill's thematic perspective in his treatment of the mysterious force.. His gradual shifts in settings from the outdoors to the indoors in most of these early long plays are not simple changes in the settings from the open sea or a mining camp to the daily chores of domestic life. They represent a shift in O'Neill's perspective from which he examines the life force from within the protagonists rather than coming from without. By focusing on the immediate American scenes, O'Neill was able to give a closer look to the working of that force through the daily realities of American life. If the force is incomprehensible when embodied in the sea, its pervasiveness in daily life is equally mysterious and unknowable to those who live in it.

Three dramatic works of this stage, The Personal Equation (1915), The Straw (1919), and Diff'rent (1920) were still experimental. Originally named The Second Engineer, The Personal Equation contains some themes and situations which O'Neill puts to better use in the future. The stokehole scene with the use of dialect foreshadows The Hairy Ape; Perkins's love for the engines prefigures Reuben

Light in Dynamo, who loves machinery in the same fashion. The Straw is a highly autobiographical play, based on O'Neill's experience at Gaylord Farm, the sanatorium where he was treated for tuberculosis in 1912-13. Diff'rent, according to Travis Bogard in Contour in Time, contains O'Neill's first exploration of Freudianism. There is a focus on a pre-nuptial relationship between Emma Crosby and Captain Caleb Williams, which gives them the opportunity to examine the authenticity of their love for each other.

These longer works contain O'Neill's repeated exposition of the issues of conflicting opposites, undue human interference, and possible unity of life and death. In a word, from the one-act plays, he retained the essential elements which he merged into his Taoistic exploration of reality. In Bread and Butter (1914), O'Neill's very first full-length play, he exposes the varied human interferences that influence the lives of other people.

Around the support and hinderance of John Brown's development as a potential artist, O'Neill puts into the hands of John's parents the power to act as executors of the life force and shows how their undue interference destroy the natural development and life of the young man. John knows intuitively that he cannot be a lawyer as his father has expected. Both his father's cold objections and his father-in-law's machinations are undue interferences that hinder John's natural development according to his talent

and interest. John is never allowed to pursue his artistic goals under the pressure of parental notions of subsistence which goes by the title name of "Bread and Butter." Forced to give up his art, John proves to be a failure both at home and at work, for his frustration is expressed in excessive drinking and neglect of his duties. Although O'Neill represents John as so sensitive and weak that he kills himself when all hope has been taken away from him, for O'Neill this is the province of the force coming from both within and without. It is human interference that works jointly with the life force that destroys John in the end.

O'Neill's shift of setting from the sea plays caused different critical assumptions about the whereabouts of the mysterious force. Margaret Ranald has commented on this play, saying "there is little sense of human beings caught up and victimized by a hostile universe" (78). This view needs to be reconsidered if we look beneath the surface of the play. It is true that most of the events take place far away from the open sea, which usually symbolizes a hostile or indifferent universe in the short sea plays. If one assumes that only natural creatures and elements symbolize the universe and the life force, one is apt to oversimplify and misconceive the life force which O'Neill sees as everywhere and in many forms. This shift of setting further indicates O'Neill's developed view of the force, as he told Clark that he felt he had "endured too much from the

banality of surfaces" (Clark 86) upon Bread and Butter. O'Neill was ready to penetrate the invisible, intangible life force hidden behind human behavior.

The examination of a short marriage disintegrated by human interference in Bread and Butter ushers us into O'Neill's careful scrutiny of a marriage made successful by the proper roles of male and female in Servitude (1914). Quite a few critics see the play as an attempt at a problem play in the fashion of Ibsen's A Doll's House. Roylston's wife Alice is presented as a model wife who is happily devoted to her role in the female sphere. The double happy ending for both families involved contains O'Neill's temporary unified view on the opposites: women should be feminine, passive, and invisible in being absorbed in the devotion to the life and well-being of family, as Alice does; men should be masculine, active, and firm, as Frazer does through his patience. O'Neill's ideal is embodied in the parallel development of male and female principles, but this ideal parallel does not allow any interpenetration between the two forces which, in turn, indicates that O'Neill did not yet accept the possible unity between opposites.

If Bread and Butter depicts how undue human interference ruins John's marriage and life, then Now I Ask You (1917), a light comedy, shows how non-interference is essential to a happy marriage. Under the farcical tone is a

rather serious pre-Taoist advocacy of complete non-interference in following the law of nature. The central character is Mrs. Ashleigh who is presented as born with a mind of a philosopher who simply knows "the law of nature" (404). Facing her daughter, Lucy's romantic New Woman and free-love stance, Mrs. Ashleigh never tries to force her view on Lucy; instead she deals with her in a complete non-interfering way. Given enough freedom and time, Lucy returns to reason when she sees the ridiculousness of her own behavior. Adroitly guiding Lucy according to her circumstances, Mrs. Ashleigh is presented as a most spontaneous and intuitive Taoist.

This play contains O'Neill's earliest reference to China, when Leonora, Lucy's friend, is looking at the pictures of Ashleighs' ancestors, she scornfully thinks aloud, "Chinese ancestor worship!" (407). According to Di-shan Xu, a famous Chinese scholar and novelist, Taoism originates partially from the Chinese ancestor worship (178). This substantial knowledge of Chinese culture indicates O'Neill's possible earlier study of Chinese philosophy and religion.

Although Beyond the Horizon (1918) can be seen as a marriage play, it aims more at the human liberation through an intuitive unifying vision to transcend human perception of life and death. Around the destiny of the Mayo brothers, O'Neill examines the importance of proper self-knowledge and

human transcendental vision. At the beginning, both brothers appear to be sure of who they are and what they want in life. Andrew wants to work on the family farm, while Robert, the dreamer, feels the calling to go to the sea. He tells Andrew, "I feel I've got to. There's something calling me--... the mystery and spell of the East which lures me in the books I've read, the need of the freedom of great wide spaces, the joy of wandering on and on--in quest of the secret which is hidden over there, beyond the horizon" (575-77). Their emotional entanglement with Ruth completely changes their lives. It turns out that Andrew goes to the sea, and Robert stays behind on the farm, completely contrary to their personalities and capacities. The momentary confusion about themselves and the loss of self-knowledge is fatal to both of their dreams.

The sad ending of the play is nonetheless turned around through Robert's ultimate vision of unity of life and death. In his final lingering moment, he yearns for the last gleam of hope offered by death. Robert's is not a simple death-wish as an escape of his worldly troubles, for he also envisions a beginning, and he reaches a mysterious realization of the meaning of worldly suffering: "All our suffering has been a test through which we had to pass to prove ourselves worthy of a finer realization" (636). This realization sees each suffering to be a step further toward the final unifying vision of life and death. It is also

O'Neill's way of elevating him above his worldly trouble. Robert's last speech transforms him from a victim to a victor, "You mustn't feel sorry for me. Don't you see I'm happy at last--free--free--freed from the farm, free to wander on and on--eternally! ... It isn't the end. It's a free beginning--the start of my voyage!" (652). His realization of the unity of life and death, that life is not the beginning and death is not the end transforms his whole vision about this world. His exultance is not over the release from his troubles but rather over the beginning of his endless roaming and wandering on and on forever.

After Beyond the Horizon, O'Neill's view of polarities undergoes a transformation toward a tentative unified vision with nature, or the mysterious life force. If the sailors, Yank for example, in the short sea plays want to break away from the sea, then the protagonists in Chris Christopherson, the early 1919 title for Anna Christie, experience a re-unification with nature. This play was first written in 1919, and revised into Anna Christie one year after. In Anna Christie, O'Neill not only shifts the focus from Chris to Anna, as indicated by the titles, but also recharacterizes Anna, who is changed from being rather pale and contrived with her English accent and sudden love of the sea to a misled prostitute who achieves regeneration through her intuitive connection with and love of the sea.

The sea constitutes the center of the play, which looks back to the S.S. Glencairn plays. It is also a partial return to the outdoors with the emphasis on the relationship between humans and nature. Presented as the incarnation of the powerful life force, the sea demands submission and obedience whether the characters fight against or intuitively embrace it. These different attitudes are represented by Chris, Mat Burke, and Anna.

Old Chris has spent his lifetime fighting against "Dat ole davil, sea" (92), and tries to escape from it. He blames the sea for the deaths of his family members, and sends Anna away to be brought up on a farm in order to protect her from its harm. In the play he is fighting to prevent her from marrying Mat, the stoker. O'Neill makes it clear that certain accidental deaths are inevitable on the sea. Chris' tragedy, Anna's prostitution for example, is caused more by neglect than by the sea. Chris uses the sea as a scapegoat to avoid his own responsibility as father, as Mat points out to him, "blaming the sea for your troubles" (118). Long and hard Chris has fought against the sea, yet in the end, he realizes the futility and also learns to accept his destiny. He goes back to the sea as "bosun," just as he has assumed that the "ole davil sea do her vorst dirty tricks" (159) to reclaim him.

Contrary to Ranald's view that Mat Burke is ambivalent about the sea (31), Mat actually feels an inner unity with

the sea just as Anna does. He tells Chris, during their argument, that "The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow! 'Tis only on the sea he's free, ... and not giving a damn for saving up money, or stealing from his friends, or any of the black tricks that a land-lubber'd waste his life on" (119). Clearly Mat is aware of the purifying power of the sea which keeps humans morally clean and provide the opportunity to retain their true identity.

For Anna, the sea plays a far more important and mysterious role. Never seeing or knowing the sea before, she intuitively feels an affinity with and love for it. She sees herself as part of the sea, around which she finds unity with nature, which is loving, nurturing, and revitalizing to her. The sea not only baptizes her when she expresses the feeling to her father that she feels "clean, somehow--like you feel yust after you've took a bath" (93), but also gives her consolation and new life that furnish her with honesty, courage, and integrity. She gains from the sea the strength to tell Mat her past before she will marry him.

The central theme of obedience to or resistance against the sea is O'Neill's own projection of the conflict between Western dualistic view of the universe and the Eastern unity of all existence. Through Anna's intuitive unity with and love for the sea, O'Neill reveals that his Eastern readings

some five years before still influenced his view that the organic unity of human being and nature and also the possible achievement of the oneness of universal existence through human conscious connection with it. O'Neill underlines the mysterious operation in the life force when he includes a prophetic utterance by the bartender at the beginning of the play, "This girl, now, 'll be marryin' a sailor herself, likely. It's in the blood" (67). This inborn mysterious link with the sea is confirmed by Anna herself when she says: "I feel so--so--like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for--'s if this was the right place for me to fit in" (93).

The sense of unity with universal existence in the play parallels the harmonious combination of male and female qualities of Mat and Anna, a prerequisite for the unity between the opposing genders. Anna is shown to be very feminine in her appearance, her love, and her caring for her father and Mat. She is active and strong, the qualities that Taoism calls the Yang spirit to maintain her sense of justice, integrity, and independence. Mat, on the other hand, is tough and strong, daring the sea and his destiny, yet he possesses enough tenderness, or the Taoist Yin spirit in his person. His genuine love and care for Anna gives him the courage to accept the "mermaid" of his dream. Both Anna and Mat contain a balanced combination of male and female

spirits in themselves, and they will make a compatible couple by sharing each other's male and female qualities.

As O'Neill strives to present the possible unity in the relationship between human beings and nature, he also pays equal attention to the inner formation of the human being as individual. The Emperor Jones (1920) is a play which concentrates on the issue of self and self-development. Brutus Jones lacks self-knowledge and brings on his own destruction through the expansion of his ego. Jones never understands the truth about himself nor the true reason for his dethronement, although he expands his ego to the extent that it literally stands for the law. Jones is portrayed as a man who possesses sufficient "cunning intelligence" (9) and other attributes of shrewdness to get into power but not to stay in power. As the Emperor, instead of working for the well-being of the natives, he has exercised his intelligence and manipulative ability to exploit and oppress them. He is able to fool his "subjects" in their desire for grandeur and superstitious magic, but he himself is lost in that trick which confuses him about his own identity. Jones' intelligence is not real intelligence according to Taoism, since he does not really know who he is. Jones has acted wrongly in putting his will above the well-being of the people.

The expressionistic techniques of jungle rituals provide a revelation of the human tendency to return to his

origin. In the end, we find Jones returned in a circle to the point from which he entered the forest. Although Jones came back to the starting point after his mad flight, this is never a simple return to the beginning, but a return on a different level: when Jones started to flee, he was full of hope and courage while when he returned, he was very frightened and even defeated through confrontation with his personal and racial past. This cyclical movement contains the seminal implication of Taoistic return, the return to one's life source which is a journey to obtain knowledge about one's identity. The reverting to his personal and racial past confronts Jones with the truth about his identity and where he belongs. Although he is disillusioned, he learns at least who he is and why he fails as the "emperor."

The Hairy Ape (1921) is another play of O'Neill's that explores human belonging in the universe. The play's skillful use of modern theatrical techniques often conceals the ontological implication. O'Neill himself felt the need to reiterate the meaning of the work in 1924, and he asserted the play was "about man who has lost his old harmony with nature," and it is man's struggle "with his own past, his attempt 'to belong'" (Clark 84). The search for the significance of the human being and sense of belonging is portrayed through Yank's struggle to know who he is and where he belongs. This theme also parallels greatly with

Taoist ontology which teaches the organic oneness of human being and nature. In The Hairy Ape, the displacement of modern humanity is symbolized in the personification of the ship which is clearly presented as a human body: the furnace has "flaming mouths" (187), the furnace doors, being opened and shut, sound like "teeth-gritting of steel against steel, of crunching coal" (188), and the leaping flames in the furnace have the "throbbing beat" like a human heart. An original organic body of nature which ought to be revitalizing is ironically made of cold iron and steel with flaming mouth and gritting teeth, which is ready to swallow at any moment. This metal monster, a prison made of "white steel," provides the background against which the whole drama is acted out. Yank, as the representative of modern humanity, is not nostalgic about the past, although he only has engines and steel to hold his sense of belonging. The ship made of iron and steel is his home. He appears sure of where he belongs until he is shocked to see the reality of his true identity as "the filthy beast!" (192).

In contrast to Yank's illusion of identity, O'Neill shows modern human longing to return and join the "real oneness of man and nature" (173) through Paddy. At the beginning of the play, Paddy is dreaming aloud the good old days when "men that was sons of the sea as if, 'twas the mother that bore them" (173). It is a time worth being thought of, because life is beautiful to live, and sailors

with "clean" skin and "clear" eyes are not polluted and blinded by modern civilization and dirty insatiable desires. They really belong to mother nature which nurtures and guides them. That Paddy speaks of the unregainable past before the days of alienated labor serves as the background to contrast with the present alienation of Yank and his fellow sailors. O'Neill's lamentation is double edged: he laments the modern society which has alienated humans from nature, from their primal life source, and he laments modern humans who have been both accomplices and victims in modern civilization by which they have entrapped themselves. Through technology and scientific progress, modern human beings have estranged themselves from the bond and unity with nature, and imprisoned themselves in the cage of iron and steel which has in turn transformed them from an organic part of nature to automata. Yank and the stokers are described as shoveling coal with "mechanical, regulated recurrence," and this mechanical motion offers a clear image of the oppression and alienation of modern humans before Yank himself realizes it. If we take one step further into Yank's illusion and Paddy's nostalgia for the good old days when humans and nature were an organic whole, we see that Yank's struggle to belong is carried out within an Oriental or Taoist universe which is a unified organic whole where humans enjoy the oneness of universal existence. The Western world is a place of constant conflict, in which

human beings struggle against nature and a personal God. O'Neill sees in Yank the loss of that organic essence in human beings who have undergone alienation in modern society. If the Western universe is dualistic from the beginning, Yank's struggle to go back to mother nature is certainly projected in an Eastern universe. The Taoist oneness of all existence in which humans enjoy harmony and unity with nature dreamed about by Paddy provides a sharp contrast to the cruel reality of human beings in modern society.

Although O'Neill became more concerned with large ontological issues of human belonging, he retained his interest in the theme of polarities in the relationship between male and female. Originally called The Oldest Man, The First Man (1921) presents the repeated explication of the incompatibility between husband and wife.

In The First Man, the imbalance between husband and wife is presented in a different way than the one-act plays. Curt's wife Martha is so loving and helpful to Curt that she completely dissolves herself in Curt and his work until her pregnancy wakens her. During the years helping Curt, her identity, her femininity is absorbed and dissolved in the overpowering masculine demand of Curt. This idea is accurately expressed by Martha when she tells him: "If you had the tiniest bit of feminine in you--! (*forcing a smile*) But you're so utterly masculine, dear!" (85). This remark

reveals that the masculine spirit is so strong in Curt that it has dissolved her feminine quality as well the whole of Martha completely. O'Neill's puzzlement over the incompatibility of opposite genders remained unsolved until he accepted the Taoistic unity of Yin/Yang rhythmic movement.

The one-act plays, with a few early long plays, mark a very special phase in O'Neill's career. It gave him the opportunity to explore many and different themes and modern theatrical techniques for his dramatic presentation of the mysterious force and human search for a better life. His life experience, reading, and his mystic temperament drew him to the portrayal and exploration of the mysterious life force, which, before he knew Taoism through his Oriental studies, is indefinable and mysterious in its nature and operation. As indefinable and vague as it was, O'Neill managed intuitively to grasp some important issues such as wise passivity, non-interference, the conflict of opposites, and human desire for home. All these issues are expressed at this early period in terms of humanism, but they correspond accurately to the Taoist Wu-Wei, non-interference, elimination of the Chinese call undue desires, the Taoistic return, and Yin/Yang principles. O'Neill eventually developed these into a profound integration of Taoism in his works. Grasping the essence of Taoism in his pre-Taoist drama, O'Neill was committed to these essential

Taoist issues from the beginning to the end of his career. Such issues as the love of peace and non-contention contain Christian connotations, yet it is through O'Neill's artistic bent that these issues are inclined more toward the Taoist thoughts that led him to his Taoist fascinations.

Most of the critics of O'Neill's Orientalism in general or of his Taoism in particular seldom realize the existence and the importance of his pre-Taoist mysticism in the early plays, although his mystical approach plays a key role in his attraction to Taoist philosophy. These critics seem to either ignore the early works, treating one or two of the S.S. Glencairn sea plays, or do not feel comfortable to affirm the existence of rudimentary Taoist ideas in them before O'Neill studied Lao-tse's philosophy. Taoism is usually treated in O'Neill as a step-child, something adapted to his system only after he studied it in the early 1920s. This view indirectly misconceives the true source of O'Neill's Taoism. With the close scrutiny of these early works, we can see that O'Neill's repeated treatment of the "ironic life force" is actually the very Tao of Taoism with its mysterious nature, omnipresent power, and ever-lasting domination. Disorderly and unsystematic as it is, the O'Neillian mysterious life force is exactly Tao of Taoism, and O'Neill's pre-Taoist mysticism is actually the budding of Taoism itself. It can rightfully claim its independent existence from Lao-tse's philosophy. It is not difficult to

imagine that there might have been an "O'Neillian Life-Force," whatever the name may be, had O'Neill been born before Lao-tse. O'Neill's consistent inquiry of the mysterious force developed in the process to merge with authentic Taoism after he discovered it. In effect, O'Neill's intuitive grasp of the essence of Taoism before his actual study of Lao-tse's philosophy shows more clearly that he is a self-educated as well as a spontaneous Taoist. O'Neill's warm embrace of Taoism in the early 1920s when he formally encountered it, and his continuous lifelong attraction to it, indicate the solid bond between the two because Taoism is part of him springing spontaneously from him. Mere coincidence or interest on impulse would not last, let alone be a lifetime influence.

The early long plays further solidified O'Neill's pre-Taoist preparations for his embrace of Taoism. These works still reflect O'Neill's vision of ultimate reality as fundamentally Western at this time, while his intuitive Eastern mind perseveres in its attempts to reconcile or overcome more strongly the dualities between male and female, humans and nature, life and death. Under each extreme action, there is clearly a wishful longing for wise moderation, and within every human interference is concealed a mystical Oriental obedience to the law of nature. It is through this constant inquiry and exploration of personality and reality that O'Neill step by step progresses toward his

Taoist vision of the universe. Robert Mayo in Beyond the Horizon reconciles with himself, his life, and his dream through his intuitive and mysterious vision of unity of the universe. Anna willingly merges herself in the loving and nurturing embrace of the sea through her intuitive affinity with nature. Modern society which is made of iron and steel has long been alienating the human being from nature. In The Hairy Ape, Yank's awakening from his illusionary sense of belonging destroys him. Through Yank's tragedy, O'Neill sends us an Eastern message that human beings intuitively share oneness with nature.

The pre-Taoist dramas spanned the period from 1913 to 1921, which delicately crosses the date in 1920s, the time of O'Neill's study of Oriental philosophy and religion. Certain facts shown in O'Neill's own works, O'Neill's knowledge of "Chinese Ancestor Worship" which is closely associated with Taoism, indicate O'Neill's probable study of Oriental philosophy and religion could be much earlier. It could be around 1917 at the time when he wrote Now I Ask You, especially when Chinese Ancestor Worship is reconfirmed as a religion to the Chinese by Martha in The First Man.

In the writing of these pre-Taoist works, O'Neill had formulated his creed as an artist. He had chosen to express the fundamental issues of the human search for life in confrontation with the mysterious life force. Most important of all, these early works already contained

seminal Taoist methodology. In his subsequent efforts, he adhered to this philosophical perspective which adumbrated his enthusiastic embrace of Taoism in the following two decades.

IV. The Real Presence of Taoism in O'Neill's Major Dramatic Works

The Fountain (1921) initiated O'Neill's adventure into a new stage of his writing career. This was the first play that he wrote after he studied Oriental philosophy and religion. At a time of artistic maturation and development, his discovery and embrace of authentic Taoism revitalized O'Neill's inspiration and creation. It liberated him from the confinement of a restrictive and linear Western value system to a broader Eastern cyclical vision. According to Robinson, the approximate date of O'Neill's Oriental study nearly coincided with the years during which The Fountain was written, that is 1921-22. O'Neill could easily have obtained by 1921 Legge's version of Tao Te Ching among other texts of Oriental writings (100). We can assume that either the search for the material to write The Fountain inspired him to study world religion and philosophy or vice versa. This play shows O'Neill's extreme excitement over his discovery that Lao-tse's Taoism was very close to his own mysticism so much so that the grandiose pageant-like frame of the play is almost the celebration of his initiation into the new philosophy through a variety of impressionistic and expressionistic devices. Moreover, he enriched the play with a lofty attempt to express the universal quest for life, love, and poetic beauty. With his ambitious intention

to "express the urging spirit" of "the Era of Discovery in America" (Clark 101), O'Neill revealed to us that his own spiritual quest for the wisdom of the East parallels Christopher Columbus's physical quest.

The play unfolds around the life story of Juan Ponce de Leon, a Spanish soldier/adventurer of Columbus's time. Juan spends his life seeking power and wealth to build the empire of Spain and the Fountain of Youth which was fabled to be in Cathay. Lured to the fountain in a forest, Juan is ambushed and wounded by the Indians. In a Cuban monastery, Juan finally discovers the true fountain of youth in his nephew and Beatriz, who is his old love's daughter.

In this play, Taoism permeates the entire structure. Image, Characterization, and theme, along with the fountain itself and the fountain song are woven together in a dynamic Taoist rhythm of return and unification that signifies the fundamental destiny of life. The substantial fountain appears in the first scene situated at the center of the courtyard of the palace of the Moorish chieftain, Ibnu Aswad in Granada. This positioning establishes the central position of the fountain for the entire play, and it appears in scenes three, eight, nine, and ten. In scene ten, the ordinary physical fountain in the forest clearing and the spiritual fountain in Juan's imagination merge into one in which Beatriz appears and disappears, and in which the Chinese poet and Moorish minstrel join together, and then

vanish. In the end, Juan sees himself dissolve as a drop of water and returns to the fountain. It is through his symbolic transcendence that Juan sees the universal oneness in which he is only a particle.

As the central image, the fountain runs impressionistically through the whole play with an alternating motion that through tone and mood represents the different stages in the life of the hero. In scene one, the fountain is described as "splashing," providing a reflection of the youthful Juan who is at the prime of his life. In scene three, twenty years later, the fountain in Porto Rico (sic) where Juan is the Governor, is "shimmering in the heat waves" (187). The stable, calm movement of the fountain parallels the downhill journey of Juan's life. The fountain in scene nine contains even more symbolic meaning when the fountain is described as "with soft murmur of a spring which bubbles from the ground" (219), providing a revelation that shows Juan's energy and life is almost near the end. This is the bright, visible, or the Yang side of the fountain which involves Juan's physical change. The fountain also accompanies the dark, invisible, or the Yin side as the play moves from the imaginal presentation from a tangible substantial fountain to an intangible spiritual fountain. Through that spiritualization, Juan is able to see the truth of Youth and beauty into which he has dissolved himself.

The fountain song also runs through the play to indicate the growth of the hero. In scene one, when Luis sings the song, it is totally alien to Juan who denies it bluntly as "Charming, but a lie" (175). He is, at this time, devoid of love and tenderness with his single-minded ambition for war, adventure, and glory. In scene ten, after he is wounded, Juan evokes Beatriz's image which sings the same song, and he responds, "Youth," for the song reveals to him the spiritual fountain of youth with which he can defy death. The song is sung twice to indicate how, like the fountain, it revitalizes and reaffirms his vision. In scene eleven, Juan himself is the source of the song. Beatriz and his nephew sing it together because Juan is "the song" himself (231). The song marks Juan's progressive understanding of the meaning of the fountain as the life source. It evolves from the lie which mirrors Juan's life to the harmonious rhythmic flow of the Yin and Yang in the primal life source, represented by Beatriz and Juan's nephew.

O'Neill engages another Yin/Yang cycle around the image of the fountain to signify the Taoistic return of human life and natural creatures through both the song and Ibnu Aswad's Eastern conception of the fountain. At the very beginning of the play, Aswad talks to Juan, saying: "The waters of the fountain fall--but ever they rise again. Sir Spaniard. Such is the decree of destiny" (107). This view is also the

Taoist vision of the destiny of life and other natural creatures. Lao-tse says, "All things alike go through their processes of activity, and (then) we see them return (to their original state). This returning to their root is what we call the state of stillness; ...The report of that fulfillment is the regular, unchanging rule" (Müller 59). The fall and rise again of the waters of the fountain completes only half of the cycle. The fountain song which is replenished with a Taoist return supplements the other half to make it a complete return. The song elaborates the iconic function of the image:

> Love is a flower
> Forever blooming.
> Life is a fountain
> Forever leaping
> Upward to catch the golden sunlight,
> Striving to reach the azure heaven;
> Failing, falling,
> Ever returning
> To kiss the earth that the flowers may live. (175)

This returning to the original state, the source, is the common destiny of all things. It is the fulfillment of the purpose of existence, the ever-rising tendency of existence referred to in Aswad's speech.

Within the rhythm of Taoistic movement, there is the figure of Juan who dominates the play. His physical journey to conquer the land of the Great Khan for Spain is contrasted with his spiritual odyssey in search of youth, beauty, and life, which is actually Juan's journey to become a complete man of Tao. Juan starts as a partial man of war, glory, and adventure, who is incapable of human love and tenderness because he is deprived of what Taoism refers to as the Yin principle. He is so single-mindedly full of ambition that he can "see things, not the spirit behind things" (214). Only when his love for Beatriz inspires him to seek the "Fountain of Youth" does he start to change. Beatriz brings love and tenderness to him, so he is made "the knight of Granada with your gift of tenderness" (205), as he tells Beatriz. A knight with his martial strength and valor (Yang) who understands and cherishes love and tenderness (Yin) is the perfect embodiment of a harmonious entity according to Taoism. It is this spiritual and physical unity in Juan that enables him to transform the physical fountain into a fountain of life that defies death and age, and through which he merges himself into the fountain of youth of the soul. In the final scene, Juan is reborn in his nephew who is in love with Beatriz. The nephew bears his name, Juan, which overtly reveals O'Neill's acceptance of life cycles and the continuation of Juan's life in the eternal flow of existence.

Juan achieves his spiritual growth when he envisions the fundamental unity and harmony embodied in the entire universe. This universal fusion is the progressive major theme of the play. Through his vision, Juan sees the unification of life and death: "Death is no more!" (225), and "Age--Youth--they are the same rhythm of eternal life" (225). He further envisions the religious unity when the Chinese Poet who embraces both the Moorish minstrel and the Dominican monk, "All faiths--are one and equal" (225), he says. He finally envisions the unification of the entire world, the fusion of East and West, as he acknowledges, "East to West--round and round world--from Old worlds to new" (224).

The Fountain records O'Neill's double embrace of Taoism with its transcending vision of life as an ever-flowing continuum and its acceptance of the oneness of universal existence, as well as the Taoistic return as the common destiny of human beings and all natural creatures.

O'Neill's acceptance of Taoist unity of universal existence continues in Desire Under the Elms (1924). Beneath the play's overt presentation of Puritanism, the Oedipal complex, and an unbridled Dionysian passion for life and possession, lies a newly obtained Taoist vision which penetrates deeply to the root of the tragedy of excessive human desire and its consequent destruction of the potential enjoyment of the unity of universal existence. In fact,

O'Neill projects this theme in a Taoist frame in order to show the protagonists' deviation from the Taoist unity through their destructive sense of possession. Tao, as the creator and law of the universe and its creatures, connects everything, human and natural, in an organic unity in which none are subservient because human beings, nature, and Tao are part of one another. If human beings maintain their affinity with nature and the law of Tao, they are guaranteed a life of harmony and happiness. On this point, Chuang-tse states that, "there are those who specially regard Heaven as their father, and they still love it (distant as It is); -- how much more should they love That which stands out (Superior and Alone) the Tao" (Müller 241-2). Distant and remote as it is, Tao and nature are the life source of human beings through their love and affinity with them. So long as one integrates oneself with the law of nature rather than with such things as desires and sensations, one will be able to obtain spiritual serenity and peace of mind.

In Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill projects a Taoist belief in man's innate bond with nature as the path to a better life. Old Cabot, Eben, and Abbie are all described as in love with the farm and at home with nature. Even Simeon and Peter feel a sense of awe before the beauty of nature, saying the sunrise is "Purty," for example. Both of them smell of earth, which suggests how much they are part of nature. When Abbie once describes her keen sense of

unity with the sun and the land, she is not only part of it but reveals how she has merged into the unity, "Hain't the sun strong an' hot? Ye kin feel it burnin' into the earth--Nature--makin' thin's grow--bigger 'n' bigger--burnin' inside ye--makin' ye want ti grow--into somethin' else-till ye're jined with it" (342). O'Neill has her express the right feeling of the dynamic overflow of life and energy provided by the earth. Old Cabot participates while staring at the sky when he says, "Purty, hain't it? ...The sky feels like a wa'm field up thar" (244). His remark reveals his appreciation and kinship with nature along with the others and indicates that their sense of awe and beauty, though temporal, is part of their nature; ironically all their love and affinity with nature is eroded by their excessive desire for possession of the farm. This resistance to the positive forces of life and acceptance of the destructive elements is anti-Tao because the Taoist unity of all existence advocates love and co-existence of human beings, nature, and Tao. No true human ownership is possible before the ineffable Tao. Moreover, excessive and undue desire for worldly belongings will ruin a person's clear vision of life, values, and the self, just as Lao-tse says: "There is no crime greater than having too many desires; / There is no misfortune greater than being covetous" (Lau 107).

The major characters in this play are motivated by their strong desire to own the farm. Simeon and Peter go to

California in the hope of owning gold, after seeing the impossibility of inheriting the farm. Eben's desire for possessing the farm is turned into hatred for his father. Even his incestuous relationship with Abbie is part of the desire to take revenge on Cabot who, as Eben alleges, stole the farm from his second wife, Eben's mother. Abbie married or sold herself to Cabot for economic security and the future ownership of the farm.

Each of them is very clear about how the others covet the farm. Abbie's strong sense of possession is resented by Cabot from the beginning, when every time she refers to "my hum" and "my farm," Cabot corrects her as "our'n" or "our farm." Her desire to own the farm leads her to seduce Eben for a male heir. This avarice walls the three of them in a prison of misery from which there is no escape except for Abbie and Eben through illicit love and through Abbie's killing of the baby, which frees them from the bondage of desire. Renouncing undue desire is the first step for them toward a peaceful life. The death of the baby, and the arrest of Abbie and Eben seem to be tragic, but these events prove to be quite the opposite, according to the higher justice of Taoism. O'Neill holds the infanticide symbolically as an ironic fortunate fall, because by killing the baby, they have killed their desire for possession, which transforms them to a different order of being. It is only through the death of the baby that the couple is shown

their true love for each other. The fortunate fall is reiterated in the last scene. Hand in hand, Adam-and-Eve-like, Abbie and Eben walk out of their purgatory into a paradise which is regained through their renunciation of desire. Their desire is turned into a love for nature which sustains them to the very end. Just before they leave and oblivious of any impending punishment, Eben points to the sunrise, saying, "Sung's a rizin'. Purty, hain't it?" (371). We know that this time they can fully and truly appreciate nature and its beauty for their pure aesthetic value and implication. With the sunrise, O'Neill symbolically endows them with the hope of rebirth through death.

Starting with The Fountain and Desire under the Elms, O'Neill conducts almost all his explorations into human hopes and folly from the Taoist perspective. Even his continuous scrutiny of the marital relationship is projected in the true Taoist Yin/Yang dynamic.

In Welded (1923), O'Neill presents that dynamic process of opposites in the form of a debate between the couple about their relationship. What is different from the early examinations of partnership in a marriage here is that the seeming harmony and unity between Michael and Eleanor Cape is accompanied by their constant breaking and separation from the union. The initial pattern of their life style fits a Taoist perception of the conflicting opposites of Yin

and Yang. They quarrel constantly, come back to the natural rhythmic unification, separate again, and they reunify on a higher scale. In this play, the Yin/Yang principles, represented by wife and husband, are no longer eternally fighting where one party absorbs and destroys the other completely as in Ile and The First Man. Here is a true dynamic process of Taoist harmony of Yin/Yang forces.

The undertone of a Taoist Yin/Yang rhythmic movement is stressed from the beginning of the play when Michael and Eleanor first assert each other's independence and completeness as individuals. Eleanor sees her husband as "an egotist already," (236) while Michael replies, "You are an actress," which indicates both her profession and her identity. Each knows the other's role and retains his or her own sense of personal value and identity. Moreover, each is a complete whole, and each is a harmonious combination of Yin/Yang, the prerequisite for their union. There is a harmony between the two in a deeper sense. In their professional life, they form a harmony in which they consider themselves as one. Michael as playwright, and Eleanor as actress, cannot do without the other. They recognize the union between them. When Michael talks about the play which he is writing, he says, "It's going to be the finest thing *we've* ever done" (Italics mine). Michael's choice of "we" instead of "I" indicates the oneness. Michael creates the body and bone of a play by writing,

while Eleanor "breathes life into them" (249) by acting, a perfect match. In daily life they love each other so much that each loses half of the self in the other in the interpenetration and interaction. Eleanor says, "I lost myself. I began living in you. I wanted to die and become you!" while Michael answers, "And I, you" (239). This is a mutual dissolution into each other, not the absorption of one party by the other, as they see it, "You and I--forms of our bodies merging into one form" (239).

Then there comes the turn, for they sometimes quarrel with each other, and both of them tend to break away from the union. As Michael says: "Then let's be proud of our fight. It begins with the splitting of a cell a hundred millions years ago into you and me. Leaving an eternal yearning to become one life again" (239). Michael's words are an expression of the Taoist dynamic process of Yin/Yang motion of the cosmos. Their fight and splitting is part of nature, while they retain the urge to return to be one again. This emotional and psychological feeling of the tendency to split and separate foreshadows their actual break. After a short time, each goes the separate way. After some aimless wandering, they come back again to return to each other. Michael confesses to Eleanor that his loneliness is gone when Eleanor is "there--beside me--with you I become a whole, a truth" (275). This is a thorough view of unity in disunity when Michael says, "It reveals a

beginning in unity that I may have faith in the unity of the end" (276). Each separation brings them closer to each other, and reunifies them on a higher level and more solid foundation, and this will go on forever. In this play, O'Neill presents a complete Taoist vision of the universal unity of opposites. The title "welded" implies the unity achieved through their constant conflict, union, and separation and reunion--the eternal pattern of Taoist interflow of opposites.

If in Welded O'Neill presents the examination of Yin/Yang polarity within each human being, then in Marco Millions (1925) O'Neill gives the most direct Taoist study of the overt conflicting forces embodied in the Yin/Yang split represented by Oriental and Occidental cultures. As the central Taoist play in the middle phase of O'Neill's career, Taoism appears very definable and plays a key role in the ensemble of Eastern philosophy and the religion of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Moslemism (sic). Shifting his arena from New England and New York to the home of Taoism, O'Neill gives us a full play of his fascination with China and its philosophy and religion. It is, as O'Neill said, part of his intention of "contrasting the oldest civilization of China and that of modern times--same crises offering definite choice of either material (i.e. worldly) success or a step toward higher spiritual plane" (Floyd 58). Marco Millions is closely bound with Taoism in many aspects

of the play, its grand structure, setting, major theme, and characterization in particular.

The structural movement of the play is typically Taoistic. The prologue begins with the carriage of Princess Kukachin's corpse coming from Persia, and in flashback we have the living drama in the middle of the play. It ends with the arrival and the elaborate funeral for her at the palace. This arrangement of death, life, and death structurally corresponds to what Chu-Yin, Kublai's courtier, says in the play about life that it is "a bad dream between two awakenings" (266). Chu-Yin's remarks match Chuang-tse's view of life, "And there is the great awakening, after which we shall know that this life was a great dream" (Müller 195). According to Taoism, one is awake only when one is an ignorant child who can see things clearly with the void of desires and when one is dead, having become completely aware of the vanity of life. The arrangement of the dramatic events in the scenes falls into a death-life-rebirth pattern which displays the Taoist notion about the organic relation and cycle of life and death. The grand Taoist structure of the work is not a mere display of Oriental grandeur for its own sake, but a conscious act on the part of O'Neill to serve as a contrast between these two cultures.

The dialogue of Marco Millions ties in fittingly the Taoist structure of the play with its living dramatic presentation of Taoism and characterization. The dialogue

has some special significance by taking place in Kublai Khan's palace. Chu-Yin, the sage, is set up as a mirror, with his mastery of Tao, to reflect the anti-Tao ideas of Marco Polo and such other major characters as Princess Kukachin, and even Kublai Khan himself who has not yet obtained the inner spirit of Tao. Kublai sees the spiritual deformity of young Marco after their first meeting, and he is left with pity and affection for the young man. Hesitating over what to do with Marco, Kublai seeks advice from Chu-Yin, who advises, "Let him develop according to his own inclination and give him also every opportunity for true growth if he so desires. And let us observe him. At least, if he cannot learn, we shall" (246). Chu-Yin's advice of Wu-Wei accords with Lao-tse's preaching, "Thus he (the sage) helps the natural development of all things, and does not dare to act (with an ulterior purpose of his own)" (Müller 108). Here is a further example to show Wu-Wei is not "doing nothing" but acting in accordance with the natural development of all things without imposing the purpose of one's own.

The dialogue between Kublai Khan and Chu-Yin is actually that between a disciple and his Taoist teacher. A similar situation takes place later in the debate over Marco's soul. Disappointed with Marco's greed, Kublai Khan remarks:

> Marco's spiritual hump begins to disgust me. He has not even a mortal soul, he

> has only an acquisitive instinct. We have given him every opportunity to learn. He has memorized everything and learned nothing. He has looked at everything and seen nothing. He has lusted for everything and loved nothing. (251)

Kukachin refutes the Khan by enumerating Marco's big and small achievements and concludes, "he has a soul! I know he has!" (251). Seeing Kublai's anger, Chu-Yin finally asks him, "Is intolerance wisdom?" (252). Similar dialogue abounds about Marco, yet it once again reveals the true face of the speaker: what an innocent and inexperienced romantic Princess Kukachin is. Kublai Khan, a Taoist student who can see things deeper than Kukachin, has not obtained the all-embracing tolerance of Taoism. Chu-Yin is the Taoist master who sees through all but is not imposing, nor interfering, nor pushing away any.

The subtle characterization is also tied into the theme of the work. The intuitive stillness and Oriental mysticism is contrasted with the Western philosophy of action and rational practicality represented by Kublai Khan and Chu-Yin, and Marco Polo. Although Kublai Khan may stand for certain Taoist doctrines, he is not yet a Taoist master as Chu-Yin is. Marco Polo is all for striving for money and power. He represents anything that is contrary to Taoist way of life: insatiable greed and desire. As a Venetian merchant, Marco Polo is the image of greed and the soulless mammon-worshipping; while as an officer of Yangchau, he is a

"gross abuser of power" who acts completely contrary to Taoism: to raise taxes and repress free speech. John H. Stroupe sees Marco Millions as "O'Neill's compelling criticism of American values" (116). From a Taoist view, this soulless craze for mere material gain stands as a Yang principle of the Western world view which is destructive not only to itself, but also to Eastern spiritualism. According to Taoism, the inner balance of the Yin/Yang principles is crucial to harmony and unity.

Taoistic return is another central motif that expounds the destiny of human beings. It constitutes the major motion pattern of the major characters. The Polos come from the West, and after about twenty years in China, they return to Venice, while Princess Kukachin goes to marry the Persian King and comes back home at the end of the play. These are not simple returns to the starting point, but cyclical movements on a different or higher order of being. Marco Polo returns to Venice, full of money and devoid of spiritual beauty, while Princess Kukachin comes back home physically dead, yet elevated to a higher, spiritual love through suffering: "I loved and died. Now I am love, and live. And living, have forgotten. And loving, can forgive" (216). Her love transcends the common, narrow love between man and woman and transcends time and space to acquire the essence of true love which is forgiving, understanding, and everlasting.

O'Neill's mid-career emphasis on dichotomy is presented in the distinctive qualities of opposites: in Taoist term it is the Yin/Yang principles. At this stage, he paid more attention to the outer display of the opposites. Marco Polo is directly presented as the Yang: hard, strong, and active, while Princess Kukachin as the Yin: soft, weak, and passive. This stands in a larger sense for the contrast between the West and the East. Marco Polo is specially mentioned to be associated with the Yang. Chu-Yin describes Marco when he comes back from Yangchau, "The other hand rests upon--and pats--the head of a bronze dragon, our ancient symbol of Yang, the celestial, male principle of the cosmos" (253). In Taoism, Yin/Yang stand for the fundamental opposites of the universe, yet they are inter-relating, inter-penetrating, and inter-dependent. They are in a process of constant struggle against each other, continuously identifying with the other and fighting for unity. The uncompromising tendency of Yin/Yang in this play highlights O'Neill's mid-career stress on disunity and duality. Maybe Marco Polo is too destructively strong, or O'Neill cannot find a common ground upon which East and West can hold on to form a spiritual union. Marco Polo's practical philosophy that "keep on going ahead and you can't help being right!" (271) is only the manifestation of his inner greed and desire for material gain. The Western sense of righteousness and blind drive for action and the Taoist

Wu-Wei, the pursuit of spirituality and peace of mind are still irreconcilable to O'Neill at this period.

Taoist unity of life and death also occupies a larger space in the play than in any other. Taoism holds the view that to live is to live a simple and spontaneous life and to die is to enter a new cycle of natural order. Life and death are companions, and death is not something to be feared nor desired. Princess Kukachin desires to die, realizing her unrequited love for Marco. She sees death as an escape from reality and her worldly suffering, just as her song tells us: "If I were asleep in green waters, / No pains could be added to my sorrow. / Old grief would be forgotten, / I would know peace" (274). Not yet a Taoist, Princess Kukachin repeatedly resorts to her death wish for temporary escape or consolation. It is through her elevated love that Princess Kukachin can send her message of life and love to Venice. In the prologue, she voices the Taoist belief in seeing death as a new life: "I've loved and died. Now I am love, and live" (216). Through that faith, she achieves spiritual immortality.

The seeming failure of Taoism for O'Neill is not only in its contact with Western people, it is the failure of a complete value system defeated by and in the modern world--where no individual, no country is free, or can ever be free from the urge and greed to gain regardless of the cost. That sacred soul is not only lost to Marco Polo, but to the

whole West and the entire world. Unable to obtain "the peace of that soul" (290), Kublai is still hurt over Princess Kukachin's death, he says, "My hideous suspicion is that God is only an infinite insane energy which creates and destroys without other purpose than to pass eternity in avoiding thought. Then the stupid man becomes the Perfect Incarnation of Omnipotence and the Polos are the true children of God!" (291). Marco, "the true ruler of the world" not only defeats the East but will go on to pollute the entire West by exemplifying material gain as the sole measurement for success. This is both Kublai and O'Neill's message to the West and modern world where money rules.

In Marco Millions, Taoist Yin spirituality fails to conquer the Western Yang materialism of Marco Polo, although O'Neill strives to discover the unity of the two worlds. This, however, does not stop O'Neill from exploring the harmonious formation of Yin/Yang spirits in a single individual in The Great God Brown (1925). O'Neill's extensive and unconventional use of mask makes The Great God Brown at once interesting and confusing.

The aim of the play, if put in O'Neill's own words, is to present Brown as:

> the visionless demi-god of our new materialistic myth--a success--building his life on exterior things, inwardly empty and resourceless, an uncreative creator of superficial preordained social grooves, a by-product forced aside into slack waters by the deep main current of life-desire. (Clark 105)

As representative man, Brown was not born that way, and he was but the product of a soulless society. Brown's realization of his spiritual sterility marks his original plenitude or natural aspiration for spiritual elevation. This fits the Taoist firm belief in humanity's original state of innocence and purity before civilization. As many critics have noted, either interpreted as the split personality of modern humanity, or as the Nietzschean Dionysus and Saint Anthony, The Great God Brown still contains some incongruities and confusions. However, the drama reveals its unity, congruity, and clarity in theme and plot when viewed from a perspective of O'Neill's Taoist Yin/Yang dynamic, although O'Neill handles the Taoist approach in a very subtle way. His knowledge and understanding of Taoism by this time enables him to see the workings of the opposing forces not only in the overt opposites, between male and female, East and West, but also in the Yin/Yang dynamic forces in a single human being. In this sense, O'Neill's vision of reality includes the entire universe as the harmonious conflicting entity of Yin/Yang which fights an eternal internal war in an eternal union. Taoism holds that everything in the universe is composed of the Yin/Yang principles. Lao-tse says: "The myriad creatures carry on their backs the Yin and embrace in their arms the Yang, and are the blending of the generative forces of the two" (Lau 103). Each and all creatures are produced

through the interplay of Yin/Yang forces and they are the embodiment of these two principles in an eternal conflicting harmony. When union and harmony is reached, it will begin another cyclic motion on a higher plane. The cyclical reversion is, therefore, the natural movement of Tao. Furthermore, the opposites are arbitrarily conceived by the human mind, but in Tao, the "opposites" are not really opposites because they are complementaries to each other. Such things as heaven, day, the sun, fire, and solid will be Yang, whereas earth, night, the moon, water, and liquid will be Yin. Such invisible qualities as dark, invisibility, spiritual, weak, and passive are considered Yin, while light, visibility, physical, strong, and active are Yang, and all other myriad complementary qualities in the creatures. These qualities are contained in the infinite universe as well as in a tiny ant. Man and woman fall into this pattern, and so is an individual's Yin/Yang spirits.

This is where O'Neill perceives the conflict and tendency to unite in Dion Brown's life. From the beginning, Dion Anthony is described as possessing all the Yin spirits in him: rebellious, "dark, spiritual" (310), a natural Pan (310). Most of all, he represents the human tendency to withdraw into obscurity and childhood for fear of life and its responsibility. Just as he confesses, "was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or to be touched?" (315). He even denies life by

regretting being born into this world, for his "God is in the moon" (316), "It's the moon--the crazy moon ... playing jokes on us" (317), and he also consciously associates himself with the moon. Furthermore, he shows strong tendency to return to the origin: "Dissolve into dew--into silence--into night--into earth--into space--into peace--into joy--into God--into the Great God Pan!" (318). Retaining all the Yin qualities, he remains, after seven years, to Margaret a "kid" who refuses to grow up. It is in his self-denial that he gains primal identity and temporary ease. Dion has to wear a mask to face reality, and he does not dare or will not show his true face to the outside world. He is a partial man who possesses only the Yin spirit.

At the other end of the pole, Brown who faces the world by himself without wearing a mask is just exactly the opposite of Dion from the beginning. He is complete conformity to society and convention. With his success, he lives up to the standard of a successful businessman. In a word, he represents the entire Yang principle. To Dion, Brown is "Almighty Brown, thou Kindly Light!" (334), or the public side which Dion lacks. It is Brown who chases Dion and tries to unite with Dion, the other half of himself. The fusion is only temporary, and Dion retreats to his natural Panism. "Brown isn't satisfied" (347) with his public success, because without the other half, the creative

side, Brown is not complete either and he has to come back to Dion. As Dion sneers, "Brown loves me! He loves me because I have always possessed the power he needed for love, because I am love" (349). Driven by conformity to the appearance of material success, Brown is deprived of the ability to love. Since he is split in the soul, Billy Brown is a person without identity. It is in front of Dion, the mirror, "he sees his face" (350). When the weak Dion finally gives up, he leaves "Dion Anthony to William Brown--for him to become" himself (350). By accepting Dion, Brown devours the Yin principle. The conflicting Yin and Yang come to a temporary stasis where the Yin is dead, and the Yang cannot exist. Dion Brown wears a mask, but he becomes so devitalized and he is a mere cipher. As Brown admits himself: "You're dead, William Brown, dead beyond hope of resurrection! It's the Dion you buried in your garden who killed you, not you him!" (357). His energy and vitality is drained through the death of the Yin principle, and the Yang cannot exist by itself.

The dramatic structure of the play reveals itself in the celebration of Taoistic return and cyclical continuity as it is shown in the prologue and epilogue. The drama ends where it begins in the same place with the high school ball as the last generation does. It echoes the same exclamation of coldness on the part of mothers after the passion of life is consumed. As a mother figure, Margaret is different from

the mothers of Dion and Brown. She urges her children to go back to dance, a symbolic gesture to accept the law of nature. She also murmurs "So long ago! And yet I'm still the same Margaret. ... We *are* where centuries only count as seconds and after a thousand lives our ages begin to open" (377). The obscure changes in the person from "I" to "our" and "we" mark O'Neill's conscious Taoist approach to the vision of unity of life and death, and the cyclical continuity of existence. In that eternal flux, any individual is but a particle.

The Great God Brown is a tragedy, a tragedy of a dehumanized society which forbids natural human development. The natural instinct of humanity, represented by Dion, is not resenting or defying the natural life as it ought to be. Rather Dion is defying the life which Brown ardently seeks, a life of material success which is devoid of soul and spiritual value. It shows the individual's spiritual conflict as a human being in the agonizing conformity to society. It also reveals the adaptation each individual makes for survival and existence. Dion's true self is covered by a mask, and Brown's public success and social conformity is also a mask, because our society is sick, and people are not allowed to show the true self. Human-made law is inferior compared with the law of nature and Tao which allows the natural development of human beings as who they are. Dion and Brown are bound together because they

are originally the inseparable Yin/Yang forces that society tends to sever. We cannot help seeing the play as tragic because human beings can never achieve eternal peace outside of Tao, yet the concluding revelation and the potential possibility of accepting the law of nature sends some message of hope when individuals realize their affinity with the larger unity in the universe.

This play is a milestone in O'Neill's writing career because of its revelation of the innate human tendency for self-preservation and self-expansion. Through a Taoist perspective, the Yin (Dion Anthony) and Yang (Billy Brown) spirits have merged into the infinitude of universal life through numerous new lives and cycles which will begin again on a higher plane.

Following The Great God Brown, O'Neill engages himself in the elaborate exposition on the philosophy of life and death in Lazarus Laughed (1926). Cast in the framework of Christian legend of the resurrected Lazarus, O'Neill focuses on the deification of Lazarus, his Taoist transcendence of life and death, and his authentic Taoist advocacy of return to nature.

The play begins with Lazarus' return after being resurrected by Christ. Lazarus returns with an exultant denial of death and gospel of eternal life. From the beginning, O'Neill draws our attention to the inner change in Lazarus as the source of his transcendent view. The

change is noticed by those around him: "The whole look of his face has changed. He is like a stranger from a far land. There is no longer any sorrow in his eyes. They must have forgotten sorrow in the grave" (384). This facial alteration is but the expression of "the strange light" (383) coming from within him, and "It is a holy light" (383) as the second Guest observes. Lazarus' illuminating inner light is a sign of his godly quality, which has rooted in most religions, Eastern and Western. The Virgin Mary, Christian saints, and Buddha are all supposed to have either a light surrounding them, or a halo. This conception of potential human holiness is closely connected with American Transcendentalism which holds firmly the belief in potential godliness in every ordinary human being. The Transcendentalist intuition as the basis for humanity to know, communicate with, and become godlike is also the fundamental method for Lazarus to preach his gospel of eternal life. He appeals to his followers' intuitive faith by his denial of death, affirmation of life, and his heart-stirring laughter. Lazarus' godly quality brings him closer to a Perfect man of Tao:

> The Perfect man is spirit-like. Great lakes might be boiling about him, and he would not feel their heat; the Ho (river) and Han (sea) might be frozen up, and he would not feel the cold; the hurrying thunderbolts might split the mountains, and the wind shake the ocean, without being able to make him afraid. Being such, he mounts on the clouds of air, rides on the sun and moon, and

> rambles at ease beyond the four seas.
> Neither death nor life makes any change
> in him, and how much less should the
> considerations of advantage and injury
> do so! (Müller 192)

Possessing godliness in himself, Lazarus is able to achieve transcendence over life and death which renders him serene and undisturbed, and like Chuang-tse's Perfect man, he is beyond time and space, life and death.

Lazarus' preaching is a progressive deification of human being, or in Taoist terms, the cultivation of Tao. To achieve the greatness of human beings, Lazarus preaches individual salvation and elimination of the fear of death. "The greatness of man is that no god can save him--until he becomes a god!" (398). Time and again in the play, Lazarus declares, "No! There is no death!" and "There is only life" (387). This is his vision and faith, but he sees the impediment to human transcendence, for "Death is the fear between!" (387). Fear of death, a human invention, is the crucial factor that blocks humans' view. In Taoism, both Lao-tse and Chuang-tse assert that life and death are part of the natural law. Human beings fear death because they do not see through life and death. Human fear comes from the ignorance of the condition of death. Only the Perfect man of Tao does not love life nor hate death. Chuang-tse says: "How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion? And that the dislike of death is not like a young person's losing his way, and not knowing that he is (really) going

home? ...How do I know that the dead do not repent of their former craving for life?" (Müller 194). Lazarus is just such a man, who accepts both life and death as the two sides of one thing. His ever-ringing laughter is the proof of the unification of life and death.

The Taoistic return in this play is Lazarus' open preaching of a return to nature, as Lao-tse had advocated in Tao Te Ching. In order to "laugh again" and feel in tune with nature, the play suggests man must go back to nature--into the woods, up to the hills, to the simplicity of nature, to the primal state of life, as Lazarus has urged: "Out with you! Out into the woods! Upon the hills! Cities are prisons wherein man locks himself from life. Out with you under the sky! Are the stars too pure for your sick passions?" (418-9). This is Lazarus' urge for his followers to go to nature, the true source of life. It is also O'Neill's exhortation to his fellow men to purge and revitalize themselves in the nurture and instruction of nature's simplicity.

Different from other perspectives, the Taoist approach furnishes the best explanation for the hesitation of Lazarus when Miriam is forced to die. Judging from the surface, Lazarus' hesitation forms the inconsistency in his eternal life gospel, but a careful observation of his motivation from a Taoist viewpoint clarifies the myth. As lover, husband, and Perfect man of Tao, Lazarus is most sensitive

and considerate to his wife. The "special test" of Tiberius, Caligula, and Pompeia is actually rather futile, because Miriam, with her Christian faith and resignation to fate, will not resist death, and for Lazarus, death is but a gateway to be reborn. Miriam's down-to-earth view of life only tells her that death is the end of all her earthly troubles and sorrows. When she is about to eat the peach, one of Lazarus' hands is described as involuntarily "*half-reaches out as if to stop her*" (454). Lazarus hesitates, not that he preaches a false sermon that there is nothing but death, but that he knows that Miriam has not been converted to his gospel, "You have never laughed with my laughter" (454) as he tells Miriam. He feels the pain that tortures Miriam and he has to make sure, "Will you come back--Yes!--when you know--to tell me you understand and laugh with me at last?" (454). It is Miriam's silent pain and submissive sorrow that tortures Lazarus, and he hesitates because he loves her so much, and he hesitates because he wishes that Miriam could be given more time to see what he can see before she meets death, so she will not suffer mentally. The affirmative "Yes!" in his words is the best indication of Lazarus' faith in eternity, and he is sure that once Miriam is there, she will certainly "understand and laugh with" him at last. It is Miriam's lack of that vision and the pain she still suffers before death that tortures Lazarus. He remains tortured by her

pain until Miriam tells him, after a lingering interval, "Yes! There is only life! Lazarus, be not lonely!" (456). Upon hearing this, Lazarus' "*face is radiant with new faith and joy. He smiles with happiness*" (457). This happiness comes from Miriam's positive answer, and it also fortifies Lazarus' faith. Being half-human, Lazarus cannot stop loving Miriam and sharing her suffering and pain. Having already realized his own godliness, he cannot help anticipating her return and merging into the eternal flow of life. Lazarus' response to Miriam's death strongly resembles that of Chuang-tse who is famous for singing to his drumming on the basin when his wife died. Chuang-tse does not weep and wail because he understands life and death are one and a natural change, and death is nothing but a return to the original life source. Lazarus does not cry for almost the same reason, only he is more human than Chuang-tse with his empathetic feeling for Miriam. Envisioning death as the return to life, Lazarus can say "We will to die." This initiative transforms the passive act of accepting death from an inevitability to a willing entry into the gateway of eternity.

In Lazarus Laughed, O'Neill presents the gospel of human deification through the return to nature and the cultivation of the inner being to become one with Tao. If O'Neill in Lazarus Laughed projects the possible realization of human godly qualities, he then presents in Strange

Interlude an actual realization of becoming one with Tao. Strange Interlude (1927) contains O'Neill's Taoist exploration of his characters' inner selves before he turned into the depth of his own soul for spiritual cultivation in the late "Tao House" dramatic works.

The elaborate and unconventional use of asides and interior monologues fits very well the dramatic focus on the depiction of the emotional crises of the characters through twenty-five years of their lives, from about 1919 to 1944. The play has two plots running side by side: one is Nina's relationship with the five men in her life--her father, her unseen ideal-lover Gordon Shaw, her husband Sam, her actual lover Ned Darrell, and Charles Marsden, the romance writer who loves her; the other is Marsden's journey toward his Taoist acceptance of life through his unconscious cultivation of Tao. If Nina's experience symbolizes the life of "Everywoman" (200) as suggested by Edwin Engel, then, just within this entanglement, Marsden is presented as the male ideal who has obtained a growing acceptance of the law of nature in life and a spontaneous acceptance of it.

In the play, O'Neill shows his emphasis on the inner balance of Yin/Yang spirits in human beings as the prerequisite for a healthy and normal life. Some critics regard Nina as the center of the play and as the eternal feminine, but it is quite the opposite from a Taoistic perspective, for Nina is not a whole or complete being. She

not only lacks self-knowledge but also needs the other half, the male principle to make herself complete. At the beginning, she answers her father, "I am not myself, yet" (500), implying she is going to learn to be herself, but this is what she never accomplishes even to the end. Apart from her physical female features, all the qualities with which O'Neill invests her imply the Yang principle which proves to be destructive not only to herself but more to the men around her. This characteristic explains one of the reasons why she changes the gender of God from father God to mother God. God is actually neutral and transcends gender and Yin/Yang. Nina is a typical male woman, a man in a woman's body, the worst combination of Yin/Yang spirits. Without the essential feminine qualities which give care, love, and tenderness, Nina is ruinous to the males around her. Her reaction to the five men are the best illustrations. Whatever the reasons may be, she resentfully leaves her father in his old age, and totally ignores his well-being. Professor Leeds dies a premature death which can be attributed in part to Nina's leaving home. She is not a dutiful daughter. She marries Sam not because she loves him, but because she wants to have a child to distract her obsession with Gordon's ghost. She commits adultery by fabricating an excuse for a healthy child. She is an unfaithful wife who despises her husband. Ned Darrell, her lover, is only an instrument for her pregnancy, and as soon

as this is accomplished, she wishes he would disappear from her life. Darrell ruins himself as a promising doctor because of his "love" and involvement with her. Gordon Shaw, the athlete full of masculinity and male energy proved to be the weakest in contact with the male Nina, and he had to die even before they ever consummated their love. Nina is too much of a male woman for him, and is too masculinely strong for the others. In Western terms, she is a *femme fatale*, who preys emotionally, psychologically, and even physically on the males for survival. In Taoist terms, she is the imbalance of Yin/Yang and is a natural disaster. She is created as the most pathetic extreme of what it is to be a human being, an abnormality who lives only as a parasite. "Nina has no life beyond the men," as Bogard remarks (310), and Nina knows her devouring power, "My three men! ...to form one complete beautiful desire which I absorb ... and am whole ...they dissolve in me, their life is my life!" (135). Instead of giving nurture and love, she devours and destroys the men around her. The only man who escapes her is Marsden. Marsden, who becomes a complete man, is in tune with nature, life, and himself, and nothing and nobody can bring him to ruin spiritually.

Paralleling Nina's experience, O'Neill carefully presents the whole process of Marsden's difficult journey toward the final acceptance of a life with real peace of mind. Marsden is set on a journey during which he is

working to approach a natural living of Wu-Wei, non-interference, non-contention, and elimination of undue desires. In short, he is on the way to the spiritual cultivation of Tao, because the inner self-cultivation with Tao is essential to a peaceful happy life. The way of his doing it is through meditation, which is the proper way according to Taoism. To show us the inner spiritual journey of Marsden's cultivation, O'Neill uses the interior monologue technique; thus we are given the opportunity to know Marsden's inner activities and motivations.

From the beginning of the play, O'Neill endows Marsden with the perfectly balanced qualities of a Perfect man of Tao. Marsden is described this way: "*There is an indefinable feminine quality about him, but this is nothing apparent in either appearance or act. His manner is cool and poised*" (284). The indefinable feminine in him is a quality that emphasizes the inner charm and dispels any suspicion of womanish look or behavior. It is these qualities that mark him as a potential true man of Tao with poised balance of Yin/Yang spirits in him. At the beginning, he, like everyone else in the play, had desired, loved, envied, and was disappointed, and most of all, he suffered inwardly and quietly. He is endowed with a remarkable endurance, always restraining and controlling himself. The self-control and self-discipline is stated in Lao-tse as primary and crucial to obtain Tao. Marsden's

self-control comes from his inner strength which helps to check his undue desires. He loved Nina very much, yet he never forced himself upon her. He is the only character who appears in almost every act of the play, who pre-exists in Nina's life the ever-haunting ghost of Gordon Shaw, and he outlasts all the males, living or dead. He, in this sense, is the one who really dominates the entire play, just as he himself thinks, "I knew it ... I saw the end beginning!" (663). In the course of his spiritual growth, all the incidents in the play--Nina's obsession with Gordon Shaw, Nina's marriage, Nina's affair with Darrell serve to highlight his gradual spiritual maturation and cultivation of Tao rather than the experience of Nina. One by one, they are severe ordeals that test his faith and endurance. If not consciously motivated to act Taoistically, he is presented as a model of one who lives unconsciously by Taoist doctrines of life.

Marsden is shown to live a life of Taoist Wu-Wei and non-contention. Compared with all the other characters who always strive hard for what they want and who are always engaged in busy action in a reckless way, he is a cool observer, and seldom acts except on one occasion to help marry Nina to Evans. Offering his own love to other people seems incomprehensible, and it reminds us of Older Man in A Wife for a Life. Since Nina really loves someone else, Marsden realizes the futility of attempting to force Nina to

love him, and consequently, he accepts his lot wisely with Wu-Wei. His behavior is both reasonable and unreasonable. He is ready to accept whatever life offers, and at the same time, he agonizes and suffers inwardly, which shows the painful process of learning to become a Taoist. He knows that he loves Nina as a lover does, however he accepts without protesting about the role of an uncle (518) or father imposed upon him by others because he does not want to contend against others. Here is the typical Taoist non-contention. He is pushed to be the surrogate father for Nina with his true and selfless love. He is more than a father because his love is pure, noble, and true love, as he confesses in his monologue, "There...this is all my desire ... I am this kind of lover ... this is my love ... she is my girl ... not woman ...my little girl ... and I am brave because of her little girl's pure love ... and I am proud ... no more afraid ... no more ashamed of being pure!" (525). This is the love of giving, sacrificing, and comforting without desiring to require anything back in return. He gives Nina away to Sam, without a cry of pain in public, because he sacrifices to make Nina happy, and accepts passively whatever life offers knowing there is no other way. In his unconscious non-contention lies the real male valor and nobility according to Taoism. Marsden has reached the true state of Taoist Wu-Wei.

The figure of Marsden has often been ignored both for the overt will and passion of Nina and his quietness, Wu-Wei, and seeming weakness. These qualities do not appeal to the Western life philosophy which will regard him as spiritually impotent and cowardly. On the contrary, these are the very central attributes preached in Taoism, and are associated with life, strength, and wisdom. Lao-tse says, "Man at his birth is supple and weak; at his death, firm and strong. (So it is with) all things. Thus it is that firmness and strength are the concomitants of death; softness and weakness, the concomitants of life" (Müller 118). This is a clear warning against the trust in pure physical strength. "Thus we say: he ne'er contends, / And therein is his might" (Müller 111). After the direct presentation of Taoism in Marco Millions, O'Neill by this time had grasped the essential ideas about what a Perfect man with Tao acts and looks like. No matter how unappealing Marsden is to the Western audience and most likely to himself, O'Neill attempted to portray a figure true to Taoism in Marsden by endowing him with all the typical Taoist qualities of Wu-Wei, non-contention, non-interference, and submissiveness and humility.

Marsden's name contains the greatest implication for O'Neill's intention and understanding of the man of Tao. Mars is the Roman god of war. He stands for valor, courage, defiance of danger, prowess, and all the qualities

associated with masculinity. Den means the lair of a wild animal, a hollow or cavern used especially as a hideout, or a center of secret activity. Putting together Marsden means true masculinity and valor and inner strength hidden secretly in his body and heart. In hiding his masculinity, he maintains his strength without resorting to physical power. Even the appearance and impression Marsden gives people are drawn close to the Perfect man of Tao. For this, Lao-tse's idea about the man of Tao resembles the Perfect man of Tao of Chuang-tse. Lao-tse says, "Shrinking looked they like those who wade through stream in winter; ... grave like a guest (in awe of his host); evanescent like ice that is melting away; unpretentious like wood that has not been fashioned into anything; vacant like a valley, and dull like muddy water" (Müller 58). Marsden's affinity with this description is only the manifestation of his inner cultivation of Tao. The resemblance is self-evident and, while he may not be an admiring replica of a Western type of hero, he is the typical true man of Tao.

Strange Interlude stands at the peak of O'Neill's mid-stage drama. In this play, O'Neill presents the achievement of Tao through human self-cultivation of inner spirit. This positive standpoint led him into the writing of his comedy, Ah, Wilderness! in 1933. If the belief of non-interference in Now I Ask You is still a tentative exploration, in this play it is a straightforward celebration of that belief.

Many critics recognize the light nostalgic family comedy as unusual for O'Neill. It indeed contains O'Neill's nostalgia for a collective past of the America of his generation, as he told Clark, "My purpose was to write a play true to the spirit of the American large small-town at the turn of the century....To me, the America which was (and is) the real America found its unique expression in such middle-class families as the Millers" (138). To some other critics, this play, however, recalls a personal past of O'Neill. Colored with joy and nostalgia, "O'Neill made his first direct incursion on the autobiographical substance of his life" (Bogard 315) in this drama. This play is filled with such detailed facts from his early life as the age of the hero. Like Richard Miller, O'Neill was seventeen years old in 1906 preparing to go to college. Glossed over by its superficial peace and happiness, its non-interference preaching often goes unnoticed or ignored, even Clark once says, "There are no philosophical implications in this simple serious comedy" (137). A careful reading in the light of O'Neill's intellectual history proves to be very different.

On July 4, 1906, the Millers are celebrating the holiday. Richard Miller, a high school rebel, loves reading Swinburne, Wilde, and also loves a girl, Muriel McComber, in the neighborhood. Forced by her father, Muriel writes a letter to break with Richard. Angry and spiteful, Richard goes to a bar and becomes intoxicated and nearly stays with

a prostitute. When he comes back home, he learns the truth about Muriel's letter, and in the end everything is well again. Indistinctly, O'Neill engages his nostalgic look at the past from a subtle non-interference perspective. He dramatizes all Richard's problems as typical of an American adolescent: tentative alcoholism, possible prostitution, and adolescent spiritual despair. And it is fortunate that Richard comes from good parents who are loving, understanding, solicitous, especially Mr. Miller, who is wise, able, and humorous. They are responsible but never coercive toward Richard. By giving Richard enough time and patience as well as guidance, they believe Richard will become himself again, and he does in the end. In contrast to the Millers, David McComber coercively interferes with his daughter's love for Richard and forces her to write a letter and lie about her love. O'Neill shows that guiding the young according to their circumstances is the right way, while undue interference will not solve their problems and more often than not, it will force them to cheat and be dishonest.

The optimistic mood also projects itself into a Taoist cycle of life. The sound of dance and music in the background, the hinted sense of seasons' change, and "*the crescent of the new moon casts a soft, mysterious, caressing light over everything*" (86) reflect nature's approval of beauty, harmony, and life that involves all creatures on

earth. The environmental harmony is possible only when human beings can enjoy inner spiritual serenity. Putting the past, both personal and national, in perspective, O'Neill cannot help seeing the promising future offered by a Taoist non-interfering way of life, when the younger generation is given the chance to grow naturally according to their temperament and preference. In another sense, it is also O'Neill's nostalgic recalling of the lost tolerance, good humor, and the simple age and innocence taught by Taoism.

Following the positive view of life of Ah, Wilderness!, O'Neill quickly wound up the writing of Days Without End in 1933. An eight-draft and seven-year writing effort that gave him extreme difficulty, this drama is more appropriately called a "plea for Catholicism" (Clark 139), and it is also a turning point in O'Neill's writing career.

The hero's religious experience might have initiated as well as reflected the change in O'Neill. As many critics have noted, O'Neill, like John Loving, the hero, spends his lifetime looking for religious and spiritual solace. He has moved from Catholicism, to Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism. Through the anatomy of Loving's touch-and-go treatment of all the religions that he encounters, O'Neill offers the view that no religion can be satisfactory unless one fully understands and cultivates it through one's confrontation with God, Tao, or whatever the name may be. In brief,

Loving's experience offers a guide to O'Neill's development as both a playwright and man. From the evidence of biography, letters, journals, and the plays themselves we know that after Days Without End, O'Neill withdrew into his "Tao House" to meditate and cultivate his inner spirit by examining his own soul. The retreat appears to have been a period of artistic silence, but in essence it was a spiritual and emotional hibernation which led to an artistic harvest in his "Tao House" drama which contains a high degree of interfusion of Taoism.

V. Late "Tao House" Re-Interpretation of Taoism and the Taoistic Return

After his full creative productivity in the 1920s and 1930s, when O'Neill fully incorporated Taoist tenets in his works, he retreated into his "Tao House" on the West Coast in 1937 and did not have a new play produced until 1946. The building of "Tao House" witnesses O'Neill's consummate interest in Taoism. From the architectural design to the building materials themselves, Tao House is a substantial presence that publicly announces his commitment to Orientalism. The house roof which is made of black Oriental-style tiles resembles closely a Chinese pagoda. The garden path runs in a zigzag pattern to the house to stop evil spirits which, according to Chinese tradition, can only travel in straight lines. By living secluded in that house, O'Neill presents to the world a picture of a simple retirement to a comfortable residence with an Eastern ambience, but some scholars believe O'Neill's withdrawal from social and artistic activities was brought on by bad health, with the resultant period of "isolation" (Bogard 366), or in Carpenter's phrase, "complete physical and spiritual retirement" (53). Documentary evidence, along with what we know of the Oriental influences of many years, however, suggests that no matter what other forces were at work, the withdrawal into Tao House marks a deliberate

effort by O'Neill to effect a philosophical withdrawal from life, akin to the advanced period of meditation and self-examination that the Taoist hermit undergoes in pursuit of the full wisdom that discovers the nature of Tao in the universe when he/she comes to know his/her own soul into a new kind of living. Not unlike Thoreau who withdrew from society by building his cabin near Walden Pond as spiritual exercise, O'Neill's decision to remain apart from the world by building his Eastern house in the American West and naming it for the creative principle of the universe in Lao-tse's ancient mystical philosophy ushered him into a new kind of spiritual living that is reflected in the different order of spirituality that marks his later "Tao House" dramas. In this sense, for O'Neill, "Tao" in "Tao House" not only means the right way of life, it means, as O'Neill actually explained, "the peace, the restfulness" of the mind (Bowen 254). After eight years of seclusion in his symbolic Taoistic "temple of the soul," not surprisingly, a group of four autobiographical works emerged that reflect the intense soul-searching of their author. These few works are considered by some scholars to be the best of O'Neill's artistic career. T.S. Eliot once said that "Long Days Journey into Night seems to me one of the most moving plays I have ever seen" (Cargill 168). Added to The Iceman Cometh (1939), Long Day's Journey into Night (1941), Hughie (1941), and A Moon for the Misbegotten (1943), such other works as A

Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions may be included in a larger grouping that might be called "Tao House" dramas because of the more dominant influence and subtle interfusion of Taoism in the plays written after the move into Tao House.

During this temporary withdrawal in Tao House, O'Neill experienced a short digression from his Taoist mind-set in writing A Touch of the Poet (1942) and More Stately Mansions (1938). The former play presents the conflict of Cornelius Melody, an Irish farmer's aristocratic pretenses who rejects his true identity. The latter play, a sequel, depicts what happens after a four-year interval when Cornelius dies as he is: a poor Irish tavern owner. Simon Harford, the Thoreauvian idealist, deserts his cabin in the woods near a lake to become an unscrupulous businessman. These are the only two works which survive a cycle of nine plays which O'Neill called, "The Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed." The cycle is O'Neill's attempt to depict the period of American history from 1755 to 1932 through the vicissitude of the two families of Melody and Harford.

The cycle was magnificent and lofty in its plan, yet it was not the focal point for the O'Neill who had been well on his way toward artistic attainment of Tao. In fact, he was so absorbed in self-examination that he suspended the writing of the cycle and turned all his energy and inspiration away to write the autobiographical plays. It

was to these works that O'Neill brought a not easily detectible but highly evolved Taoism. The seeming disappearance of Taoism had, in fact, signaled a transformation and internalization of a more subtle, harmonious, and organic interfusion of the inner spirit of Tao in the drama, just as O'Neill himself has achieved a high cultivation of Taoism and spiritual serenity. Seeing O'Neill in 1946, Barrett Clark noticed the change in O'Neill the "complete lack of self-consciousness" and "a sort of tolerantly humorous attitude toward life" (151) which he had not observed in his chats with O'Neill in the 1920s and 1930s. The self-effacement and humorous tolerance toward life is the change in the man/artist who has brought about the more subtle Taoism in the final works. Even O'Neill's choice of autobiographical subjects in these works manifests the progression and evolution of his understanding of Taoism. In Lazarus Laughed and Strange Interlude, he probes the depths of the soul of his characters in ways he had never before. In his "Tao House" life, when he turned to writing the personal subjects, O'Neill was revitalized by the philosophical depth and artistic excellence he could achieve in dealing with the past--the past of his own family and friends in relation to his own.

O'Neill's choice of autobiographical subjects for these works coincides with one of the basic doctrines of Tao Te Ching, which says that the cultivation of the inner self

with Tao is the prerequisite and result of obtaining Tao. The choice of subjects also looks back to the very fountainhead of O'Neill's mysticism in the teachings of Light on the Path. Both works place primary importance on the cultivation of the inner spirit of the individual in transcending the mundane in the everyday life. Light on the Path says, "For within you is the Light of the world, the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere" (21); likewise, Lao-tse says, "Without going outside his door, one understands (all that takes place) under the sky; without looking out from his window, one sees the Tao of Heaven. The farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows" (Müller 89). The former exhorts its disciples to seek the truth and light within themselves by plunging into the mysterious and glorious depths of their own innermost being. Believing that man is a responsive microcosm, Taoism sees the mysterious interflow between the microcosmic human being and the macrocosmic universe. If one wants to understand the movement of all other minds and the outside world, one must first understand the motion of one's own mind. It is through meditation only, Taoism upholds, that a person can get to know himself or herself and realize the Way of Heaven or Tao so as to be identified with Tao by purging his or her inner disturbing feelings and emotional entanglement. By examining past

relations with others with an all-embracing tolerance and understanding of them through his characterization, O'Neill accepts them with pity, understanding, and forgiveness. Although these qualities are equally and fundamentally Christian, yet the soul-searching, cultivation of Wu-Wei, and spiritual purgation are at the bottom of authentic Taoism.

The structure of these works displays the drama of O'Neill's inward turning from action to meditation and spiritual quest. The Iceman Cometh (1939), Long Day's Journey into Night (1941), Hughie (1941), and A Moon for the Misbegotten (1943) are all set in secluded locales: a bar, home, farm, and hotel and shun the outside world, looking inwardly at the self and soul. Dialogue, instead of action, dominates these works, and it carries the self-examination and soul-searching of the protagonists. This inward-turning exploration connects with the past and the beginning of life to recapitulate the process of the protagonists' personal formation and growth.

The Taoism manifested in the Tao House dramatic works is tremendously different from the "grafted" ideas of basic Taoist tenets in his early works. In these later works, O'Neill has stripped away the explicit Yin/Yang polarities and other overt manifestations of Taoist doctrines. Taoism has transformed itself into highly harmonious interfusion into the ideas and perspectives of the drama. It highlights

the inner spirit of Tao in the interfusion of polarities, the return to origin, and the triumph of true Wu-Wei. Taoist notion of water and lowliness in position is incorporated in these plays. Repeatedly employed in Tao Te Ching, the imagery of water and lowliness illustrates the way of Tao in its highest form of non-contention and gentility.

To identify with Tao, one must still all the disturbances coming through the senses, retreat to a focal point of one's inner self, and purge the inner disturbing feelings. In Taoist terms, one must undergo a spiritual and psychological return to one's origin. The writing process of the four "Tao House" dramas is O'Neill's reliving of his early life of spiritual and artistic growth through entanglements with family members, friends, society, and art. This remembrance of his spiritual journey during which he experienced a cathartic purgation of his mind of chaotic and disturbing emotions enabled him to be at peace with the dead and himself. These late autobiographical works represent the culmination of his artistic and spiritual achievement as both artist and man, for through a peculiar O'Neillian interpretation of Taoism, O'Neill has transformed all the authorial meanings and microcosmic implications into meanings of universal significance.

Returning to the origin, the destiny of all things, is the road one must follow not only for the creator, but also

for the protagonists of the drama. In The Iceman Cometh, in order to let others understand how he achieves his peace and happiness, Hickey feels the compulsive need to tell his past, saying that he has to "start way back at the beginning" (693) of his emotional and spiritual recklessness he experiences when he is a child. In Long Day's Journey into Night, James Tyrone, Sr. traces back to the very beginning of his family poverty and subsequent financial insecurity to justify his parsimony and failure to become a true artist. Mary Tyrone loses herself in her memory and dreams of girlhood and security when living in her father's home in order to escape her guilty conscience as a drug-addict. Even James Tyrone, Jr. has to recall his dream as a child in his confession to Josie in A Moon for the Misbegotten. The starting point, then, is the past, or the origin. Instead of being the source and fountainhead for a productive present life, that past serves as scapegoat to justify each of their current personal realities, but only a temporary escape from reality and one's own guilty conscience is possible for these characters. The past is certainly usable but not returnable when one has been alienated by life or by oneself. It is here that O'Neill has Americanized the Taoistic return with his personal interpretation. In doing so, he reveals more of the human utilitarian motivation of the return to origin than its natural Taoistic spontaneity as the destiny of all things.

The tendency to interfuse polarities and opposites in these dramatic works corresponds to the Taoist notion of the equality of all things and opinions. This leveling of differences and opposites also reveals a Taoist assumption of the futility of human concepts of distinction. Chuang-tse's teaching provides a sharp challenge to Western human-made distinctions between opposites--right and wrong, this and that, love and hatred, present and past, past and future, and many other antitheses. Chuang-tse says, "All subjects may be looked at from (two points of view),--from that and from this. Hence it is said, 'That view comes from this; and this view is a consequence of that': --which is the theory that that view and this (the opposite view)--produce each the other" (Müller 182). On the one hand, this view of the relativity of all values and the unifying movement of opposites forms a tentative solution to the duality of Western views, and it also indicates O'Neill's possible personal transcending acceptance of distinction and leveling of all differences. On the other hand, this view suggests O'Neill's deepening understanding of the ambiguity of human feelings and the complexity of human judgment, psyche, and vision. Compared with his early emphasis on division and the duality of reality and personality, this late view embraces the duality and, moreover, a hopeful vision of unifying opposites and opposing forces.

O'Neill's continuous meditation on marital relations through his dramatic situations manifests the Chuang-tseian paradoxical view of human distinction, which has replaced O'Neill's early clear-cut dichotomy between love and hatred. In The Iceman Cometh, Hickey's killing of his wife indicates the actual blurring between love and hatred. Hickey is proud of the mutual love shared with his wife Evelyn, yet he has to kill her to prevent her from suffering his incurable infidelity. He commits murder out of love, or out of too much love. Yet his love is blurred and betrays its half truth when he laughs and curses while killing her: "You damned bitch!" (700). As soon as his swearing bursts out, he backs up, "No! That's a lie! ...Good God, I couldn't have said that! If I did, I'd gone insane! Why, I loved Evelyn better than anything in life!" (701). The vicious outpouring of anger and immediate denial reveal Hickey's unconscious hatred of Evelyn at the innermost point of his heart, but it is beyond his comprehension. Perplexed by his own ambivalent emotions, Hickey cannot understand a dilemma which has both conscious and unconscious origins. Hickey's innermost feelings for Evelyn refuse any clear-cut categorization of common human emotional responses. It is through Hickey's confession and self-justification that O'Neill reveals to us the most complex hidden motivations of human behavior, and brings out the ambiguity, complexity, and unintelligibility of human nature which reflects the

mystery of Tao. This is also true of the relationship among all the Tyrones in Long Day's Journey into Night. They are all enmeshed in the tragic net of the contradictions of human nature. The Tyrones all try to understand their weaknesses, while they cannot help blaming one another; they need both to confront and evade reality; and they wound and console one another. The Tyrones are an incarnation of all the love-hate relations of family, which O'Neill sees as universal.

The interfusion and identification of polarities also manifest itself in the interflowing of time past, present, and future. Long Day's Journey into Night dramatizes both the tearing away and affinity with the past which, in this drama, impinges upon and controls the present and has actually become the present and the future. All the Tyrones are, in one way or other, victims of a past which drives them to become what they are, a miser, drug-addict, or alcoholic. They all have attempted to change but life, or their habit derived from the life of the past, will not let them. The past, like a dark cloud, shadows their present and will eventually shape their future, as Mary claims, "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future too! We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us" (765). The notion of time past, present, and future with no distinction as a continuous flux stresses the displacement of the Tyrones in the labyrinth of life. It also tells the

enormous power that the past has over the present lives of the Tyrones.

The sense of the unity of universal existence persists through to the very end of O'Neill's career. In Long Day's Journey into Night, Edmund tells his father his one time sense of the sublime while walking near the beach in the fog and sailing on the sea. When he senses that "The fog and the sea seemed part of each other. It was like walking on the bottom of the sea" as if he had drowned long before (796), or when he is intoxicated with the singing rhythm of the sea and the beauty of the white sail in the moonlight, saying,

> for a moment I lost myself--actually lost myself. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belong, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of man, to life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way (811-2)

Edmund's feelings of merging into the beauty, purity, and unity of nature and being lost in the timelessness revolve around the Taoist notion of the oneness of all existents and the freedom of humanity when being associated with nature and the true freedom derived from a true Wu-Wei. As part of nature, human return and unification with nature is the ultimate destiny, and in that particular moment, humanity and nature and its creatures coexist harmoniously in one unity. Edmund's feeling is temporal, yet during that

particular moment time is eternal, free from worldly cares and undue desires. It elevates him to a higher order of being and he is nearer to God and identified with Tao. If Robert Mayo in Beyond the Horizon is called by a far away beauty from the East which is vague and undefinable, here Edmund has directly penetrated the core of beauty by his ecstatic affinity with the beauty and unity of nature and Tao because that beauty resides inside himself. Through Edmund's experience, O'Neill reflects the progressive Taoist cultivation in his heroes, and also tells us that if the Westerner cannot reach the height of a real Taoist vision completely and become permanently immune from reckless action and undue desire, a constant spiritual sublimation through contemplation in the heart of nature will definitely keep a good balance in their life of crass materialism.

From a perspective of detachment and forgiveness, O'Neill paid his final farewell to his friends and buried the dead of his family. The very last drama he wrote, A Moon for the Misbegotten, dealt with his brother, his closest connection in the world. Like Hickey, James Tyrone, Jr. is caught in the guilt of his ambivalent feelings toward his mother. He professes his unique wholehearted love for his mother since she is all he has in the world, yet escorting her body from the West Coast, he stays with a prostitute every night on the train back to New York. He hates what he has done, yet he knows that he has enacted his

own plot for revenge. Later he realizes that he cannot forgive his mother for leaving him alone in the world. This portrayal of emotional ambivalence in ties of blood contains the philosophic and artistic subtlety of O'Neill's work as well as the pervasiveness of the Taoistic interfusion of polarities.

As the most controversial drama in the O'Neill canon, A Moon for the Misbegotten turns out to be the most Taoistic of his dramas. The freakish figuration of Josie Hogan was a major reason for the play's theatrical failure when first produced on Broadway. The oversized body of Josie, however, contains the artistic and philosophical significance of the drama, and, in fact, it is Josie who dominates this autobiographical drama. Through the overt down-to-earth quality and essential feminine attributes of Josie and her association with the farm and the pigs, O'Neill dramatizes the mythic image of Tao and the original simplicity and purity in human nature. O'Neill constructs this central image by stripping away the coarse, plain, and even lowly appearance to reveal the core of true beauty and the existence of Tao. Josie is not only physically oversized to arouse the feeling of coarseness and ugliness, but her dress is also cheap, dull in color, and coarse in fabric, and she is the hostess of that pigsty full of hogs that love to wallow in dirt and mud. Everything about her appearance, her overt association with the farm and pigsty points to the

notion of being low, plain, coarse, and even dirty--in the sense of mud. Yet with her "all woman" (857) quality and beauty in the soul, she is the blossom "in a mud puddle." Josie comes close to Lao-tse and Chuang-tse's unconventional notion about Tao and beauty. Lao-tse says, "The highest excellence is like (that of) water. The excellence of water appears in its benefiting all things, and in its occupying, without striving (to the contrary), the low place which all men dislike" (Müller 52), while Chuang-tse has a similar teaching on Tao's association with everything low and dirty, when asked where the Tao is to be found, he replies: "Everywhere. ...It is here in this ant. ...It is in this panic grass. ...It is in this earthenware tile. ...It is in that excrement" (Müller 66). Nothing can be more obvious than this exposition of the inner association of Tao with everything, both the beautiful and high as well as the ugly and low, especially the latter. And water is one of Lao-tse's key symbols for Tao. A person of high excellence is decidedly a person of Tao, and he or she is very much like water, especially in the sense that while rendering services to benefit human beings, he or she is not at all contentious, and seeks the lowest level. This sought-after low abode also suggests humility. With her love and forgiveness, Josie is the very image of Tao, because she is non-contentious in her love and nurturing of Jamie. Repressing her own physical love for Jamie and accepting the

role of earth-mother-virgin imposed on her by Jamie, she symbolizes the highest form of human understanding, love, and forgiveness. Without employing explicit Taoistic dogma, O'Neill endows Josie with the highest excellence of a true Taoist or a Tao incarnate. Since being a Taoist in life is to obtain a transcendental perspective about life, nature, and self, in his final work, O'Neill surely found the possibility of transcendence in a romantic beauty beyond its conventional notion, according to Carpenter, "It lay, rather in Josie Hogan's pigsty" (79).

For Jamie Tyrone, the "difference" of one single night, the temporary peace of mind, and the pure love, redeem the long-past guilt and debauchery, and promise a bright and new future. Through one night's baptism in the pure love, understanding, and forgiveness near a pigsty, Jamie is reborn the next morning, with the dawn promising a beginning of a new life. The rebirth of Jamie symbolizes the possible human achievement of eternity through a vision of the unity of the temporal and the eternal. His repentance frees him from the confinement of a guilty past and achieves a timeless present which yields the real freedom while anticipating a future in which he is free to live and die. Without Josie's love and understanding, nothing would be possible for Jamie Tyrone.

These Tao House dramas not only stand for O'Neill's highest achievement of his Taoist cultivation, but his

profound comprehension of Wu-Wei is fully expressed in these works, although some critics' evaluation of the doctrine leaves room for reconsideration. Robinson's analysis of The Iceman Cometh serves as such an example when he declares that "The Iceman Cometh's opening scene seems to dramatize the ideal of inaction articulated in Carlotta's book....these dregs live in a state resembling the Taoist golden age" (171). This assertion fails to grasp the true meaning of inaction or Wu-Wei which I have explained in Chapter Two. The high excellence of O'Neill's own understanding of Taoism, moreover, does not allow any room for Robinson's literal interpretation of Wu-Wei. Actually through the depiction of physical stasis, O'Neill reveals the true failure to be Wu-Wei on the part of Harry Hope's roomers. In The Guiding Light of Lao Tzu, Henry Wei also reiterates the concept of Wu-Wei that "nonaction does not mean doing nothing, that it simply means action without contention and without interference with the rhythm of Tao" (229). The Taoist Wu-Wei stresses more the state of mind than the overt physical movement. In The Iceman Cometh, O'Neill portrays the inner disturbance and undue desire covered by physical paralysis, which has been viciously gnawing at the heart of them all and this is just the opposite of Wu-Wei. The Harry Hope roomers cannot bear the inner pain at heart, so they all have to resort to alcohol to numb themselves. With their heart and mind troubled by

the pipe dreams of doing what they can never do, they are never Wu-Wei even if they were dead completely, not to say this alcohol induced stillness.

The Harry Hope roomers are trapped and ruined by their dreams. The pipe dreams shared by all the derelicts are wild fancies which is the root of their pain and suffering, and what makes it worse is that they have never even tried to realize their dreams. Larry's comment, "I've never known more contented men" (584) sounds doubly ironic, for had they been content, they would not have to numb themselves by means of alcohol every minute of their lives to achieve "contentment." Contrary to some critics's opinion, Larry is not the most passive and serene of them all. He differs from the others only in his ability to appear so by repressing his involvement with life temporarily. His implicit anger toward Parritt's betrayal and indirect interference in giving advice to the latter reveals that his detachment and tranquillity is nothing but a pretense. "They manage to get drunk by hook or crook, and keep their pipe dreams, and that's all they ask of life" (584), Larry observes again, yet what they ask is far more than what they can do or even try, and they keep the "pipe dreams" in order to feel alive. Giving in his last attempt to reform, Hickey obtains his peace and happiness (though his end does not justify his means), and he is set free. He has reached the stance of Wu-Wei inwardly, though outwardly he is the most

active among the group because his freedom transcends life and death. His mission to preach the extinction of "pipe dreams" to the derelicts would liberate them from their suffering and inner disturbances, yet none of them is ready to give up because giving up their dreams would be worse than death. By setting up Taoist Wu-Wei as a mirror, O'Neill manifests the dilemma of the human condition: one cannot live completely without some form of pipe dream and one cannot live peacefully on pipe dreams either. Putting on a pretense of detachment and keeping pipe dreams secretly, Larry suffers as much as the derelicts. Hickey's murder of his wife is a symbolic act of killing the last vestige of pipe dream. No longer fettered by the torture of his wife's excessive trust and the impossible demands of the pipe dream, he is free to will life and death when he telephones the police and confesses the murder of his wife. Literal and physical paralysis of doing nothing is not Taoist Wu-Wei, but an inner serenity and peace at heart purged of undue desire and carrying out what needs to be done according to the natural flow of Tao. Furthermore, the "Taoist golden age" stands far above the state of a paralytic, breathing corpse, but the one envisioned by Lao-tse in Tao Te Ching in which humans, nature and its creatures live a simple, happy, and active life in harmony with Tao.

The Tao House dramatic works represent the highest achievement of O'Neill's own Taoist cultivation as a writer who purged his own inner disturbing feelings and emotions about human beings' ultimate bewilderment over the meaning of life, society, and themselves. In Tao House, O'Neill finally found the right way of life which was embodied in the name of the house: peace of mind and serenity of heart.

Whether consciously or unconsciously at the end of his career, O'Neill composed a one-act piece, Hughie in 1941. It was originally intended to be part of a series of eight plays entitled "By Way of Obit," among which only Hughie survived. Together with the other autobiographical plays which are based on the playwright's experience like the one-act sea plays, this play represents O'Neill's personal feelings and emotions as they seek to confront the social life of a long-gone past. The Night Clerk and Erie Smith were both familiar types of people known to O'Neill in New York when he was young. O'Neill confirmed his acquaintance with them in his letter to G. J. Nathan in June, 1920, "The Night Clerk character is an essence of all the night clerks I've known in bum hotels--quite a few! 'Erie' is a type of Broadway sport I and my brother used to know by the dozen in far-off day" (Roberts 218). They are part of his past, and part of himself which has been lost in the mysterious working of that "inscrutable" force of life.

Like the other "Tao House" dramas, Hughie signifies both a Taoist self-examination and a return to the origin. Its plot is marginalized, and the action is reduced to bare dialogue or, rather, monologue. The dialogue is actually the process of revealing the truth of the characters' innermost need for companionship. As to the art form, O'Neill returns to the starting point of the one-act drama with which he began his career when he could not handle longer plays very well. After he mastered both traditional and modern theater art, O'Neill returned triumphantly to the one-act play for its artistic simplicity and density.

Simple and short as it appears, Hughie contains a highly internalized Taoistic rhythm of characterization and theme. The Yin/Yang dynamic motion re-emerges in the characters of the Night Clerk and Erie in a more subtle way. The former is described as thin, married, a quiet and passive listener, while Erie is presented as stout, single, noisy, an active speaker. Yet they have "*the same pasty, ...night-life complexion*" (832), and their mutual need for companionship stands for their symbolic union. Their difference is descriptive and behavioral, while their unity is essential and fundamental. The interplay of character and role, reality and illusion also revolves around the Taoist rhythmic of Yin/Yang. Erie babbles all night about his memories of the dead Hughie, the previous hotel clerk who died not long before, and who is more alive to Erie in

death than in life. By his wishful imposing of the role of the dead Hughie onto the Night Clerk, Erie finds the dead Hughie in the living Night Clerk, as he time and again tells the Night Clerk, "You do remind me of Hughie somehow, Pal. You got the same look on your map" (838). While moving in the Taoist rhythm, the play also probes progressively into the true essence of Taoist unity of all existence.

This drama looks both backward and forward in connection to O'Neill's very first drama, A Wife for a Life in plot and structure. With two men talking about a dead "pal" or an absent to-be-won sweetheart, both stories take place at night, a time supposedly for self-examination and soul-searching. The difference lies in the remarkably tacit communication and understanding between Older Man and Jack in A Wife for a Life in contrast to the non-communication and loss of discourse between Erie and the Night Clerk in Hughie. If the early work dramatizes the innate goodness, beauty, and simplicity of human nature, the final work manifests the ambiguity, complexity, and absolute non-communication in human nature and even the paradoxical discovery of communication based on misunderstanding.

Whether misunderstanding or non-communication, the drama implicitly indicates the fundamental need and essential truth about the interdependence of human beings and the fundamental unity underlying reality. To the very last moment of his writing, O'Neill never stopped exploring

the mystery behind life. The constant unification and division, separation and reunion implied in the dialogue between the Night Clerk and Erie in reaching out for communication indicate the possible futility, precarious failure, and whimsical success of human effort before the mysterious force, yet the essential human need for friendship and companionship prevails over all. In the end, the Night Clerk gets to know the so-called old friend of the famous Arnold Rothstein, and Erie resurrects Hughie from death in the "sucker" Night Clerk. In modifying each other's identity through misunderstanding, both Erie and the Night Clerk get what they need in moderate concession. Both find reality in the illusion that underlies the real world, and illusion and reality unify in the human need to live in interdependence. Henry Hewes has commented on Hughie, saying,

> O'Neill in Hughie has written the whole cycle of life ... The wise guy and the sucker stand for all forms of human interdependence. The swing from naked truth to illusion, from isolation to communication, from bitterness to love, are basic to living. We alternate from one to the other, and this cyclic motion rather than the achievement of a goal is the stuff and richness of life.... (Cargill 225)

The communicative failure does not obstruct the human essential need to depend upon one another. O'Neill's view on basic human bonding evolves from the one based on gratitude-reciprocation between Older Man and Jack in A Wife

for a Life to the unconditional bond between two strangers like the Night Clerk and Erie. This primary bond between human beings has shed its social and historical conditioning to uncover the universal truth about human interdependence.

This emphasis on the universal need for the security of social intercourse reflects on the Taoist belief in the mysterious communication among human beings without the aid of language. O'Neill could not miss the passage in Chuang-tse on the distrust of language, "There are some things you can talk about and some things that you appreciate with your heart. The more you talk, the further away you get from the meaning" (Lin 313). The sense of distrust of language in Chuang-tse is continued in Hughie where O'Neill has anticipated, as an *avant-garde*, the post-structuralist distrust of language in the modern world. Yet O'Neill means more. The final union of the gambler and the sucker brushes away all the misunderstanding on the way to communication through language. What matters is the innate interdependence of human beings, a kind of divine unity of all things in the Taoist rhythm behind their explicit diversity. Since language itself is said to be a human invention concomitant with human moral corruption, it no longer suffices for meaningful communication. Hughie holds high the promise of a mysterious and extraordinary soul communication among human beings, which transcends time, space, and even the linguistic media. Taoism believes that

if we can return to the simple and pure excellence of the original humanity, the interflow of communication can be restored without the use of language. Through the simple and direct presentation of the confrontation between the two characters of his final work, O'Neill reveals his belief in a basic truth of human nature which illuminates the mysterious purpose of life on earth.

Hughie's subtle image of light links itself with an early one-act play, The Moon of the Caribbees. In the early drama, the moonlight coming high from above the sea barely illuminates the darkness which surrounds the reveling sailors. The external darkness symbolizes the human spiritual darkness whose dispersion relies upon illumination from without. In this play, the light from nature is replaced by the human-made light in the lobby of the old hotel, in which the Night Clerk and Erie are facing the bare reality of existence. If human beings share sacred unity with nature, then they are capable of creating illumination within their minds, for within human beings "is the Light of the world," as Tao Te Ching, Light on the Path, and Christ in the New Testament will say. It is this recognition of the innate divinity of human nature that opens the avenue to the ultimate unity of humans with the universe and with one another.

With his innovative and exploring mind, O'Neill shows in Hughie his artistic expression goes beyond the suggested

dramatic conclusion. His *avant-garde* vision about the unreliability of language and the mystery of human nature fits in the Taoist enclosure which constitutes a cyclical movement, embodied in an ascending spiral, in which the end of one loop is the beginning of another loop on an upward level, and this in turn symbolizes the never-ending motion in progression on a higher plane and broader scale. O'Neill never stops exploring the mystery of life to the end of his career. Envisioning the ultimate truth of the innate interdependence, Hughie ends O'Neill's career where he began by returning to that original state of purity and simplicity of human beings.

Viewing O'Neill's writing career as a whole, we can see that a major source of power and philosophical depth in his works lies in the central influence of a Taoistic perspective. When he confirms his discovery that "The mysticism of Lao-tse and Chuang-tse interested me more than any other Oriental writings" (Bogard 401), O'Neill establishes his close bond with Taoism among other Oriental religio-philosophies. He explores and expands in an unique way the possibility of an Oriental perspective within an Occidental culture which has fallen short of human expectation. Around the enduring concerns of Westerners over life and death, humans and God, time and space, O'Neill raises the possible Taoistic approaches in a dualistic context of the judgmental, personal God, linear time, and a

life philosophy of practicality and rationality. Different from other Orientalists in American literary history, O'Neill's Orientalism is a complete engagement of the man, the artist, and his art. In that triple mergence under Taoistic influence, O'Neill clearly maintains his identity and sense of inquiry and critical attitude. The achievement of a Taoist approach in his works is closely connected with the inner spiritual cultivation of Tao in the man/artist of O'Neill. His increasingly progressive understanding and interpretation of Taoism is clearly demonstrated in the works of the early, middle, and late period. In the early plays, the Taoist influence emerges in two different manifestations: either it is quite vague and not easily definable or it is presented in overt Taoist symbols. In The Fountain, Juan only gradually realizes his incompleteness, the lack of Yin spirit in himself, through his love for Beatriz, while in Marco Millions, Marco Polo is overtly associated with the Yang principle which is embodied in the statue of the lion. The middle plays reveal a comparatively deeper comprehension of Taoist doctrines by O'Neill, thus the subtle integration of Taoist ideas without resorting to overt Taoist gadgets but stressing the inner quality and spiritual cultivation. In Strange Interlude, Marsden's journey to be one with Tao is the movement towards Taoist harmony with nature and with one's self through the self-cultivation of Wu-Wei and non-interference. Soon after

we have Nat Miller's smoother application of non-interference in Ah, Wilderness!. Wu-Wei and non-interference has become part of their lives. In his late Tao House dramas, instead of cultivating the inner Taoist potentials of his characters only, O'Neill integrates his own spiritual cultivation through self-examination and soul-searching in A Moon for the Misbegotten and Long Day's Journey into Night. These plays illustrate that O'Neill has gone through a cathartic process of purging disturbing emotions and feelings by reliving his early years of growing pain and familial chaos, thus obtaining the Taoist return to origin--the serenity of soul--which is the ideal state of Taoist achievement. Although Taoism does not become a philosophical and religious panacea, O'Neill's integration of it in his works shows O'Neill's personal cultivation, increasingly progressive understanding and interpretation of Taoism rank as high as a true man of Tao.

Through his characters' search for life in an unlimited cultural possibility over the American boundary, O'Neill has promoted Orientalism in Western culture to a new stage in which Orientalism has achieved universal significance. Furthermore, O'Neill's Orientalism, as it has been shown, is never a rhetorical ornament, or a simple mention or reference to some geographical locus in the East. It is constituted, from the beginning, in O'Neill's intuitive grasp of the essence and crux of Oriental philosophy and

religion. It is his unique exploration into the essence of Taoist belief with a questioning mind, out of which he refines a vision, a perspective, and even a methodology through which he can examine the West. With this profound absorption of Oriental mysterious faiths, O'Neill has transformed Oriental philosophy and religion from a strange, alien system into an organic part of his art, which transcends race, religion, and national boundary to envision the fusion of the entire world. In the process, Oriental philosophy and religion have achieved universal significance and meaning and belong not only to the Orient but to the whole world. Marco Polo's hard destructive materialism and blind reckless action stand for the Western Yang principle forever in search for the gentle nurturing Yin principle of the Eastern spiritualism. The two are inseparable any longer than the palm and the back of a human hand. This process will go on forever in the Taoistic Yin/Yang dynamic.

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