

**THE PORTRAYAL OF THE IDEAL MALE IN SELECTED WORKS OF  
EUGENE O'NEILL**

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To Gretchen, who taught me the joy of teaching,  
To Maureen, who taught me the joy of academia,  
and to Tanis, who taught me joy.

## **Abstract**

A woman's choice between a starry-eyed dreamer and a pragmatic businessman ends in disaster. This situation is a motif in the works of Eugene O'Neill, and examining its occurrences in *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Great God Brown*, *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* sheds light on the "seeker" (the starry-eyed dreamer) and "provider" (pragmatic businessman) characters in O'Neill's work as well as his understanding of what women believe is the "Ideal Male." Through his work, O'Neill questions whether women really want a seeker or a provider and, perhaps, would prefer a father instead. Nietzsche, Laing, Lao Tzu, and Frazer are all used to help ground this study of why exactly O'Neill's women and men seem to get caught up in this cycle that often leaves both sexes dead or insane.

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## **Introduction**

This study of Eugene O'Neill's portrayal of men in *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Great God Brown*, *Strange Interlude*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night* exists at an odd point of confluence between other studies of gender and family, but it is directly related to neither. It is interested, principally, in male/female relations, and so touches on these topics only as necessary to achieve that end.

Nonetheless, a number of earlier studies are extremely useful in these areas. I am not aware of any gender studies on *Beyond the Horizon*. Doris Alexander does an impressive job in *Eugene O'Neill's Creative Struggle* of analysing the perception of masculinity in Billy and Dion through the autobiographical lens of a younger, teenaged O'Neill's relationship with his drinking and womanizing brother Jamie. Richard Sater's article on "Gay Sensibility and *The Great God Brown*" highlights the degree to which Margaret is really a secondary character, with the relationship between Dion and Billy being the central focus. Bette Mendl has written a similar article on homosocial bonding in *Strange Interlude* in which she suggests that the relationship of the four men with Nina is principally just a conduit for their relationship with each other and with Gordon Shaw. Much of the gender work done on *Strange Interlude* has revolved around the effeminate character of Charlie Marsden, and Michael Schiavi points out that that Charlie, who wins Nina's hand in the end, shares a number of traits, both physically and in personality, with O'Neill himself. The only gender study that I am aware of on *Long Day's Journey into Night* is by Laurin Porter who suggests that through the use of their literary allusions and

quotations the Tyrone men masculinize language in a way that further isolates Mary.

On the topic of family, a few studies stand out. Skinner's book, *A Poet's Quest*, has a number of interesting observations, especially with regards to the relationship between Ruth and Robert and the way in which Ruth is extremely passive-aggressive in her efforts to get Robert to remain on the farm. Thiessen's article on "The Inescapable Father" in *Strange Interlude* suggests that Nina's struggle throughout the play is primarily motivated by a desire to defeat and, later, forgive her father for his actions. Perhaps the most valuable piece, however, is Judith Barlow's article about "O'Neill's Many Mothers" in which she suggests almost exactly the opposite (though from a very different point of view) of what will be proposed here. She says that the Tyrone men demand of Mary "nurturance, forgiveness and renunciation of her dreams for theirs" (9), that "Josie [Hogan, of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*] stands as the saviour for whom nearly all of O'Neill's heroes search" (15) because she is simultaneously both mother and virgin in a way that Mary Tyrone was never able to achieve. Barlow's article, taken in the light of this study, suggests, then, that the petty recriminations and bitter relationships examined here are not merely uni-directional. Rather, like the couple in *Welded*, O'Neill's conception of love is all about sacrifice.

It is a common belief in Western culture that women seek the "Ideal Male," characterized variously from Prince Charming to Mr. Right. The Ideal Male should (among many other things, depending on the source) be attractive, incredibly romantic and passionate, and possess success, wealth, and fame, while at the same time doting upon the woman's every whim and being a good father for her children (genetically, socially, and financially). The exact details of this perfect mate might vary from person to

person, and there may be individuals who are more or less interested in a particular aspect, but the important thing is that this figure is a cultural archetype. This social construction of the supposedly perfect man is important for both sexes because it provides a model for men on which to base their own behaviour and for women to look for in a husband.

In Eugene O'Neill's *Day's Without End* (1933), Elsa and Lucy talk about marriage and how happy Elsa is with her husband, John Loving:

LUCY – Do you mean to tell me you're as much in love with him now as when you married him?

ELSA – Oh, much more so, for he's become my child and my father now, as well as being my husband and –

LUCY – Lover. Say it. How incredibly Mid-Victorian you can be! (137)

Elsa, at this point in the play, is perhaps the most ecstatically *happy* character in O'Neill's *oeuvre*. For her to describe her husband in this fashion speaks to how O'Neill conceives of the Ideal Male. He also dedicates the same play to his wife, Carlotta, with the words, “mother, and wife and mistress and friend! –/ And collaborator!/Collaborator, I love you!” (qtd. in Barlow “Mothers” 123). Taken in the context of this dedication, Elsa's outburst is not merely a casual remark but rather a framing of O'Neill's world view, as it echoes what he appreciates about his own wife by considering John in terms of fixed roles. O'Neill is constructing his own understanding of what the Ideal Male should be, not simply as a set of character traits but rather as a set of character *roles* – that the Ideal Male should be child, father, husband, and lover, all in one.

This description of male roles is also not an isolated occurrence, but it is unique in its exact appearance. John is the only O'Neillian character to be described in all four terms, but, throughout O'Neill's plays, these roles appear frequently, though with only one



or two roles per character. Male characters then tend to try to take on the characteristics of roles they do not possess in an effort to curry favour with the female character or otherwise live up to the social expectations of the Ideal Male. In the early plays like *Beyond the Horizon* (1920) and *The Great God Brown* (1926), their efforts not only invariably fail, but the men are revealed actually to be incapable of filling these different roles, and the effort of attempting to do so is self-destructive. It reaches a point in *Strange Interlude* (1928) where Nina simply selects a man to fill each role in her life rather than try to find one who can be all things to her. Finally, the men of O'Neill's autobiographical *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) have made their own attempts at being the Ideal Male for Mary, but these attempts are irretrievably in the past, and most of the men have simply become pathetic shells – only Edmund, who is occasionally capable of defining himself independently from his mother, has any chance for redemption. Taken together, these four plays chart the development of O'Neill's conception of the Ideal Male, the inability of real men to actually live up to such an ideal, and the implications for both the men and the women they love.

O'Neill is primarily interested in the “peer-level” roles that Elsa describes as husband and lover. The father and the child are equally important but carry with them specific power relationships – the father as an authority figure for the daughter, and the child as subservient to the mother – that O'Neill avoids trying to deal with in his early works. Both the husband and the lover are somewhat more free from these automatic power relationships. The woman's relationship to either of the two men is (theoretically at least) far closer to a partnership of peers. The father and the child can also frequently be seen within husband and the lover figures respectively throughout his *oeuvre*. While it is

possible to follow Elsa's lead, especially when referring to *Strange Interlude*, where her labels still work, but the real situation is more complex. Virginia Floyd, as an example, uses the more neutral labels “materialist-businessman” for the husband and “idealist poet” for the lover (31).

However, both of these labelling conventions have either different focuses or are otherwise potentially misleading. Floyd's labels are excellent, but they are focused on O'Neill's sociological rather than interpersonal interests. Certainly the titular Marco of *Marco Millions* (1928) would be well described as a materialist-businessman but is not a particularly good husband for the two women in his life. He is good at making money and will move mountains to provide for the slightest *physical* desires of Kukachin, but he is never actually available for either Kukachin or Donata to interact with emotionally or spiritually.

The idealist poet is much harder to find outside of a male-female relationship, but perhaps the best example would be Yank from *The Hairy Ape* (1922), who is an idealist, at least, though not a poet. His quest for belonging, precipitated by Mildred's rejection, leads him down a path of discovery that, ironically, results in the destruction of his idealization of his place in the world and his ability to effect change within it.

Floyd's definitions are useful because they define men outside of their relationships, define them as they (perhaps) see *themselves*. However, even in *Marco Millions* and *The Hairy Ape*, perhaps the most sociological of O'Neill's *oeuvre*, the protagonists are still being defined by their relationships to the female. Marco may be quite happy, and completely oblivious to what he has lost in his return to Venice, but the audience is very much supposed to pass judgement upon him for his rejection of

Kukachin's love. Similarly, Yank may be driven to despair and a failed attempt to return to nature by his sudden disconnection with society, but it is a woman who causes that disconnection. Yank's belief that he is a leader in society because of his strength and work, without which the machines would stop, is shattered because Mildred's horror at his bestial nature comes from an individual whom he considers, as a result of her social class and *sex*, vastly inferior.

Elsa's categories have similar advantages and problems. Husband and lover are interpersonal labels – a man is not simply a husband, he has to be a husband *to* someone. Thus, Elsa defines a man based on his relationship to a woman. What is really problematic is that while the definition of lover is reasonably clear in its sexual connotations, Elsa does not really distinguish what makes the husband significantly different. If they are, in fact, two separate roles, could a woman not choose to marry a lover and then call him “husband”? What label or functions does that leave for the real husband? Thus, husband is more of a legal or social label rather than a role label. He may be a husband, he may even be a husband *to* someone, but that does not explain what he is expected to provide.

The answer is perhaps in this last word, “provide.” In *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), Abbie marries the ageing Ephraim in order to inherit his farm. She takes his son, Eben, as her lover, but, without the farm, he is not in any position to provide for her. Thus, they both still need Ephraim and his farm for the time being. Ephraim provides for Abbie in the same way that Marco provides for Kukachin – physically and financially. Thus, the role of the husband is reconciled with Floyd's materialist-businessman by definition of what he should bring to the relationship – he is a *provider*. Marco does not

need to be Kukachin's legal husband to fulfil this function (and, as we shall see, it is actually relatively rare for a provider to hold this title in O'Neill's plays). What's more, Marco's relationship with Kukachin is purely (at least from his perspective) platonic, while Ephraim seems to have become sterile. Thus, the provider figure's role is kept completely separate from the sexual functions of the lover.

Thus, it is possible to say that the provider figure is connected with the wealth and success aspects of the Ideal Male. He is literally in a social position to *provide* for the woman and any children she might have. He is not seen as a desirable sexual partner but rather as a friend or confidante. Marco is an anomaly because Kukachin actually loves him and wants to be with him, but Abbie does not love Ephraim, and she is using him solely to provide for her material needs.

The provider also tends to be socially mature (though this is not always the case), possessing self-control or good council. It is Marco who is tasked with escorting Kukachin safely to Persia, and Ephraim's age and family relationship with Eben also places him in a fatherly role to Abbie. Thus, where no other such figure is present, the provider is also often a stand-in for Elsa's father role. Finally, notice that Elsa is not actually able to say that John is also a lover. Lucy has to do it for her. Thus, of the two peer-level relationships, it is the provider that has the socially acceptable face.

Floyd's second category, the idealist poet, is another common character in O'Neill. Like the materialist, it falls into a sociological viewpoint. The title itself invokes visions of artistic creativity and naivety and actually holds up reasonably well. What the category does not do very well is include the characters who are not particularly artistic, like *The Hairy Ape's* Yank, or whose creative power is spent on science, like Reuben of *Dynamo*

(1929) or Ned Darrell in *Strange Interlude*. To broaden the categorization, it would perhaps be better to use the term *seeker* to distinguish that what really binds all of these characters together is that they are interested in finding universal truth.

At first glance, this title might seem to have the same sociological focus that Floyd's do, but the important aspect of the vast majority of seeker characters is that, for whatever reasons they might have, they decide to search for their universal truth through love and their female companion. For a variety of reasons, from the seeker's artistic nature to the quality of his genes, O'Neill's women seem to find the seeker sexually appealing. Thus, most seekers fall into Elsa's lover category, despite the fact that they also tend to be the men that women actually marry. The seeker tends to be socially immature or otherwise introverted; he is frequently described in childish or child-like terms. He is at odds with the society around him. Yank, as an example, is socially naive and makes a grand show of "thinking," like a child might. Reuben acts much more worldly but is completely obsessed with a reunion with his dead mother.

O'Neill's view of these two character roles is coloured by his reading of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche posits a world divided into two opposing forces, championed by the Greek gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus. Michael Thro presents a useful list of adjectives that connects the Apollonian force with order, civilization, illusion and dreams, restraint, and reason (or intellect). The Dionysian, by contrast, is connected with chaos, nature, intoxication, excess, and emotion (par. 3). Nietzsche himself observes that the Apollonian is connected with sculpture, the visual arts, and very ordered music, while the Dionysian is connected with music more generally. Apollonian art is a clear representation of something else, an image or illusion

of the real object, while true Dionysian music is beyond conventional understanding or categorization (Nietzsche 14-20).

O'Neill takes this dichotomy and applies it to his provider and seeker characters. The provider becomes associated with the Apollonian force, interested in establishing order, maintaining boundaries and hierarchy. As was observed earlier, the provider is the more socially acceptable role and, through his connection to the Apollonian, he becomes the representative and defender of society.

The seeker is then connected with the Dionysian. He is connected with both of Dionysus' roles as god of wine and fertility and is interested with escaping social confines and into an unknowable nature. What he seeks is not intellectual knowledge, but rather brutal Dionysian truth, stripped of its illusions. The most important modification that O'Neill makes to Nietzsche's system is that art in general is treated as a Dionysian attribute. There are no prominent musician artists in all of O'Neill, but there are a number of poets and even a painter, all of whom O'Neill treats as seeker characters.

It is important, however, to understand that the two dichotomies are not entirely synonymous, especially in O'Neill's later plays. The two theoretical structures run parallel but are not intrinsically chained together. Thus, while there are not any Apollonian seekers or Dionysian providers, there are Apollonian providers with Dionysian qualities, like Sam in *Strange Interlude*, or Dionysian seekers with Apollonian qualities (though this is extremely rare), like Ned or Charlie from the same play.

While these broadened categories are extremely useful for understanding O'Neill as a whole, the remainder of this examination shall include one additional presumption: that what really separates the provider and the seeker from Floyd's materialist and idealist

is the element of desire. The provider and the seeker actively desire (or at least think they desire) the love of the woman. With such a caveat, Marco is not really a provider because he does not recognize or desire Kukachin's love. Yank is not really a seeker because he does not want Mildred's love, just her recognition of his superiority. The men who remain within these categories, then, are men who are defining themselves at least partially on their ability to fulfil the woman's desires.

The phrase “Ideal Male”, as it will be used in the remainder of this study, should be taken to mean a man who is both seeker and provider (and child and father, as appropriate) because the women are attracted to and love seekers, but need providers. In O’Neill’s plays, this man never occurs as an actual character only as a sentimentalized memory, as in the case of Gordon Shaw in *Strange Interlude*, or as a fantastic, inhuman image, like the Dion mask in *The Great God Brown*. He is the Ideal Male primarily in the imagination of the female character. Men only adopt the traits of the other role, adopt a female conception of the Ideal Male, because they love the woman and want to be loved in return. The Ideal Male is not really ideal in the eyes of men, or even society, only in the eyes of O’Neill’s women.

O’Neill treats this desire to be loved as extremely dangerous for men. Providers, like Andrew and Billy, throw their lives away trying to forget about the woman or to earn her love, which seems to be all they really want, if Sam of *Strange Interlude* is any measure. Seekers, however, rarely find companionship or true acceptance from either their women or their society-at-large. In O’Neill’s conception, the seeker is, and is supposed to be, outside of the society, both of men and women. The plays presented here demonstrate the consequences when seekers choose to seek truth within society, and,

specifically, through a woman's love. This is especially dangerous for seekers because O'Neill's women, with a handful of exceptions, seem to want to devour their men and reshape them, so as to become the sole focus of unconditional love. The seeker's search for such acceptance, for better or worse, leads him away from the woman, to a union with nature that shifts from a Romantic to a Daoistic escape from his troubles over the course of O'Neill's lifetime.

Daoism is an Eastern religious movement that Liu Haiping says O'Neill became interested in in the early 1920s (par. 1). According to Hopfe and Woodward, Daoism believes that "the basic unity behind the universe is a mysterious and undefinable force called the [*D*]ao" and advocates harmony with nature and simple living. Death is not an obstacle, but rather the result of life. Living in harmony with the *Dao* is to live in harmony with nature and, later Daoist philosophers believed, could extend life (175-78). The central tenet of Daoism is *wu-wei*, "not acting in a contrived or planned manner," that is, to act from a state of innocence (Rodrigues 274). Daoist philosophers best describe this state as "the innocence of the child as an ideal toward which all human beings should strive. The infant knows no craft and has no ambitions but to live; yet the child is cared for, fed and clothed" (Hopfe & Woodward 178).

A second key aspect of Daoism is the concept of "profound identification." The *Tao-te-ching* instructs one to "Become one with the dusty world./ This is called profound identification" (Lao Tzu 199). In his commentary on this passage, Wing Tsit-Chan says that the term means "at once being merged with Tao in a harmonious state and removing all distinctions and differentiations" (199). Unity with the "dusty world" and with the *Dao* is the height of (non)aspiration to a Daoist and represents, in part, the destruction of



individual consciousness and its absorption by Nature.

Unable to belong to individuated human society, O'Neill's male characters seek solace in Nature; in his early plays, this is manifested merely as a Romantic ideal – living in harmony, and apart from human society, but without the sacrifice of either body or mind. By the time of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, this same impulse appears as properly Daoistic, with the loss of consciousness in exchange for real belonging and salvation that it implies.

The unfortunate part for all of his characters is that O'Neill does not seem to believe that any one man can really come to embody all of these roles in a perfect manner. The representations he does provide are always just that, idealized images – a false mask (as in *The Great God Brown*), or the memory of a dead love (as in *Strange Interlude*). There are only two characters for whom this might not be true. The first is Elsa's John, our vision of perfection up to this point, but even he turns out to be an adulterer who hopes his wife will die, not to mention that his split personality, rendered on stage by two different actors, allows John to embody two different people, thus placing John's apparent perfection as being firmly in the realm of a “false mask.” He can appear to be both provider and seeker, and thus as an Ideal Male, only because of his psychological division. The second is Charlie Marsden, the father figure of *Strange Interlude*, and while he might be the closest character in all of O'Neill to being an Ideal Male by the end of the play, but Nina, like many of O'Neill's women, seems to be interested in him primarily as a *father* rather than anything else.

A simple example of this phenomenon appears in the early one-act *Before Breakfast* (1916). As Mrs. Rowland berates her husband, Alfred, who is in the next room,

the little details of their life together begin to come out. She says that he will do

anything to put off getting a job, anything to get out of going to work like a man [. . . we will not be in this room] long unless you manage to get some money some place. Heaven knows I do my part – and more – going out to sew everyday while you play the gentleman and loaf around barrooms [. . .] You say you *can't* get a job. That's a lie and you know it. You never even look for one. All you do is moon around all day writing silly poetry and stories no one will buy [. . .] I've a good notion to go home, if I wasn't too proud to tell them what a failure you've been – you, the millionaire Rowland's only son, the Harvard graduate, the poet, the catch of the town! (393-95)

It seems that they were originally married because Mrs. Rowland got pregnant (though the baby did not survive), and that now Alfred has impregnated another woman named Helen, whom Mrs. Rowland wonders if she “Is young and pretty? I was young and pretty, too, when you fooled me with your fine, poetic talk” (397).

Alfred is a classic Dionysian seeker character. His alcoholism and virility link him with Dionysus, the god of (among other things) wine and fertility. His poetry links him with Dionysian art. Beyond these aspects, his artistic inclinations make him an attractive figure to women not merely as a friend but as a sexual partner – both key aspects of the seeker role. What makes this play so tragic for Mrs. Rowland is that she has discovered only too late that Alfred is not the Ideal Male because he cannot fill the provider role. His rich father has died penniless, and Alfred, himself, seems unable or unwilling to work. Mrs. Rowland's dissatisfaction with her marriage seems to stem directly from this fact. Her seeker husband will not provide, and (as a result) she is forced to try, and fails, to do so herself. Alfred does not live up to the image of the Ideal Male as equally seeker and provider.

*Before Breakfast* is an early illustration of O'Neill's male character roles in action and serves as an excellent example of how the inability of a man to fulfil all of the roles

simultaneously prevents the woman from being happy in the relationship. As the play is presented entirely from Mrs. Rowland's point of view, however, it only contains only a cursory engagement of one of O'Neill's central interests: whether it is even *possible* for a single man to succeed at being both a provider and a seeker, and it is this question that shall come to occupy a central role in his writing for the rest of his life.

While *Before Breakfast* is an excellent early illustration of this dichotomy in action, it does not appear on stage in its full definition until *Beyond the Horizon*. *Horizon* marks the first time that both a provider and a seeker figure appear, both vying for the woman's affection, and it demonstrates that neither man is capable of being everything she requires. The vision of the two character roles in this play is both at its most simplistic and its most pure. Each character has only his role's characteristics and avoids the muddled complications of shared traits apparent in the later plays. The characters are also the least encumbered by O'Neill's readings into Nietzsche and Eastern mysticism at this stage in his writing.

*The Great God Brown* marks a refinement and complication in O'Neill's dichotomy. Unlike in *Horizon* where the provider is only occasionally on stage, *Brown* gives both the provider and the seeker ample time to express their struggles. O'Neill's use of masks serves to reinforce the idea that each character is struggling to fulfil a role that he is not naturally suited to. It is with this play that the influence of Nietzsche really becomes clear, and O'Neill weaves Nietzsche's philosophy carefully with Christian and Indo-European religion to create one of his most theoretically interesting works. The men in this play are not completely locked into their roles, as they had been earlier; a shift is possible, even if the men cannot perform as well as their counterpart in an off-role, but

attempting to do so can only lead to destruction.

*Strange Interlude* expands O'Neill's character roles out to the full four, including, for the first time, both a father and a (male) child for Nina as she chooses four different men to fill the roles in her attempts to find happiness. The men, in turn, struggle to supplant each other until Nina can no longer maintain her balancing act, and they desert her. This play shifts the focus from the male to the female as Nina is the play's protagonist. With the addition of the father and the child, the whole system becomes unbalanced, and character traits, especially those of from the Nietzschean model, bleed over into other characters.

Finally, *Long Day's Journey into Night* represents a contraction and complication. Gone are the outwardly simplistic roles of *Strange Interlude* and the earlier plays. The Tyrone men are all trying or have tried to be provider and seeker, father and child to Mary, and none are particularly successful at being everything. Transition between the roles is possible, but they remain essentially binary. The fact that *Long Day's Journey* is autobiographical also allows us to see how O'Neill conceives of the male roles in his own life.

Together, these plays chart the course of O'Neill's thought on what the Ideal Male represents, the hopelessness of any actual living man to succeed in becoming Ideal, and the destructive implications of the attempt for both the men and the woman they love.

## **Chapter 1. Definition: *Beyond the Horizon***

O'Neill's attempt to define the Ideal Male begins in earnest in *Beyond the Horizon*. This early play is an excellent starting point because the characters are painted with a simple brush – they are polar opposites, unsullied by the cross-over of traits apparent in the later plays and uncomplicated by O'Neill's readings of Nietzsche or Daoism.

The two brothers, Robert and Andrew, are set up as a seeker and a provider, respectively. As a result of Ruth's choice of Robert instead of Andrew as a husband, each man is forced to assume the lifestyle of the other. Robert stays to work on the farm and marry her instead of Andrew, and Andrew takes Robert's berth on the ship to head off and see the world.

The two men are incapable of adapting to their reversed roles; in and of itself, this is not a terrible thing but for the requirements of capitalism. Robert is incapable of becoming a provider and thus cannot care for the farm properly nor provide his family with the required financial stability. Andrew is incapable of becoming a seeker and thus cannot learn to see the beauty of the world. This inability leads him to attempt to exploit the world rather than admire it or even simply profit from it. Neither Robert's and Andrew's inability to represent fully both the seeker and provider aspects of the Ideal Male nor Ruth's choice of mate automatically doom the three of them to unhappiness in *Beyond the Horizon*, but, rather, the responsibility for their unhappiness lies largely with the greater capitalist society in which they live.

At this stage of O'Neill's understanding, he seems to conceive of the seeker and

provider not simply as separate but as opposite entities. Robert, the seeker figure, is presented as having “*the touch of the poet [and appears] delicate and refined*” (573). It becomes clear over the course of the play, between his sickness in the play and references made to his childhood illnesses, that, throughout his life, he has always been a sickly person. He spent a year away at university, is frequently seen with a book in his hands, and seems incapable of running the farm without assistance. He is interested in poetry, travel, the sea, and claims that he has “always wanted to write” (631).

By contrast, the provider, Andrew, is described as “*an opposite type to Robert – husky, sun-bronzed, handsome in a large-featured, manly fashion*” (573). He is connected closely with the earth and is happy to have only a high school education – he has little time for Robert’s books. Nonetheless, Andrew is gifted with the ability to succeed in many practical matters. He seems to succeed at whatever he puts his mind to, not just the farming aspects of his life at home and speculating in Argentina. He also seems to have been at least reasonably successful as a ship’s officer, despite his dislike of the lifestyle, as he is quickly hired upon returning to port.

Their opposition is marked throughout the play not merely by their physical appearance and personality but also by their costumes. The colour of clothes that the characters wear is significant to their identity and intentions. In the opening act, Robert wears grey pants “*and a blue flannel shirt with a bright coloured tie,*” while Andrew simply “*wears overalls, leather boots, and a gray flannel shirt open at the neck, and a soft mud-stained hat*” (573-74). Andrew’s colours of grey and muddy brown give him a very neutral, earthy, tone, which emphasizes his connection with the land. Robert, with his dreams of the outside world, is the only one who really brings colour to the scene.

Ruth's costume, both now and throughout the play, characterizes her mental state and that of the men as well. Her white dress in this scene implies both virginal purity and innocence, sexually and socially.

By the second act, Robert's colours are not identified, but the description of his "*overalls, laced boots, and a flannel shirt open at the neck*" (608) largely mirrors the neutral farming clothes of Andrew's description in Act One. Andrew, however, now wears "*the simple blue uniform and cap of a merchant ship's officer*" (618). The two men have exchanged colours as they have exchanged lives. Where Robert dreamed of the blue beyond the horizon, Andrew brings it back with him. Note, however, that Andrew lacks the bright colours of Robert's tie – for Andrew, the blue is a colour of duty, not desire. Ruth's costume shifts to a gingham dress of uncertain colour in the first scene. The checked dark/light pattern of the gingham serves as a counterpoint to the white of the first act. It demonstrates that the darkness of doubt and worldly knowledge have entered the minds of the three central characters while also maintaining a sense of hope. Her resumption of the white dress in the second scene is partially a mask, as she seeks to restore her image of virginal purity to entice Andrew, and partially a symbol of her own renewed hope for a new and happy life with him.

In the final act, the colour of both Robert's and Andrew's clothing is unspecified, though Robert remains dressed largely as he was in Act Two, and Andrew now wears "*an expensive business suit*" (639). We may be able to assume that this suit is a muted colour – black, navy blue, or perhaps brown. He has traded in the dirty, earthy colours and clothes of the first act for the darker, cleaner colours of his business suit, just as he has traded the task of growing crops for making money. Where there was once hope and the

occasional glimmer of colour or light in the first two Acts, the third is marked only by neutral or dark colours. Ruth's solid black dress has lost even the compromised light colour of the gingham, signifying the loss of hope for all three characters for a better life.

The central struggle for the Mayo boys in this play is whether or not each of them can adapt to the lifestyle of the other. Robert's ability to operate in a world beyond his books and in a socially acceptable male fashion on the farm is a serious question in the play. It is made clear throughout the first act that Robert has never been very active in helping on the farm; he spent much of his childhood sick, reading, or staring out the window, and, upon informing his family of his intention to remain on the farm, Robert declares,

I want you all to understand one thing – I'm not going to be a loafer on your hands any longer. This means the beginning of a new life for me in every way. I'm going to settle right down and take a real interest in the farm, and do my share. I'll prove to you, Pa, that I'm as good a Mayo as you are – or Andy, when I want to be. (592)

Ruth later accuses him of being lazy, of spending too much time with his books, but Mrs. Mayo defends him against Mrs. Atkins' similar accusations, saying, "You can't say but Robbie works hard, Sarah [. . .] Robbie's just had bad luck against him" to which Mrs. Atkins responds, "What good's workin' hard if it don't accomplish anythin', I'd like to know?" (604). She accepts the truth of Mrs. Mayo's statement, that Robert has not been lazy, but questions what the hard work has accomplished. Even when he hires men to help on the farm, they never seem to stick around long. Indeed, by the end, he would hire "men to take charge, and they nearly all cheated him – he couldn't tell – and [they] left one after the other" (641).

It seems clear from these passages that it is not an unwillingness to work that



holds Robert back. It is bad luck, an inability to read other people, and a lack of worldly knowledge and Andrew's farming instinct. As Andrew declares right at the beginning of the play, "Farming ain't in your nature" (576). Thus, it cannot always be, as Andrew confidently declares before departing for Argentina the first time, that "I'm going to make good right from the minute I land, if working hard and a determination to get on can do it; and I *know* they can!" (626). Robert has a strong work ethic and a motivation to provide for his family, and yet, still, he cannot succeed on the farm, despite his efforts.

It is clearly not merely a matter of heredity but, rather, Andrew's drive, determination, and *interest* that make him a good farmer. For Andrew, farming is a passion. He loves what he does, and, as a result, is good at it. In the first scene, Robert sees Andrew's dirt-covered hands as filthy, something that might damage his book, but Andrew views it as "good clean earth" (574). Robert is a terrible farmer because he sees it only as a way to support his family – it is merely a job. He would much rather be with them, or reading, or travelling, than spending time in the field. He has no *desire* to do it. Andrew possesses a natural sense of the practical aspects of his society that Robert simply cannot replicate because he cannot bring himself to care enough. In marrying Ruth, Robert buys into, willingly or not, the social vision of the male provider role – he believes he should be and should *want* to be a provider for his family – but, simply put, he would much rather be spending time with his books or his daughter, and that lack of interest shows on the farm.

Similarly, Andrew cannot seem to appreciate the same beauty of the world that Robert sees in his poetry and yearning looks beyond the horizon. His description tells us that he is "*intelligent in a shrewd way, but with nothing of the intellectual about him*"

(573), and that, upon his return from Argentina, he has come to possess a “*ruthless cunning*” (639). He dismisses Robert’s poetry out of hand, calling it “crazy” (574). His attempts at explaining Robert’s desire to leave the farm are largely practical in nature. He thinks that Robert “has an itch to see it all [the world]”; that there is good money in being a ship’s officer, especially if one wants to travel and see the world, and that there are business opportunities in other countries that a travelling man might just be able to cash in on (576-7).

ROBERT – (*forced to laugh*) I’ve never considered the practical side of it for a minute Andy.

ANDREW – Well, you ought to. (577)

When Robert actually explains his reasoning, Andrew calls him “nutty” (577). Andrew’s constant attention for practical application is an admirable trait in a provider, but it prevents him from accepting any sort of aesthetic appreciation of the world or literature that a seeker should.

It thus comes as no surprise that Andrew’s letters and tales of his travels are ultimately practical and dissatisfied with the exotic experience of the East. As Robert declares,

his letters read like the diary of a – of a farmer! “We’re in Singapore now. It’s a dirty hole of a place and hotter than hell. Two of the crew are down with fever and we’re short-handed on the work. I’ll be damn glad when we sail again, although tacking back and forth in these blistering seas is a rotten job too!” (*scornfully*) That’s about the way he summed up his impressions of the Orient. (615)

Or, as Andrew himself later explains, “as for the East you used to rave about – well, you ought to see it, and *smell* it! One walk down one of their filthy streets with the tropic sun beating on it would sicken you for life with the ‘wonder and mystery’ you used to dream of” (620). It is an attitude that is far distant from Robert’s “mystery and spell of the East

which lures me” (577), and it is one that never changes.

By the end, Andrew sees the world only in terms of the profit it can make him, turning from his love of the farm to the exploitation of the grain trade in Argentina. Just as Robert never learns to function in the economic world of the farm, Andrew never manages to see the beauty and truth around him, either. He is closed off from new experience, closed off from “different” things, because he does not see the profit in them. In fact, Andrew serves as something of a proto-Marco Millions. O’Neill’s foreword to that play, describing the real Marco Polo’s diaries, remarks on the way in which Polo emphasizes “the ‘millions’ of this and the ‘millions’ of that in the East” (*Marco Millions* 380), a description that largely echoes Andrew’s own of Argentina: “you ought to hear about the farms down there – ten square miles where we’ve got an acre. It’s a new country where big things are opening up – and I want to get in on something big before I die” (*BTH* 621).

Just as Marco is distracted from Kukachin’s love for him by the counting of coins, choosing instead to return to Venice and marry Donata to improve his family’s mercantile connections, so Andrew possibly sees profit in marrying Ruth – in the form of her family’s farm. Certainly his father sees their potential union in such terms, saying that “I ain’t what you’d call calculatin’ generally [. . .] but there’s advantages for both o’ them in this match you can’t overlook in reason. The Atkins farm is right next to ourn. Jined together they’d make a jim-dandy of a place” (589). When the farm is no longer a coin to be won, Andrew is quick to cast aside his “feelings” for her. After his return from sea, Andrew assures Robert that his trip had “opened my eyes to how I’d been fooling myself. Why, I’d forgotten all about – that – before I’d been away at sea six months [. . .] I guess

it never amounted to more than a kid idea I was letting rule me. I'm certain now I never was in love" (622). He later tells Ruth the same, declaring that he now feels toward her "as if you'd always been my sister" (627). The audience is never presented with any evidence that Andrew forms any romantic attachments in his travels after he leaves the farm. It would seem as though Andrew never falls in love, or at least never allows himself to, with anything but profit, again. He is a gifted provider, but, without a family to provide for, he throws himself into making money for its own sake, and it leaves him spiritually hollow. As Robert says:

you're the deepest-dyed failure of the three [of us], Andy. You've spent eight years running away from yourself [. . .] You used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in harmonious partnership. [. . .] what I mean is that your gambling with the thing you used to love to create proves how far astray [you've gone]. (647)

What separates Andrew from being simply a materialist-businessman like Marco is that he actually loves or believes he loves Ruth, at the beginning of the play, and desires her love in return. Andrew's inability to be a romantic seeker figure like his brother, which leads Ruth to snub him, paired with his obvious financial ability is what marks Andrew as this play's provider character.

It does seem to be the romantic world view of the seeker role that draws Ruth to Robert. In more than one instance through the first scene, Ruth declares that she would love to be going off to travel the world as Robert wants to, and, unlike Andrew, Ruth claims to understand Robert's explanation for why he needs to leave. She is "*charmed by his low, musical voice telling the dreams of his childhood*" and declares "Oh, Rob, how could I help but feel it? You tell things so beautifully!" (581). She later wishes that "I hadn't been such a fool to listen to your cheap, silly, poetry talk that you learned out of

books!” (616). It is clear that what attracts her in the first place is his poetry and dreams, romantic seeker qualities that have little to do with Robert's qualifications to succeed in the world.

Ruth is enchanted specifically by Robert's memories of his *childhood* dreams. Throughout the play, characters seem to treat or see Robert as rather childish. He is frequently late for meals, and Ruth has to constantly nag him to stay on task. The other farmers and farm hands (not to mention Mrs. Atkins) in the area seem to look down on him once he begins mismanaging the farm. Ruth still sees Robert as someone to be taken care of, as a child, or, perhaps, as a sickly person like her mother. The character he seems to get along best with, and is most attached to, is his daughter, Mary. Robert is repeatedly associated with childish characteristics, treated as a child, and is most happy in the company of a child. While the other characters view this orientation as a negative quality, O'Neill manages to build Robert up into a positive character, largely as a result of his child-like nature.

While the other characters may treat him as childish, Robert is, in fact, rather child-like. His active imagination and special connection with his daughter, Mary, place him in a separate realm from the other adults in the play. Robert exhibits a certain level of child-like innocence in his belief in the power of love, in his faith in others to treat him fairly economically, and in his expectation of quickly learning how to operate the farm.

This child-like mentality is important because it links Robert to the child role in addition to the seeker, a connection that will become common through the course of O'Neill's work. Additionally, Robert's child-like nature is a pre-emptive connection with the philosophy of Daoism (though it appears that O'Neill had not been reading about

Daoism at this date). As was discussed earlier, Daoism advocates an attempt to live in complete harmony with others and with nature by ceasing attempts to exert control over the world around us. It holds up the innocent state of a child as desirable and sees the end goal as entering a state of non-individuated union with nature. Thus, Robert's child-like nature is a positive attribute to a Daoist. He is closer to achieving Daoistic enlightenment than his brother, but both still struggle to take control of their own natures. They seek to reshape themselves to suit Ruth's and society's desires when they are really best off leaving themselves be.

Secondly, Robert experiences a vision of union with nature, but it is not exactly Daoistic. He says that he “is happy at last – free [. . .] – free to wander on and on – eternally [. . .] Look! Isn't it beautiful beyond the hills? I can hear the old voices calling me to come [. . .] It isn't the end. It's a free beginning – the start of my voyage” (652). Liu quite rightly observes that Robert's vision is only a “vague [idea of the East], a romantic utopia – meaningful and alluring, yet remote and intangible” (par. 6). Robert's vision has a sense of unity with nature, but it is a Romantic unity. He wants to be in nature, a part of nature, to live in harmony with it away from the rest of society, but not *become* nature. His vision maintains his sense of self but also reinforces the his child-like nature, as the old voices are likely the voices of “the good fairies” from his memories of his childhood dreaming “who sang their little songs for me” (581). Robert's final vision does grant him some small form of escape, some small fragment of peace that is denied to the others, and it is linked partially with his child-like innocence and curiosity.

The point to stress here is that, even before O'Neill begins reading Daoist philosophy, there is an impulse in that direction. This image of escape via a union with

nature, or, in other instances, childhood, is central to the majority of O'Neill's plays from this point forward. Robert's vision is a re-identification with his dreams and his understanding of himself prior to settling down with Ruth, but it is a *Romantic* union with nature, not a Daoist one. Robert looks to be part of nature, but not actually lose his identity or consciousness. The "old voices" of the fairies that he refers to give the passage a communal sense, as though with them there is a sense of familiarity and community beyond the horizon (not unlike the "belonging" that Yank in *The Hairy Ape* craves to regain).

For the first time since the beginning of the play, Robert is again defining himself in this scene based on his own conception of the world rather than by his relationship with Ruth and is granted a measure of peace and freedom in doing so. In the first scene, Robert decides that "I think love must have been the secret – the secret that called me from over the world's rim – the secret beyond every horizon; and when I did not come, it came to me" (583). This passage is central to the play because it is this hypothesis that Robert is testing throughout. The conclusion he arrives at, at the moment of his death is that he was wrong. Love, by itself at least, is not the truth he was searching for, and, in fact, loving Ruth has trapped Robert on the farm, away from his dreams.

Ruth, in contrast, has her happiness tied up in remaining on the farm, despite her words in the first scene, and she seems to use her mother as an excuse to do so. In Act Three, when Robert again suggests running away together, this time to the city, she uses the same defence. Robert declares that "You're lying, Ruth! Your mother's just an excuse. You want to stay here" (636). Ruth admires the *idea* of running way from the farm and

her problems but does not have the nerve to follow through.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the farm is the only home she has known, and, thus, a safer place than the outside world.

It seems likely that Ruth is, in fact, searching for a father figure and blames Robert for his failure to fill that role for her. The only comment she makes about her real father is a brief (and aborted) wish in the first scene that “If only Pa was still living –” then perhaps her mother would not be such a nag, then perhaps he could take care of Mrs. Atkins instead of Ruth, then perhaps she could “be going away some place – like [Robert]” (579). Her father is clearly a figure that could/did solve the problems in her life; he provided solutions.

The simple truth is that Ruth cannot support herself. At no point in the play does O’Neill present working women outside of the home setting – indeed, there are only a handful of working females in all of O’Neill’s *oeuvre* (including several prostitutes, a seamstress, and an actor, most of whom hate their jobs). Mr. Mayo’s solution to Mrs. Atkins’ problem is a marriage between Ruth and Andrew: “bein’ a wider with only a daughter, and laid up all the time to boot, Mrs. Atkins can’t do nothin’ with the place as it ought to be done. She needs a man, a first-class farmer, to take hold o’ things, and Andy’s just the one” (589). Mr. Mayo offers no thought that Ruth could manage for herself. He thinks she needs a man to do the farming, to provide for her, and this is probably Ruth’s experience as well. The men she knows have all been providers – her father and Mr. Mayo. It would seem reasonable to believe that all men could fill such a role, so why should she not choose the romantic sounding Robert for such a task rather than his less

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Skinner is of the opinion that Ruth goes beyond this. He says that she, “is not content to let Robert be himself, even his best self. She must possess his will so completely that he will be a reflection of herself rather than a separate person” (53). I agree insofar as this seems to be the outcome, but it ascribes a level of malicious intent that Ruth hardly seems capable of at this point in the play.



interesting brother?

Ruth is caught in a double bind. The society she lives in believes she cannot support herself, nor does she exhibit any desire to, and so must choose one of the two brothers. Either choice will drive the other away. It seems possible that she never expected (like Robert) that Andrew would leave the farm in his distress. Certainly his parents are shocked by his sudden decision to run away. She expects either man can support her, based on her social experience, which turns out to be not true.

Throughout the play, she tries to embrace the part of herself that is reflected in her choice of male. It is clear that she marries Robert because of his intellectual side, his love of books and beauty – things that Andrew could never appreciate. Andrew's departure leaves the farm without its practical side – financial concerns that Robert can simply not cope with. In the first act, Ruth is romantic, youthful, and hopeful, much like Robert. Her decision to pursue Andrew in the second act is a pragmatic, practical move – the sort that Andrew would likely understand. In the third act, she is barely alive, merely surviving, and a part of her really dies with Robert's death as "*her mind [is] already sinking back into that spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope*" (653) when she is left with Andrew alone.

Thus, while she cannot love Robert while not being provided for, she cannot seem to love Andrew (if she ever did) without Robert's presence, either. It might well be true, as a number of characters remark, that Ruth would have been better off with Andrew, but, without the romantic predisposition that Robert possesses, Ruth would in all likelihood be just as unhappy, despite being financially well off. The two characters are complimentary. She needs both a romantic lover and a financial provider to be satisfied,

and, in this play, the two attributes cannot be possessed by the same man, just as one man cannot be both a child and a father to her (as the two roles come to be represented in this play).

Ironically, because of the stresses that are placed upon the two men, they cannot even fill the roles they are actually good at. Robert cannot simply be child-like or follow his seeker desires for travel because his marriage forces him at least to attempt to provide for his family financially on the farm, an inappropriate position of responsibility for a seeker/child figure. Andrew attempts to be a good provider, but the promise of capitalism lures him into corrupting his natural abilities with the land to the point of obsession, leaving him without a nuclear family of his own and unable to provide for his brother and sister-in-law when he needs to. He betrays the provider model he is well suited to fulfil on the farm by surrendering to greed.

Gender issues and stringent capitalist demands are at the heart of the role problems in this play. Ruth must be a mother and a wife because that is all society can conceive of her being, that is all it will *allow* her to be, and she gives little indication of wanting anything else. Her definition of the Ideal Male swings wildly from one side to the other as she gains worldly experience, in part because neither man is really capable of being both seeker and provider.

The play's capitalist society tells Robert and Andrew that being a good provider is all that matters – a directive that manages to destroy them both, Robert through his inability and Andrew through a consuming greed. What is perhaps most interesting about this early play is that, capitalism aside, it would seem as though love and marriage was not the secret Robert is searching for, that he might well have been just as unhappy if he

had stayed and not had to work the farm. Even if Andrew had stayed or Mr. Mayo had lived to manage the farm properly, Robert would still feel that *need* to go beyond the horizon. Ruth holds him back from that dream, and, while she might well be happy with both Robert and a steady income, he would not be. Thus, while capitalism and society play a large role in Robert's fall, a large amount of blame must also fall on Ruth. O'Neill's social concerns shine through in this early work, but it is also clear that there are interpersonal undertones beneath the surface that shall become more important later. Andrew, conversely, being told by society to be exactly what he is (except with a family), throws himself so fervently into his labours that he manages to lose his way. Robert's failure is the result of his love of Ruth (and his decision to stay with her), while Andrew's is the result of Ruth's lack of love for him.

This early play is an excellent example of the seeker and provider roles because O'Neill presents them essentially as a binary dichotomy, and without the complications of any of his readings into philosophy. Neither role is able to fulfil the functions of the other and attempting to do so destroys or corrupts them both. In this play, the Ideal Male is neither the seeker nor the provider, but both together, which O'Neill presents as an impossibility.

## Chapter 2. Refinement: *The Great God Brown*

While *Beyond the Horizon* serves as an introduction to O'Neill's seeker and provider character types and the ways in which society at large destroys them, *The Great God Brown* serves as grounds for further experimentation and as a refinement of those same themes. During the period that this play was written, O'Neill has moved away from the stark Realism that characterizes *Beyond the Horizon* and uses Expressionist techniques like painted backdrops and masks to emphasize his sociological and interpersonal themes. He also further complicates his subject matter through the use of Nietzschean philosophy and *Magna Mater* mythology. Ultimately, however, O'Neill achieves something slightly different in this play than its predecessor. *Beyond the Horizon* only depicts the destruction of its seeker figure, ending with the death of Robert, with Andrew's moral destruction only hinted at. In *The Great God Brown*, O'Neill brings his theme full circle by explicitly depicting that the demands placed on both character types by society and by the female have only negative consequences. Struggling for Margaret's love destroys both Dion and Billy, and, in the end, it becomes clear that she loves neither of them, only her own vision of the Ideal Male.

It seems worthwhile, first of all, to examine Billy and Dion in the light of their predecessors, Andrew and Robert, in order to demonstrate that we are dealing with essentially the same character types prior to examining how they have evolved. The first pair is Billy and Andrew. In physical appearance, the two are quite similar. Billy is described in the prologue as “a handsome, tall and athletic boy [. . .] with a likeable smile

[. . .] *its expression already indicating a disciplined restraint. His manner has the easy self-assurance of a normal intelligence*” (473), compared to Andrew, “*husky, sun-bronzed, handsome in a large-featured, manly fashion – [. . .] intelligent in a shrewd way, but with nothing of the intellectual about him* (BTH 573). Both are handsome and in good shape, and O’Neill makes the point of commenting in both cases on the character’s intelligence in order to draw attention to the fact that neither man is exceptional. By making the two men more or less average, O’Neill wants to emphasize that their success in business is the result of other things, like Andrew’s passion and hard work, rather than a brilliant analytical mind.

The pair function as provider figures in their respective plays. Both men labour with unrequited love, though Andrew is quick to give his up when Ruth chooses Robert, and both men excel at making money. At this point, however, the comparison begins to break down. Where Andrew made his profits via “hard work” and “determination” (BTH 628), Billy seems to coast along. His father says that “Billy’s got the stuff in him to win, if he’ll only work hard enough” (474), but Billy, himself, confesses to Margaret that “it’s been mostly luck. Things have come my way without my doing much about it” (489). Billy is described in the first act as being a “*capable, college-bred American business man,*” (488) and later as “*the ideal of the still youthful, good-looking, well-groomed, successful provincial American*” (501).

In many ways, the two represent opposite poles of the American Dream: Andrew represents an America where a drive to succeed and willingness to work is enough, while Billy represents an America of untold riches, where one gets rich just by being there with

the appropriate appearance.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in his mania, Billy labels any number of government officials as being part of the “Great God Brown,” as he declares, “Long live Chief of Police Brown! District Attorney Brown! [. . .] Senator Brown! President Brown! Oh, how many persons in one God make up the good God Brown?” (524). By applying his own surname to these American institutions, he comes to represent America (or perhaps civilization more generally). By the end of the play, with his final realizations, Cybel goes so far as to label him “Man” to the police officer, and it is important that the officer (a representative of the state that Billy has declared made up entirely of the Great God Brown) is so unfamiliar with what “Man” is that he does not know how to spell it (533). Thus, Billy, as a symbol, evolves from the model American businessman to the Everyman, ironically misunderstood and unrecognized by the very society he represents, or, at least, once represented.

The seeker figures Robert and Dion are also quite similar. These two men are the men that the female characters choose to love and marry. The description of Dion's (real) face in the prologue, “*dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life*” (475), echoes similar word choices in Robert's description: “*touch of a poet [. . .] wide dark eyes [. . .] delicate and refined, leaning to weakness*” (BTH 573). The two men share similar facial characteristics and orientations towards life. Both men are interested in art, like proper Dionysian characters, but either do not produce anything (like Robert) or hate what they do create (like Dion).

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<sup>2</sup> Or rather, perhaps, they represent two sides of a single pole, with Robert and Dion at the other end of the founding ideals, being an America that allows its inhabitants to live free of persecution and as they see fit. This ideal seems to have gone unrealized, at least in the societies that Robert and Dion live in. At the very least, there seems to be an implicit condemnation of Billy's America, as the stage directions comment on Dion's home as being in “*one of those one-design districts that daze the eye with multiplied ugliness*” (484), just as Billy's designs are structurally perfect but lack beauty.

Dion's description also draws attention to the childlike attitudes that he and Robert share.

Indeed, like Robert, Dion is *constantly* referred to as a child, almost to the point of ridiculousness. To choose just some of the examples, Margaret dreams of him on the pier as "my little boy – my baby" (479) and years later tells Billy that "[Dion is] just like a child, he's so impractical" (490). When Dion first meets Cybel, he calls her "maternal" (493), and, when seeing Dion off for the last time, Cybel speaks to him "*like a mother talking to her little son*" (500). Even in his last moments, Dion speaks to Brown "*weakly and childishly*" (510).

This play marks the first clear use of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophies in the provider and seeker characters. Billy is a representative of Apollonian order. He is the model citizen of a great civilized nation, and his description suggests that he is a model of "*disciplined restraint*" (473). He is essentially non-artistic. His architectural creations are purely functional and lack the aesthetic Apollonian beauty necessary to properly market them to society. He is so extremely Apollonian that he cannot even muster the artistic ability to create the illusion of beauty.

Dion, on the other hand, is a near perfect Dionysian model; even his name is a shortened form of his representative deity. His drinking and carousing link him with Dionysus's divine portfolio. He is an artist figure, self-tortured by having to corrupt his Dionysian art in order to decorate Brown's functional buildings with Apollonian "beauty" in order to support his family.

Nietzsche begins *The Birth of Tragedy* by saying that while Apollonian and Dionysian forces are in conflict within society, they take their most visible form on the stage in drama. His primary argument is that the Apollonian finds the Dionysian repulsive

but is also fatally attracted to it. Tragedy is created when the two come together (14). This play is both a Nietzschean and Aristotelian tragedy, but it is not Dion's tragedy. Dion's life and death are merely ripe with *pathos*, with sadness. Dion's path is set before the play begins, or at the very least, from the prologue on. The title is *The Great God Brown* because, ultimately, the narrative shifts to Billy's tragedy. In Nietzschean terms, it is a tragedy because the Billy, the Apollonian hero, desires to live the life of his Dionysian brother, and their union, via Billy's assumption of Dion's mask upon the latter's death, creates the tragic arc. In Aristotelian terms, it is Billy who finally achieves *anagnorisis* and has his realizations validated by Nature, in Cybel, but not by the society surrounding him. Indeed, Billy's death does not seem to carry with it the traditional Greek redemption for society – he is no Oedipus, curing the plague of Thebes through his self-mutilation and exile – because society itself is the plague. Neither of the representatives of society, the police officer nor Margaret, recognize Billy nor pay any attention to the redemptive power of his words, so he cannot save them even if he wanted to. They have driven him to be as greed-motivated as Andrew or Marco, but Margaret still demands that he exhibit the romantic nature of a seeker, an effort that leaves him splintered into *three* personae (Dion's mask, his own mask, and himself underneath), rather than just Dion's two. Salvation in the play's world is individual because it is Billy's efforts to comply with society's unattainable expectations that drive him to his *anagnorisis* and death.

Dion is an extremely divided character, both visually and mentally. His divided nature is made clear to the audience principally through his mask. As the play progresses, the mask demonstrates the difference between his own mental state and the face he has to present to the world. At the beginning the play, the “*mask is a fixed forcing of his own*



*face – dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life – into the expression of a mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing and sensual young Pan”* (475), but, by the second act, his real face has become “*that of an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self-torture, yet lighted from within by a spiritual calm and human kindness*” (497) while “*the mask is now terribly ravaged. All of its Pan quality has changed into a diabolical Mephistophelean cruelty and irony*” (498). The mask is a shield that Dion wears against the world, as he asks, “Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or be touched” (480). The mask begins as an image of a Dionysian character (though not a seeker) which covers up the Dionysian seeker beneath it. As society places greater pressure on Dion to conform, through his wife, children, and job, it becomes steadily corrupted.

Dion's mask is an early prototype for O'Neill's later experimentation with placing two different actors playing one character on stage in *Days Without End*. The character of John Loving, split into two onstage characters, John and Loving, are treated by the other characters as one entity. In their eyes John Loving occupies only the physical space of John and the speeches of both actors are heard to be coming from him. Similarly, it would seem as though the Dion who speaks is not always the suffering ascetic beneath the mask. It is difficult to find a single page of this play with Dion on the stage that does not prefix at least one of his speeches with the stage direction “*mockingly*,” a key word in the mask's original description. Further, Dion even seems to see himself as being divided. When Brown confronts him about the lies Margaret has been telling about Dion's quality as a husband and father, Dion replies “(wearily) She was lying about her husband, not me, you fool” (495). Since Margaret is unable to recognize Dion without his mask, he

may well mean that his mask persona is responsible for his drinking and womanizing, not himself.

In order to understand better Dion's mental divisions, it seems valuable to briefly introduce the ideas of a British psychiatrist from the 1960s, R.D. Laing. As Paul Levine describes Laing's theories, he suggests that schizophrenia is the result of a conflict between a person's behaviour and experience:

*by experience* is meant the way we perceive and comprehend the world. By *behaviour* is meant the way we act on our perception and comprehension of the world. Thus *experience* may be thought of as the way the world looks to us; and *behaviour* may be thought of as they [sic] way we look to the world [. . .] We experience the behaviour of others and then behave according to our experience.  
(2)

Laing believes that, from a very early age, social institutions, from the family, to schools, to the government, serve as authority figures that constantly evaluate and respond to the behaviour of the individual. When that behaviour is in line with social norms, it approves, and vice versa. Conflict arises when the experience of the individual, his or her sense of his or her self and his or her place in the world, is at odds with the response he or she receives from these authority figures – who we think we are versus who society tells us we should be. Laing says that the most serious cases of this conflict result in a schizophrenic condition where the mind attempts to protect itself from these negative evaluations by retreating inward or lashing out, “*If our experience is destroyed, our behaviour will be destructive*. If our experience is destroyed, we have lost our own selves” (Levine 2-6).

Dion's mask, at the beginning of the play is, in short, the image of the rebellious teenager and society's view of the artist (a socially understandable, if not acceptable Dionysian figure). The real Dion is quick to accept Margaret's love. Just as Robert thinks

that the secret beyond the horizon might just be Ruth's love, Dion falls for Margaret thinking that "She is my armor!" (481). Dion earlier says that his mask is his armor, so, if Margaret were to be so, then he would no longer need the mask. As with Cybel, he would be free to be himself, even if just with her.

Margaret, however, rebuffs his unmasked face and is unable to recognize him. He is forced to woo her with his mask on, but his conception of love is romantic. He speaks of their relationship in terms of the sky, death, and rebirth, and their coming together is passionate. After the moon has passed behind a cloud, a symbolic rebirth for the two together, a new Dion emerges, one who is, at least, subconsciously aware of what comes next for them. While the stage directions do not say so, the following passage seems to drip with sarcasm, evoking the mocking Pan mask; he says, "Wake up! Time to get up! Time to exist! Time for school! Time to learn! Learn to pretend! Cover your nakedness! Learn to Lie! Learn to keep step! Join the procession!" to which Margaret responds, "Oh, Dion, I am so ashamed" (482). Dion speaks not to Margaret but to himself. The implied loss of virginity is tied hand in hand with Dion's awakening to the future as a member of the society of which he is not part and that his rebellious masked persona rejects. The passage describes a well-socialized mask that he is never able to fully assume.

Despite this awakening, Dion is able to hold on to his spirit for a time while he is away at school and for the first few years of his marriage. Margaret berates him in the first act for having "kept up the hard drinking and gambling you started the last year abroad" (485). The death of his parents left them with a sizable fortune that, he says, "for five years [. . .] kept us living abroad in peace. It bought us a little happiness – of a kind – didn't it? Living and loving and having children" (486). Dion's father paid for his life at

school, and, beyond that, his inheritance kept him from having to work seriously to support his family. It was only in the last year abroad, presumably beginning to run short of money, that Dion was seriously confronted by the prospect of having to work for a living. The years of living in Europe allowed Dion to live as Robert wished, a seeker character travelling abroad. He was even able to do so with his wife in tow, and, for a time, he at least appeared to be happy. When the money began to run low, Dion was forced into a provider role that leaves him bitter and jaded with the world.

From the very beginning, Dion's mother says that he is a talented artist, and both Margaret and Billy make similar statements, but Dion never sees it that way. He says of his work on Billy's blueprints that:

I doctor them up with cute allurements so that fools will desire to buy, sell, breed, sleep, love, hate, curse and pray in them! I do this with devilish cleverness to their entire delight! Once I dreamed of painting wind on the sea and the skimming flight of cloud shadows over the tops of trees! Now . . . (499-500)

The society that Dion lives in has expectations: that he will work, that he will support his family, that he will create something "useful" for it, but that Dion sees as useless. The art that Dion creates for this society is a beautiful Apollonian illusion; it is not real or true, but merely "cute allurements." This is the kind of art, in fact, that Dion sees all around him anyway, since the stage directions describe his home as being "*painted with the intolerable lifeless realistic detail of the stereotyped paintings which usually adorn the sitting rooms of such houses*" (484). In fact, all of the backgrounds except the pier for the prologue and epilogue are just painted backdrops rather than Realistic box sets. Thus, the world he lives in, in both a literal and meta-theatrical sense, is an Apollonian illusion. Dion is so horribly divided inside because, in order to be the husband that society expects him to be, he must be able to support his family financially. Dion sees his creative ability

as being binary; he must either create the “cute allurements” or real art, so in order to provide for his family, society asks him to essentially prostitute his dream.<sup>3</sup>

R.D. Laing is useful for understanding Dion because Dion’s experience is absolutely shattered. Inside, he celebrates living, love, and art, but the society he lives in tells him that those things are merely statistics, sex, and “allurements,” that the most important thing for him to do is to be a husband who can bring home a pay-cheque, regardless of the personal cost. Dion tears himself apart trying to be the man society expects him to be while still protecting the man he is inside. The mask is his attempt to distance his inner self from the man he must be with others. Eventually, he simply gets to the point where even life itself is described in terms of distasteful work, as Dion wishes “To fall asleep and know you’ll never, never be called to get on the job of existence again!” (499).

He never has anyone he can remove his mask with, not even his own wife, until he meets Cybel, but even she can give little more than a reprieve. Her Mother Earth nature makes her too disassociated to give any solace in this life. As she says, “You may be important but your life’s not. There’s millions of it born every second. Life can cost too much even for a sucker to afford it – like everything else. And it’s not sacred – only the you inside is. The rest is earth” (499). In the end, Dion cannot balance his own true self and the self that he needs to present to the world, leading to apparently self-destructive behaviour like drinking and apparent womanizing that make very logical sense when seen from Dion’s point of view of attempting to escape briefly the man he has

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<sup>3</sup> Speaking of O’Neill’s *Glencairn* cycle, Sheaffer says, “He valued [*The Moon of the Caribbees*] at the particular expense of *In the Zone*, which he came to downgrade, probably because it proved his most successful one-acter. ‘When *everybody* likes something,’ he once said, with his lifelong suspicion of popularity, ‘watch out!’” (*Son and Playwright*, 383).

to be for his family and return to being a Dionysian seeker. Dion's masked self drives him to be as extremely Dionysian as possible, thus he does not just drink, he drinks to excess; he does not just love his wife, he appears to be a womanizer. His response to the social oppression is to push back as far in the other direction as possible to the point where he becomes a debauched Dionysian, like Eilert Lovbörg from *Hedda Gabler*. In this sense, Dion's “cute allurements” are an echo of Eilert's first book, of which he says:

[Praise] was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what everyone would agree with [. . .] For now I mean to win myself a position again – to make a fresh start [. . .] (*draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket*) But when this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it. For this is the real book – the book I have put my true self into. (Ibsen 34)

Eilert's first book is a mask. He writes what he has to, so that he can write what he wants, while Dion draws what he has to, but cannot see his way through to drawing what he wants.

The mask is a problem because Dion wants to be part of a society that his real self cannot fit into. The mask is a social image of what that society expects a Dionysian character to be, a sort of rebel figure that is crucially *not* truly Dionysian but a twisted, corrupted image that society can at least tolerate, if not accept. By *pretending* to be that image, Dion is able to protect his inner self but not able to fully integrate with the social image.

For Dion the ascetic, the mask allows him to protect himself, to attempt to function in society, and provide for his family at the cost of slowly destroying himself. It allows him to take on aspects of the man that Billy actually is – capable of functioning socially and making a living. For Billy, the practical businessman, Dion's mask grants the passion and drive that he is unable to summon in his own life to woo Margaret properly.

What is important here is that it is not actually the act of *wearing* the mask that drives the two men insane but, rather, that they have been “*tortured and distorted by the demon of Dion’s mask*” (516). The mask itself is in some way inherently evil simply because it is not “true,” just as the face that both Dion and Billy are forced to present to the world, simply to survive, or to achieve their goals, respectively, is inherently false.

Billy's mask of his own face, which he begins to assume after acquiring Dion's, is “*an exact likeness of his face as it was in the last scene – the self-assured success*” (515). The new mask is necessary because of the changes wrought by Dion's mask on Billy's mind. He is no longer that simple. Having taken the Dionysian within him, he is very much at war with himself. Dion was, at heart, a Dionysian seeker unwillingly attempting to be a provider, but Billy is a Apollonian provider *trying with all his heart* to be what he thinks is Dionysian. The result is that both roles are forced to be masks and that the real Billy is some tortured amalgamation of the two.

Finally, we come to Margaret, the female love object. Margaret is an interesting case in that she is a slightly different character than Ruth, though this is perhaps the result of slightly different circumstances. She seems to have a little more freedom of choice than Ruth does. She is ready to take a job at the local library to help support her family until Billy insists that she not do so and offers Dion a job instead. This sequence of events is important because Billy as a representative of “society” acts to keep her at home, in her “place.” She considers doing what Ruth would not or could not do for her husband and family, but ultimately the society itself moves to keep her at home.

The Ruth of the second act of *Beyond the Horizon* would undoubtedly understand to some degree the lamentations of Billy’s mother when she says to her husband, “When

you proposed, I thought your future promised success – my future – (*with a sigh*) – Well, I suppose we’ve been comfortable. Now, it’s his [Billy’s] future” (474), a sentiment that Margaret never seems to echo about Dion despite her husband’s drunken laziness. She never seems to get to the same point of regretting her choice in a mate. Hickey’s wife, Evelyn, of *The Iceman Cometh*, appears to have this trait of constant forgiveness in common with Margaret, which drives Hickey to hate and kill her, so perhaps Margaret’s unwillingness to blame Dion for his failings is actually making things even worse for him. She frequently seems perturbed with Dion but never stops caring for him, even though it seems clear that, at least by the time of his death, he no longer displays much affection for her. When Billy in Dion’s mask kisses her with passion shortly after Dion’s death, she says, “Aren’t you ashamed? You haven’t kissed me like that in ages” and throws her mask away permanently (512).

In earlier scenes, Margaret always removed her mask when alone with Dion, but not in front of Billy or anyone else. That she would remove the mask in the presence of Billy in Dion’s mask is not surprising, as she believes it to be him, but that she would throw it away entirely is extremely interesting because it implies that the new Billy/Dion somehow strengthens her or empowers her to display her real face, not only to her husband, but to the whole world; it implies that Billy *brings something to the relationship* that Dion alone does not. Certainly, the early years of their marriage, abroad in Europe, were a positive experience for her, but they never made her discard the mask itself. Such an idea might seem counter-intuitive, given that at the end of the play Margaret dances with Dion’s mask alone, but it is under this mask that Margaret comes to know Billy as well – both he and Dion become some sort of amalgamation within the mask that she



worships and which fortifies her to face the world unmasked. Billy adds to the seeker and Dionysian image his own provider and Apollonian traits. The mask itself becomes the Ideal Male, though Billy himself does not because he cannot, in turn, fully internalize the distorted Dionysian traits that the mask already embodies.

That said, Margaret's mask never seems to create the burden that Dion or Billy feel, perhaps because it is merely "*an exact, almost transparent reproduction of her own features, but giving her the abstract qualities of a Girl instead of the individual, Margaret*" (477). Unlike Dion and Billy, Margaret *is* basically the Girl, even as an individual, so behaving the way society expects her to as the Girl is no great stretch for her. She can afford to throw her mask away because her husband has become the man she wants him to be, so she no longer feels the need to worry about what society thinks.

Cybel, by contrast, is very aware of how far her real self is removed from her mask and is able to make her peace with it, which is what Dion cannot do. As she says, "I gave them a Tart. They understood her and knew their parts and acted naturally. And on both sides we were able to keep our real virtue, if you get me" (497). Billy sees the Dion mask as his only way to win Margaret's love, which he desperately desires; thus, he actually wants to *be* his Dion-mask persona in the second half of the play, which is why the masks affect him so much more than Dion. The other characters all either identify completely with their masks or are able to maintain some sense of distance. Even Dion understands on some level that he does not want to actually *be* the man the mask portrays. This is not a realization that Billy is able to come to, and it leaves him split into two masks and his self rather than just Dion's two personae.

Just as the man Ruth really wanted/needed was some combination of the best

features of Robert and Andrew, so Margaret is given such a man in Billy, but he is such a man only on the outside, an Ideal Male only in appearance. Her deification of the mask transforms from beautiful to disturbing as it plays out behind Cybel's cradling the body of a dying Billy, a man Margaret can seemingly no longer recognize. From the beginning, Margaret can never see people, only personae. In order to free her from her own persona, in fact, in order to be recognized at all, both Dion and Billy have to assume masks, have to be someone other than who they are, in order to fulfil her desires. In the end, Robert and Andrew could not be other than they were, and Ruth hated them for it; Dion and Billy reshaped themselves into that perfect image for Margaret and destroyed themselves in the process.

As previously discussed, Margaret frequently refers to Dion as a child, but that is not the only way she refers to him. Dreaming up at the moon in the prologue, Margaret says that she:

is Dion's little girl – (*She sings laughingly, elfishly*) Dion is my Daddy-O! [. . .]  
(*more and more strongly and assertively, until at the end she is both a wife and a mother*) And I'll be Mrs. Dion – Dion's wife – and he'll be my Dion – my own Dion – my little boy – my baby. (479)

She sets Dion up not only as a husband (of uncertain role) and a child, but also as a father figure. This rhetoric largely disappears until after Billy assumes Dion's mask, when he becomes “my long lost lover, and my husband, and my big boy, too!” (521), a line she echoes twice, once in Billy's death scene and once in the epilogue, in both cases directed towards the mask itself. Father is replaced by lover as she moves into the sexually active phase of her life. The young, virginal Margaret looks for a man, or failing that, the image of a man, who fills all of the male roles, to be O'Neill's conception of an Ideal Male for her, or, as Dion mockingly says, “The Ideal Husband” (485). In the first appearance in

O'Neill's work of the Ideal Male figure, then, the Ideal Male is, ironically, not a living, breathing person but merely the image of an amalgamation of persons that never existed at all. Thus, O'Neill questions whether this figure can ever really exist in reality at all, or whether it is merely a social construction.

The gap in these declarations occurs because Dion is incapable of fulfilling the provider role. He seems to be an acceptable lover, having fathered three children, and, as has already been demonstrated, he certainly acts and is treated as a child, with both Margaret and Cybel assuming a maternal role with him. Where Dion seems to fail, like Robert before him, is in being a provider, and, by extension, father for his wife and family. When he tries, he hates himself the whole time. Presumably, Brown is paying him enough to provide for the family (if for nothing other than Margaret's sake), but doing so prostitutes and compromises his artistic integrity and, thus, his romantic Dionysian seeker aspect. He cannot remain a seeker and a provider simultaneously, and attempting to do so destroys him as surely as it does Billy. Instead, Margaret can only find that Ideal Male in an image, an image that precludes change, and even death – Dion's mask itself.

Indeed, it seems quite probable that Margaret does not even love Dion, but, rather, just the mask itself, as she can recognize neither Dion nor Billy as the man that is her "husband" without it and, with it, cannot distinguish between the two. Both men desire to be able to reveal their true selves to her, but, as Dion's mask sardonically says in the prologue, "girls only allow themselves to look at what is seen!" (480).

Both of the men have a different approach to love objects than Margaret. As previously discussed, Dion even sees himself as a different person than Margaret's husband, and he sees her as a different person than his wife: "I love Margaret. I don't

know who my wife is” (498). The individuals love or can be loved; in Dion’s understanding of the world, the socially prescribed roles cannot. He loves the woman underneath, not her mask or the social functions of her role as his wife. Similarly, Dion’s mask persona does not love his children and carouses about the town, but he claims that none of this is really himself. He is forced to be this apparently horrible man because no one but Cybel can stand to see him without his role/mask on.

Billy’s relationship to the masks of others is more varied. He sees only Margaret’s mask when he first proposes marriage in the prologue or at any other point up to Dion’s death, but he does not blink an eye when she pulls the mask off when he first pretends to be Dion. He recognizes her, with or without her mask and accepts her, but he does *not* recognize Cybel’s real face in the parlour. This suggests that there is more to his love of Margaret than the simple possession of Dion’s life. He cares enough about Margaret to recognize her regardless of a mask, while his relationship with Cybel is simply purchasing her away from Dion.

This notion of possession is a key theme in the play, largely through O’Neill’s characterization of Billy as a representative of corporate America. The best example of this is probably his purchase of Cybel and her imaginary sister. He does not actually require their services but, rather, is interested solely in denying their comfort to Dion, regardless of his own belief that he is merely trying to help and protect Margaret. In their final confrontation, both Dion and Billy use the word “envy” repeatedly to describe Billy’s feelings, and the final conclusion is that Billy ultimately envies Dion for his whole life. In Dion’s words, Billy envies Dion because he has “always possessed the power he needed for love, because [he is] love!” (510), and when Billy asks Cybel, “what is it that

makes Dion so attractive to women,” she responds that “He’s alive!” (502). The women in the play never see Billy as anything more than a friend or a business partner, in other words, as a provider. Like Andrew, he conceives of love in practical terms, as with his purchase of Cybel, or, as in his proposal in the prologue, “I love you, Margaret [. . .] Can’t you love me? Won’t you marry me – after college” (478). Billy’s love, at least until he dons Dion’s mask, is pragmatic and always has one eye on the material benefit or implications of the relationship rather than being purely passionate, like Dion’s love.

The play’s world is one where the perception of possession is mandatory for survival. Dion cannot survive because he thinks he cannot really take possession of anything. Dion laments that to Billy in his final scene that:

I’ve loved, lusted, won and lost, sang and wept! I’ve been life’s lover! I’ve fulfilled her will and if she’s through with me now it’s only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn. It isn’t enough to be her creature, you’ve got to create her or she requests you to destroy yourself. (507)

While Dion realizes he cannot possess, he sees a different fate for his children. His last words to his sons are “I couldn’t. That’s for you who can. You must inherit the earth for [Margaret]” (505). He believes that *they* are capable of possessing the earth in a way that he could not because they are much more like Billy than their father is, as their introductory stage directions say that they are “*healthy, normal likable boys, with much the same quality as Billy Brown*” (505). Their mechanical way of speaking as a group, with a constant positive attitude, evokes Billy’s Great God Brown labelling scene. Like Billy early in the play, the boys’ understanding of the world is oriented around money.

Margaret says

*(half to herself)* Your father claims he steals his ideas.  
ELDEST – *(with a sheepish grin)* I’ll bet father said that when he was – just talking.

NEXT – Mr. Brown doesn't have to steal, does he?

YOUNGEST – I should say not! He's awful rich. (512)

They cannot understand the theft of something as abstract as an idea and believe that Brown would not need to anyway since he has so much money (which would be something *worth* stealing to them).

Dion believes that he has not “created” life and is bitter about his past “thinking one was creating before one discovered one couldn’t!” (486). However, Dion has clearly fathered three children with Margaret – he has created life, though his relationship with Cybel seems to be platonic. He provides no examples of any of his actual “failed” art, so we merely have his word against all the others that he is no good at it. Finally, the backdrop in Cybel’s parlour is first described as “*cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow-brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring*” (492) but, after so many visits from Dion, in the second act it has become “*brilliant, stunning wall-paper, on which crimson and purple flowers and fruits tumble over one another in a riotously profane lack of any apparent design*” (497). Dion brings with him fertility and a sense of Dionysian chaos to Cybel’s parlour. His desire to paint specific things, to create specific life, blinds him to the success he *is* achieving. As Cybel says of his inability to win at cards, “You keep getting closer, but it knows you still want to win – a little bit – and it’s wise all I care about is playing” (497-98).

In this last passage, what Cybel is really pointing out is that Dion is still struggling for possession, for control of his life, ideals that society is telling him he should want to control. Her own position, of playing without the intent to win, echoes the Daoist aspiration to be like a child, that one should not struggle to be anything one is not already, and, optimally, not even be able to conceive of being otherwise.

By contrast, Billy is associated with infertility and decay. Dion wonders during their confrontation, “Why hasn’t Brown had children – he who loves children – he who loves *my* children” (509), and it appears he has never married. He does not even seem to have any sexual desire for other women, as he says to Cybel, “I won’t bother you much – I’m much too busy – you can do what you like – lead your own life – except for seeing him” (502). Like her relationship with Dion, Cybel’s with Billy also appears to be platonic. Finally, Dion’s mask seems to accuse him of being beyond uninterested, but of actually being incapable, as Billy says to it:

*I will live with Margaret happily ever after. (more tauntingly) She will have children by me! (He seems to hear some mocking denial from the mask. He bends toward it.) What? (then with a sneer) Anyway, that doesn’t matter! Your children already love me more than they ever loved you! (518)*

Based on Billy’s reaction, the mask seems to be telling him that in fact Margaret will never have children with him, either suggesting knowledge of the future or infertility.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an anthropological movement was occurring that was interested in ancient religious practices. While O’Neill may not have studied the myths and rituals surrounding the *Magna Mater*, or Great Mother, himself, he was certainly aware of them, as Thomas Porter points out, via his readings of Carl Jung (42). According to James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, probably the most prominent study in this area in the early twentieth century, the Mother is a pre-Greek fertility goddess who went by many names including Cybele. The myth goes that Cybele had a lover named Attis, who is occasionally identified as her son, who dies in a boar attack or after castrating himself (403-04). Attis himself was a vegetation deity who “represented the yearly decay and revival of life, especially of vegetable life, [who was] personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead” in order to insure

the fertility of the land (378). Frazer also links the brewing of a potent wine from pine seeds as part of the worship of Attis with “the orgiastic nature of the rites of Cybele, which the ancients compared to those of Dionysus” (409-10).

O’Neill sets Dion up as a fertile Attis figure who brings life and fertility to the land with his death, as Billy says to the mask after Dion’s death, “Now I am drinking in your strength, Dion – strength to love in this world and die and sleep and become fertile earth, as you are becoming now in my garden – your weakness the strength of my flowers, your failure as an artist painting their petals with life” (519). Even in death, Dion remains a fertility symbol, and, in fact, becomes something more, achieving a union with nature that further connects him with the reincarnating god Dionysus (also symbolic of fertility) and Daoistic perfection.<sup>4</sup> Of all the seeker characters to be examined here, Dion is the only one that seems to lack a moment of unity with nature in life, be it real Daoist “profound identification” or Robert’s romantic dreaming. Instead, his unity with nature occurs after his death as his body brings life to Billy’s garden.

It seems clear that Cybel is meant to be seen as an Earth Mother figure, as many stage directions refer to her in that manner, not to mention that her name itself is a corruption of Cybele, rendering it as a homonym for the Greek title *Sybil*, or prophet.

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<sup>4</sup> O’Neill himself saw Dion as being torn between the “Dion”ysus half of his name and his last name, “St. Anthony (‘the masochistic, life-denying spirit of Christianity’)” (Sheaffer, *Son and Artist* 167). Early in the play, Dion quotes the Bible, saying, “Suffer these little ones” (485), a passage, that in the King James version reads in full: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein” (Mark 10:14-5). As with Daoism, Christ places value in the child-like state of innocence. Dion treats this “*mockingly*,” implying that his mask’s rebel attitude rejects the provider role that society is demanding he assume because it is necessarily connected to worldly knowledge and responsibility; in short, the provider is an adult. Meanwhile, the Christian religion is telling him that to take on this adult status is to forsake salvation, so society itself is also setting him up for a double bind. Nonetheless, while I agree with O’Neill that the Christian religion itself may be stifling in this play, Christianity itself, and the way that in this passage it leads towards Daoist perfection, seems positive. Dion can even be seen as a Christ figure, if an unwilling one, as his death leads to Billy’s salvation.



However, she has an interesting idea as to whom her Attis figure should be that does a great deal to explain both the reality of Dion's art and the source of fertility in our world. In Dion's death scene, he asks Billy about a prayer, and Billy responds with the first line of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in Heaven" (510). When Billy dies, he asks a similar question, but Cybel gives him the following line: "Our Father who Art!" (532). In the corrupted syntax of Cybel's quote, Art becomes capitalized – it is a noun, a name. Art is the father; Art becomes Cybel's Attis. Dion says that that he was never able "to be an artist – except in living – and not even in that" (485), and Cybel claims that he is attractive because he is alive. Life itself is a form of art and becomes associated with the creation of new life and fertility.

*The Great God Brown* offers the same hope for escape that *Beyond the Horizon* does. There simply is no escape, except in death, and in order to achieve it one must first live. As Nietzsche quotes Silenus (a character referred to several times throughout the play) "The best of all things is something entirely outside your grasp: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second-best thing for you – is to die soon" (22).

There are many Biblical passages quoted throughout the play, but in the end, it is not a Christian salvation that Billy achieves. In the final scene Billy says,

BROWN – It was dark and I couldn't see where I was going and they all picked  
on me.

CYBEL – I know. You're tired.

BROWN – And when I wake up . . . ?

CYBEL – The sun will be rising again.

BROWN – To judge the living and the dead! (*frightenedly*) I don't want justice. I  
want love.

CYBEL – There is only love. (532)

Billy misunderstands Cybel's word "sun." He clearly thinks that Christ the Son is to arrive with the Second Coming, but he explicitly rejects a Christian salvation that will

judge him in place of real unconditional love in nature, via the sun imagery. He rejects the male-centric, judgement-based love of Christ that society has taught him is appropriate in favour of the female-centric, unconditional love of Cybel and nature. Even more significantly, however, his desire for unconditional love is also a rejection of Margaret, who only loves the Ideal Male in Dion's mask.

Similar forces to those that destroyed Robert destroy Dion. It is the social pressures weighing down on him expecting him to provide for his family, coupled with his own extreme resistance to them, that tear Dion apart. Billy begins the play already possessing all of the attributes that society demands of Dion but lacking all of Dion's attractiveness to females. When he tries to mimic those attributes, to maintain his provider and Dion's seeker aspects, the pressure crushes him as well. Either because of society, or his own desires, neither character is able to maintain a single identity, and, thus, the Ideal Male figure is unable to be embodied in one man, only in Margaret's mental construction of the mask, now independent of a flesh and blood male.

While *Beyond the Horizon* depicted the seeker and the provider as largely uninterested in adopting the other's traits, *The Great God Brown* shows them as being actually unable to do so, even superficially. Dion only wants to pretend that he can be a provider, but Billy desperately wants to absorb some portion of the seeker to earn Margaret's love. O'Neill's addition of Nietzschean philosophy to the mix helps to emphasize the binariness of his characters. This play is also the first time that O'Neill effectively stages the Ideal Male as something that is ultimately inhuman, a position it will occupy again in *Strange Interlude*.

### Chapter 3. Expansion: *Strange Interlude*

*The Great God Brown* is interesting for its refinement and complication of both the seeker and provider characters. O'Neill, in his continuing experimentation, puts these characters to use once again in *Strange Interlude*. The most important shift from O'Neill's earlier work in this play is from a male to a female focus. In the previous plays, the male characters' struggles have taken centre stage, rendering both Ruth and Margaret important but ultimately side-lined secondary characters. In *Strange Interlude*, O'Neill places Nina in the central position. In order to achieve this, some modification to his dichotomy is necessary. From the perspective of a young adult male, the only serious options available to portray to a female love interest are the seeker and provider roles. From the perspective of the young adult female, however, there are two other males in her life – the father and (eventually) the child. For this play, O'Neill includes all four of these male roles. The result of this expansion is that, while the original roles themselves remain relatively static, the newly introduced roles take on aspects of the earlier ones, and the Nietzschean dichotomy that has been connected quite closely with each role is unhinged entirely, though it remains a valuable tool. The men in this play have moved away from the tight typology of the earlier works and are much closer to fully developed individuals, complete with their own contradictions. Finally, the sociological concerns of the earlier plays take a back seat to interpersonal conflict as Nina, already middle-class and over-indulged, is not as concerned with establishing a comfortable life economically as with seizing her vision of the Ideal Male by taking complete possession of her four men.

Ned Darrell is perhaps the character who falls furthest from his apparent origins as a seeker figure. He is the man who Nina chooses to love and father her children (like both Robert and Dion with their respective women before him), though, crucially, not the man she chooses to marry. Because Nina's child is Ned's, he is the male connected most closely with fertility in the play, and his drinking and womanizing while attempting to forget Nina in Europe reflect Dion and an underlying Dionysian current.

Despite this, Ned is not exactly a model Dionysian figure. He is closer in nature to a father than a child. He serves as an authority figure for Nina early in the play, acting to prescribe a treatment for her troubles at the hospital and fills in as her confessor/confidante (a role usually played by a father figure, like Charlie) when she debates what to do about having a child for Sam. He shares Robert's love of learning, but Nina says that he "doesn't care for children" (749). However, Ned is certainly much more capable of functioning in society than either of his predecessors. In many ways, he seems almost Apollonian. Ned begins the play as a doctor, which connects him with Apollo's status as a god of healing (Atsma 1).

Ned is not an artist but still claims to be a seeker of sorts, as he describes himself as a scientist, "an experimental searcher after the truth" (711). But in Nietzsche's conception, science is even more alien to the Dionysian position than the Apollonian is. In comparing science with Apollonian and Dionysian art, Nietzsche says that:

like the artist, theoretical man takes an infinite delight in everything that exists [. . .] Whenever the truth is uncovered, the artist gazes enraptured at whatever covering remains, but theoretical man takes delight and satisfaction in the covering that has been cast aside, and takes his greatest delight in a process of uncovering that is always successful and always achieved by his own efforts [. . . . The theoretical man takes] greater delight in the quest for truth than in the truth itself [. . . and places his faith in ] a profound *illusion* [. . .] that rational thought, guided by causality, can penetrate to the depths of being, and that it is capable not

only of knowing but even of *correcting* being. (72-73)

As a doctor and a scientist, Ned certainly believes that he is capable of “correcting,” improving or fixing others. As Nietzsche observes, this expectation that one can understand and correct others is an illusion, and is thus loosely connected with the Apollonian. As a result, Ned is the closest thing to an Apollonian seeker that is possible.

There is nothing about the seeker role itself that forces a seeker to be an artist other than precedent and its usual connection with the Dionysian. Thus, Ned can be, and is, a seeker, but he occupies an odd position that is simultaneously external to and located directly between the Apollonian and Dionysian that none of the earlier characters have exhibited. Ned’s initial description betrays his dual identity here, as he possesses “*a quality about him, provoking and disturbing to women, intense passion which he has rigidly trained himself to control and set free only for the objective satisfaction of studying his own and their reactions; and so he has come to consider himself as immune to love through his scientific understanding of its real sexual nature*” (661). While both *Beyond the Horizon* and *The Great God Brown* posit a world where the Dionysian character cannot flourish, let alone survive, Ned seems to flaunt this position by actually succeeding in doing exactly what Dion originally attempted: he is capable of reining in his “*intense [Dionysian] passion,*” though, as we shall see, O’Neill questions whether this capacity is really desirable.

Sam is both the provider figure and the husband in this play. He seems to share Andrew’s determination and will to success in the “*unawakened obstinate force beneath his apparent weakness*” (657) and, as Ned declares, “he’s got the right stuff in him to succeed, once he grows up and buckles down to work” (665). He thinks of love in fairly

practical (bordering on non-sexual) terms, understanding that Nina might not “love me at first . . . [I would] be happy only to take care of her . . . cook her breakfast . . . bring it up to her in bed [. . .] I’d be happy just to kiss her hair!” (659). He even tells Charlie that he will work hard so that “I can give her everything she wants. And I wouldn’t ask for anything in return except the right to take care of her. (*blurts out confusingly*) I never think of her – that way – she’s too beautiful and wonderful – not that I don’t hope she’d come to love me in time” (661). Like Billy’s desire for Margaret, Sam’s designs on Nina have an element of sexual desire, but he represses it, desiring largely to care for her. The threat of hereditary insanity in his family further renders Sam as a non-sexual being in Nina’s world, as non-useful as a lover figure as either Andrew or Billy before him.

Other similarities between these characters also exist. Sam’s clothing throughout the play mark him as “*collegiate*” (657), as part of an educated group in society (though a group younger than himself), and Charlie identifies him with America itself, just as Billy is, in somewhat deprecating terms: “His is an adolescent mind . . . he’ll never grow up . . . well, in this adolescent country, what greater blessing could he wish for?” (742). Finally, just as with Andrew and Billy, Sam’s average intelligence is immediately remarked on, not in the stage directions, but by Charlie upon Sam’s first appearance: “This is certainly no giant intellect . . . overgrown boy . . . likable quality though” (657). O’Neill makes this point of observing that his provider figures are not exceptional except, perhaps, in their appearance and determination – they are just men.

Notice that in that final quotation from Charlie, he draws attention to Sam’s childlike nature – a trait previously associated with the seeker role. In fact, in almost every passage quoted in the previous paragraph, he is referred to in such terms, like

“adolescent,” needing to “[grow] up and [buckle] down to work,” and his introductory stage directions suggest that he is both “*guileless* [. . . and] *immature*” (657). Several characters draw attention to the fact that Sam is an excellent father to his son, a fact that, when taken with his child-like demeanour, further links him with the close relationship Robert shares with his daughter for similar reasons.

Further, Sam’s occupation is significantly more Dionysian in nature than Andrew’s or Billy’s, though it is perhaps a corrupted Dionysian image. He works at writing advertisements. The writing itself is a creative process and one that he apparently grows good at, but it is closer in nature to Dion’s “cute allurements” (499) that entice society to buy beauty than to Billy’s stock buildings or to Dion’s actual desires to capture the wind on canvas. In fact, in many ways, it bears a resemblance to Andrew’s corrupted green thumb, turned metaphorically from growing plants to growing money.

This is not to say that Sam is not an Apollonian provider – he certainly is. Like Billy, he is a stand-in for the larger society, for America itself, as Charlie observed. Nina’s and Ned’s worries about Sam’s finding out about the heredity of the child certainly reflect a concern about society itself judging them for their actions. His apparent naivety and child-like demeanour, especially with regard to “his” son, are not so much markers of a Dionysian or seeker outlook as they are a willed Apollonian illusion meant to protect him from a mind-shattering truth. His ability to succeed at the workplace and attain upward mobility reflects a connection to and understanding about how society operates that would seem to be alien to a Dionysian character. The point is that, while Sam might possess a handful of odd traits that have previously been associated with Dionysian or seeker characters, he remains a solid provider figure, if only loosely Apollonian.

*Strange Interlude* is the first play examined thus far that actually puts a father figure on stage for its female character. The father is somewhat of a sub-role to the provider figure: both men look after the female financially and serve as an asexual confidante; the primary difference is generally the element of heredity rather than desire. *Strange Interlude* does give us two dedicated father figures to examine: Professor Leeds and Charlie, but Charlie is not related by blood. Thus, like the other adult males that Nina adopts, Charlie too is motivated by desire rather than heredity.

Professor Leeds appears only in the first act, but his role there is an important one. He serves as an authoritarian figure, passing judgement upon his daughter and her boyfriend in the same way he passes judgement on his students. He is an Apollonian figure connected tightly with a rigidly ordered past, as his bookshelves illustrate.

Many of the titles are in ancient or otherwise dead languages, and the directions indicate the Professor's study is a realm dedicated to the Apollonian obsession with illusion as it is "*a sanctuary where [ . . . ] a fugitive from reality can view the present safely from a distance*" (633). By Act Four, the books have become disconnected from the world of Nina's family. The dusty glass of the shelves "*giv[es] them a blurred ghostly quality,*" and Sam has a few of his own books that "[look] *startingly modern and disturbing against the background of classics in the original, [and] are slapped helter-skelter on top of each other. The titles of these books face in all directions, no one volume is placed with any relation to the one beneath it – the effect is that they have no connected meaning*" (692). Nina's father's house is a world of order, of the past, but with his death and her marriage to Sam, the house becomes more modern and filled with chaos, with only the echoes of past about it.



While Professor Leeds plays only a small role, his counterpart, Charlie, is and remains extremely important. He is certainly a bit of an Apollonian figure, constantly observing and passing judgement on Nina's actions, though rarely acting himself. He also actively serves on two different occasions as Nina's confessor and dictates what her penance must be.

Despite this, Charlie also shares a number of oddly Dionysian traits with Sam. While Sam is portrayed as childlike, Charlie is portrayed more as a child. He is constantly worried about his mother and what she might think of his actions or thoughts. Ironically, for a provider, it seems he cannot actually look after himself, calling his sister to come "keep house" (735) for him after his mother dies.

He is also something of an artist figure in both a greater and lesser sense than Sam. Charlie's writing seems to be less profit-motivated than Sam's, as he does not seem to do better than earn a modest living (though, unlike so many of O'Neill's artists, at least he is capable of making a profit), and he also seems more plagued by both an inability and a lack of desire to get at truth. Dion laments his inability to recreate truth on his canvas, but Charlie complains to himself that Europe was not a productive place to write because he was unsure of "how [to] answer the fierce question of all those dead and maimed? . . . too big a job for me!" (634). He much prefers it back in America, where the sedentary culture is "an excuse for weaving amusing words . . . my novels . . . not of cosmic importance, hardly [. . .] but there is a public to cherish them, evidently . . . and I can write! . . . more than one can say of these modern sex-yahoos" (635). Ned makes similar observations about his work, saying, "his novels just well-written surface . . . no depth, no digging underneath . . . why? . . . has the talent but doesn't dare . . . afraid he'll

meet himself somewhere” (662). Charlie realizes that he has debased his art into the creation of Dion’s “cute allurements” to “mak[e] fools feel pleased with themselves in order that they’d feel pleased with me” (741), that he has “never married the word to life! . . . I’ve been a timid bachelor of Arts, not an artist” (768). In short, Charlie’s writing, even Charlie’s life (as he studiously avoids thinking unpleasant or sexual thoughts) is an Apollonian illusion, though it has the potential, unlike Sam, to be a great deal more.

Charlie’s character development in this play is a move from this pathetic writer to the artist. He says:

Listen Nina! After we’re married I’m going to write a novel – my first real novel! All the twenty odd books I’ve written have been long-winded fairy tales for grown-ups – about dear old ladies and witty cynical bachelors and quaint characters with dialects, and married folk who always admire and respect each other, and lovers who avoid love in hushed whispers! That’s what I’ve been Nina – a hush-hush whisperer of lies! Now I’m going to give an honest healthy yell – turn on the sun into the shadows of lies – shout ‘This is life and this is sex, and here are passion and hatred and regret and joy and pain and ecstasy, and these are men and women and sons and daughters whose hearts are weak and strong, whose blood is blood and not a soothing syrup!’ Oh, I can do it Nina! I can write the truth! I’ve seen it in you, your father, my mother, sister, Gordon, Sam, Darrell and myself. I’ll write the book of us! (795)<sup>5</sup>

Charlie realizes what Dion never did – that his own life is art and worthy of being preserved artistically, whether that is a comfortable process for his mental hang-ups or not. He becomes an asexual Dionysian hero, and, thus, somehow not only father and provider, but also child and seeker as well. He becomes an Ideal Male-like figure and this could be, in part, why Charlie is the one Nina settles with at the end.

The O’Neillian *oeuvre* is full of promising artists who say they will write a great work but never do, like Robert or Simon from *More Stately Mansions*, but whether or not

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<sup>5</sup> What Charlie is describing here is exactly what O’Neill himself is later able to do in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, as he “face[s] my dead at last and write [. . .] with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones” (7).

Charlie ends up writing this book (and there seems to be some question of whether he will), his realization is important because it marks an evolution, however brief, from his “cute allurements” writing. That Nina should ignore this moment of truth and continue on with her own train of thought is, once again, fitting for O’Neill, because, so often in his plays, salvation or truth is both transient and individual: it cannot be shared. Further, Nina’s ignorance of Charlie’s potential means that the man Nina thinks that she marries at the end of the play is not this seeker figure that Charlie can be underneath but, rather, the puerile artist mask that she knows him as, a mask not dissimilar from the one Margaret loves on Dion for most of *The Great God Brown*. The man Nina thinks she marries at the end is only the “father,” not the Ideal Male, and yet, still, she is happy because she no longer has need of the others.

With Charlie’s promise that the two of them shall return to her father’s house, the play is brought full circle. She returns not only to her “father” but to her home. But the home is not exactly as it once was, because Charlie is not symbolized by the archaic books of the past. Professor Leeds is a scholar, while Charlie is a poet, a creator. The Professor’s library is a symbol of a rigid past, and Sam’s books provide it with a contemporary chaos, but what Charlie brings is potential, the possibility of creation, of the future through art, though not through sexual fertility. Nina is beyond the point where the sexual aspect is necessary. She has had her children and they have left, so she no longer has need of a lover (seeker) either, nor does she need a provider for her child. She only needs a man that is totally focused on *her*. Charlie is perfect, not because he can be an Ideal Male, but because at this late stage in her life, the Ideal is only the father.

Nina’s son, Gordon, is something of a problematic character to deal with because

he appears so little over the course of the play. In the earlier plays, the Dionysian seeker has been associated with the child figure, but there seems to be little evidence of Gordon as a seeker figure to his mother. Nor does he appear to provide for her in either a financial or spiritual way. Rather, he is merely the focus of her life for twenty years before disappearing into the sunset with Madeline. While he does seem to love her, at least to the point of jealousy early in life, he does not seem as emotionally tied to her as the other men do. Instead, he embodies so many of these traits for Madeline: as Nina says, “he’s not my son now, not Gordon [Shaw]’s son, nor Sam’s, nor Ned’s . . . he has become that stranger, another woman’s lover” (808). At the beginning of the final act, the audience is privy to their private kissing session that suggests that there is a level of passion in their relationship that hearkens back more to Ned and Nina than Nina and Sam. However, he also exhibits the drive and determination that characterized Sam in the early parts of the play too, vowing to himself that after his honeymoon he would “dive into the business . . . Dad relied on me to carry on where he left off . . . I’ll have to start at the bottom but I’ll get to the top in a hurry, I promise you that Dad!” (808). He has the potential to be either or both of his fathers, but, as we never see him free from his family, it is uncertain how he will develop as a male figure for Madeline.

These four men (excluding the Professor) make up the primary cast of the play as well as the four primary roles, but it would be foolish to neglect the influence of Nina’s dead sweetheart, Gordon Shaw. Shaw serves the special role as the image of the Ideal Male, similar to Dion’s mask from *Great God Brown*. Based on the descriptions of him, principally from Nina and Sam, Shaw was intelligent and a great athlete, not to mention patriotic and honourable. Nina spends a great deal of the play trying to reconnect with her

image of the Ideal Male, from her sexual promiscuity to the significance of her son's name. Crucially, however, Shaw was never required to actually *perform* any of his male roles. He left for the war before he and Nina consummated their relationship, and he was never in a position to need to support her (indeed, Professor Leeds comments on his family's low social class, bringing into question his ability to do even do so). He *might* have been the perfect man, the perfect union of Dionysian and Apollonian attributes, but the only proof provided that such is the case is Nina's word.

All Nina really has is the image left behind by her first love, whom she now sees as perfect<sup>6</sup> compared with the real men in her life, who manage to let her down at least once at some point or another. The men at the hospital just use her body, and Sam, in the early acts, is both sexually unappealing and financially useless. Ned lets her get back some of the passion she had experienced with Shaw, but he is initially unwilling to run away with her. Finally, young Gordon, her son, is supposed to be her last hope for such a man, but even he runs off with some other young woman. Leaving her father's house is symbolic of a sexual and social awakening as an adult woman, but when she is never able to regain that figure of the Ideal Male, she returns once more to her childhood home, complete with her pseudo-father.

For Madeline, the play ends on a similar note to how Nina's play began. Gordon is an ideal male figure, not yet challenged to perform sexually or financially, merely a smart young athlete newly graduated from college. Their departure in an aeroplane is ominous, recalling Shaw's crash during the War, and yet, at the same time, hopeful, for they have at least taken off together (an act that Nina never vocalizes, but must on some

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<sup>6</sup> This idealization of the past becomes a major theme in other O'Neill plays like *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *A Touch of the Poet*.

level wish she had done with Shaw herself).

Perhaps the clearest moment of Nina's happiness occurs in Act Six when she thinks:

My three men! . . . I feel their desires converging in me! . . . to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb . . . and am whole . . . they dissolve in me, their life is my life . . . I am pregnant with the three! . . . husband! . . . lover! . . . father! . . . and the fourth man! . . . little man! . . . little Gordon . . . he is mine too! . . . that makes it perfect! . . . (*with an extravagant suppressed exultance*) Why, I should be the proudest woman on earth! . . . I should be the happiest woman in the world! (756)

But her road to reach such happiness is suspect. Mrs. Evans assures her that "being happy, that's the nearest we can come to knowing what's good!" (690), but, in order to reach such happiness, Nina has run the gamut of sexual transgression.<sup>7</sup> Further, her happiness is not inherent in herself but tied up in being desired by men. She thinks that "I couldn't find a better husband than Sam . . . and I couldn't find a better lover than Ned . . . I need them both to be happy" (750). She takes pleasure in manipulating Ned into admitting his love for her, and, while she is willing to leave Sam for Ned early in the play, she comes to see Sam as a man worth keeping once he manages to become a suitable provider figure and potential "father" for her son. Her attitude towards young Gordon is perhaps the most blatantly characteristic of her treatment towards all of the men: she feels the need to be the sole focus of his world, going so far as to try to prevent his marriage to Madeline; in short, she wants to possess him and thinks that others want to do the same.

Nina envisions possession in terms of individuals, perhaps because she, unlike the

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<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps interesting to observe that unlike a modern audience, the play's contemporary audience might well have been more disturbed by Nina's sexual promiscuity than by her abortion, given the popularity of eugenics.

earlier women, is comfortably middle-class and has been indulged by her father all her life. Her class background means that she does not worry, even if, perhaps, she should, about economic possession and agency, unlike Ruth and Billy's mother, and, later, characters like Sara in O'Neill's cycle plays, which leaves her free to focus on the possession of individuals.

Many of the other characters are, however, motivated in great part by class and wealth, as befits O'Neill's earlier sociological concerns. Professor Leeds objects to Gordon Shaw in part because “for all his good looks and prowess in sport and his courses, [he] really came of common people and had no money of his own except as he made a career for himself” (639), despite the fact that he does not seem to have the money to support her as he would like to himself, and he worries that she will never marry a suitably wealthy man because “their fathers never approve if they have anything” (651).

Charlie has a similar anxiety. One of the first questions he asks when Ned suggests that Nina could marry Sam is about his social background – at which Ned says he personally could not care less, but that as far as he is aware they are “well off” (666) – and Charlie later laments Nina’s enduring adulation of Gordon Shaw “when actually he came from the commonest people!” (700). Charlie ascribes similar feelings to his mother, reasoning that her refusal to include his sister in her will as the result of “her bitter feeling about Jane’s marriage. In a way, she was right. Jane’s husband wasn’t much – no family or position or ability – and I doubt if she was ever happy with him. (*sarcastically*) It was one of those love matches” (736). This class-based fixation seems to be the purview of the parental figures, but, by the end of the play, Sam is in a similar position when he says,

about Gordon and Madeline, “he loves her and she loves him . . . and her folks have got money and position too” (780).

One of the most interesting observations is the degree to which family and heredity have to do with these financial concerns. Professor Leeds agrees with Charlie that in all likelihood Gordon Shaw could have made a name for himself, but that is just not what is important to him – it is Shaw’s lack of family background. This attitude seems to run counter to the vision of the American Dream of the self-made man, which, though he has the appropriate background, is exactly what Sam tries to make of himself. In the America portrayed in this play, Andrew’s “hard work and determination” are simply not enough to succeed, at least not easily or without serious opposition from the establishment. On this point it is worth observing that *Strange Interlude* was first staged in 1928, a year before the economic crash that would lead to the Great Depression, but stretches forward in time to the mid-1940s. The world of the play is one that enjoys an everlasting golden age, unmarred by economic depression or another World War, and yet it still portrays an America as caught up in class politics as ever. Nina’s interest in the possession of individuals is connected, in a Marxian reading, with class and individuals as a unit of economy. In this way, Nina can be seen to represent capitalist America, consuming as many individuals as suit her needs to provide for her happiness and lifestyle.

Charlie, however, observes that the pursuit of wealth cannot last forever, but that it has become a religion in America. He says of Sam,

What a fount of meaningless energy he's tapped! . . . always on the go . . . typical terrible child of the age . . . universal slogan, keep moving . . . moving where? . . . never mind that . . . don't think of ends . . . the means are the end . . . keep moving! . . . (*He laughs scornfully and sits down in Evans' chair, picking up the*



*paper and glancing at it sneeringly*) Its in every headline of this daily newer testament . . . going . . . going . . . never mind the gone . . . we won't live to see it . . . and we'll be so rich, we can buy the deluge anyway! . . . even our new God has His price! (744)

Charlie describes the economy and pursuit of the dollar as a new religion that will soon bring down a second Flood.

What he does not know is that Nina, too, has formed her own religion, the faith of God the Mother. Following the death of her father, Nina attempts to find solace in many modern religions, from Christianity to “the modern science god,” but she wonders, “how could that God care about our trifling misery of death born-of-birth? I couldn't believe in Him, and I wouldn't if I could! I'd rather imitate His indifference and prove I had that one trait at least in common” (668-69). Nina decides that a male God is completely inappropriate, that “We should have imagined life as created in the birth-pain of God the Mother. Then we would understand why we, Her children, have inherited pain [. . .] we would feel that death meant a reunion with Her, a passing back into Her substance, blood of Her blood again, peace of Her peace” (670). What Nina describes is incredibly similar to Cybel from *The Great God Brown*, if not to the *Magna Mater* religion that inspired her, not to mention having serious undertones of a reunion with a natural Source, similar to Daoism.

In practice, however, Nina's Mother God religion is anything but like this. She sets herself up as this deity, in action if not in words, and adopts the Father God's “indifference” that would seem alien to her own intended goals. She treats the men as her playthings; she “absorbs” them and “they dissolve” in her, which allows her to be “the happiest woman in the world” (756). Rather than being an understanding Mother Goddess, Nina is a devouring mother who takes what she wants with little consideration

for how her actions might affect the lives of her men. Her return to her father figure, Charlie, at the end of the play is a return to God the Father as well. She rejects her past experimentation and accepts a subservient position in the larger society without seeking to control it.

Returning to the issue of family and social class, however, even without that family history of money, family is at the centre of society's labour concerns. Sam says that his boss "asked me if I was married – seemed to take a real personal interest – said he was glad to hear it because marriage was what put the right kind of ambition into a fellow – unselfish ambition – working for his wife and not just himself" (681). Sam's boss even seems to be partially right, as Sam's ability to succeed in the workplace seems to be directly tied to the need to provide for a child. Sam says that "Since the baby was born, I've felt as if I had a shot of dynamite in each arm. They can't pile the work on fast enough" (742).

In fact, he connects his inability to father a child with an inability to succeed at work. When his employer challenges him on his lack of productivity before Nina is pregnant with Gordon, Sam laments that he has "no ideas . . . I'll get fired . . . sterile" (693). He mentally links his ability to perform in the work place with his perception of his ability to beget a child. Sam, in the first few acts, is not a provider figure at all – Nina is, as she wonders, "what has he given me? . . . not even a home . . . I had to sell my father's home to get money so we could move near his job . . . and then he lost his job!" (717). The Nina in the first few acts does not need Sam to support her, so Sam does not need to provide. It is only with all of her assets gone and a child on the way that Sam is really able to buckle down and actually make something of himself because, suddenly,

she *needs* him, or more specifically, needs the material objects and stable home that his money can provide.

Nina goes beyond the other characters and reasons out her own happiness in terms of possession but is less interested in material goods (beyond what is necessary for a comfortable life) and more in the possession of people. In Act Eight, Nina is concerned about Madeline and Gordon because she believes “[Madeline's] love already possesses him” (779). This is not the only time she conceives of her child as a possession. Earlier, she worries that Gordon has taken too much of a liking to Sam, that Gordon is “becoming all Sam’s . . . I’m getting to mean nothing!” (763). Even her first child is a secret because “I want to keep it just my baby . . . only mine . . . as long as I can” (676), until, of course, she discovers that the child (and Sam) might go insane, and then “I hate it too, now, because it’s sick, it’s not my baby, it’s his!” (688) and aborts it. She does not describe her relationship with the men as being one of equals but, rather, that they come together as “one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb . . . and am whole . . . they dissolve in me, their life is my life” (756). In Nina’s vision, the men have lost their autonomy and simply become a part of a greater Nina figure. The Ideal Male becomes a part of Nina just as surely as the characteristics of Dion's mask are a part of Margaret since the Dion Margaret dances with at the end of *The Great God Brown* can only really exist in her mind.

Ned provides the best illustration in this struggle for possession. In Act Two, Ned tells Charlie that he can never really love Nina because “In my mind she always belongs to Gordon [Shaw . . .] And I couldn’t share a woman – even with a ghost!” (666). After their affair, he tells himself repeatedly that “she used my desire . . .but I don’t love her! . .

. I won't! . . . she can't own my life" (721), that to marry Nina would be to let her "own me! . . . ruin my career!" (726). Even physical passion itself is a battle for ownership in Ned's view. He says that "her body is a trap! . . . I'm caught in it! . . . she touches my hand, her eyes get in mine, I lose my will!" (728).

This last passage is interesting because it suggests a level of insanity associated with physical love. Earlier in the scene, Charlie interrupts the two lovers quarrelling, causing Ned to think "*with relief* [. . .] Thank God for Marsden . . . I feel sane again" (722). He also describes Nina's love for Gordon as "Romantic imagination! It has ruined more lives than all the diseases! Other diseases, I should say! It's a form of insanity!" (725). But it is this same love that Nina has already said she needs to make her happy.

The two best examples that the play gives of socially labelled insanity are Sam's father and his Aunt Bessie. His father apparently loses his mind worrying about his son, but Sam's mother says that Aunt Bessie "lives on the top floor of this house, hasn't been out of her room in years, I've taken care of her. She just sits, doesn't say a word, but she's happy, she laughs to herself a lot, she hasn't a care in the world. But I remember when she was all right, she was always unhappy, she never got married" (685). If, as Sam's mother says, doing what makes you happy is good, then perhaps "insanity" is good, perhaps being unmarried is good, if Aunt Bessie is now happy.

Indeed, throughout the play, conscious thought seems to be something to be avoided. Nina says that she knows that Ned loves her, that "it's only when I start thinking, I begin to doubt" (715). Charlie retreats from his recognition of Ned and Nina's affair, thinking "I must stop thinking! . . . I must talk! . . . forget! . . . say something! . . .

forget everything!” (723).<sup>8</sup> Thus a lack of thought is a positive attribute.

Nina spends her entire life struggling to create a happy life for herself, but she never seems to quite achieve it. Ned tells her on the boat that she has “to give up owning people, meddling in their lives as if you were God and had created them” (789). Sam and Gordon may leave her without her blessing, but she very explicitly releases Ned by rejecting his marriage proposal in the last scene. It is this act that demonstrates that she has taken his advice to heart and leaves only Charlie for her to possess; though, importantly, this does not seem to be their new relationship.

Her reversion to a child-like state comes off as somewhat insane, if not outright disturbing, but when considered in light of the Daoism that has carried through O’Neill’s earlier work, it begins to make sense. When she finally turns to Charlie, she says, “Peace! . . . yes . . . that is all I desire . . . I can no longer imagine happiness” (815). She has managed to forgo all of the other confusing roles of men in her life and returned to her father. She gives up her drive to possess and allows herself to *be* possessed. Her life is no longer a juggling act that she has to *think* about. She is no longer capable of imagining happiness, so she can no longer struggle towards it. Rather, she is left in a neutral state of Daoistic peace, merely allowing life to happen to her rather than shape it.

That said, the positive implications of this regression also seem to have a distinct connection with death. In the final Act, Nina describes her situation as “Age’s terms of peace, after the long interlude of war with life, have still to be concluded” (806). Much earlier, she worries about Charlie recognizing the truth of her relationship with Ned in the

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<sup>8</sup> These passages seem incredibly ironic given that so little of consequence actually occurs on stage. Indeed, the action of the play could be described as a constant struggle between largely meaningless talk and important thinking.

following terms: “Black<sup>9</sup> . . . in the midst of happiness . . . black comes . . . again . . . death . . . my father . . . comes between me and happiness!” (721). Thus, Charlie (her father figure) becomes associated with death (just as she blames her real father for Gordon Shaw’s death), and her marriage to Charlie at the end of the play is a surrender to death. Mrs. Evans even suggests that “There’s peace in the green fields of Eden, they say! You got to die to find out!” (688). The play becomes a “strange interlude” between Nina’s sexual awakening and sexual ending, a “sexual death” though not in an orgasmic sense. Since she is no longer a sexual figure, she no longer needs a lover and no longer needs a child. In her youth, her father was the only provider that she knew. The Ideal Male is simplified down into just one man. The child-like state that she recedes into is constructed as one that is both utopian and beyond death.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, several characters in this play have similar utopian transitions linked with their own interests. Charlie sees himself as an artist, so his salvation lies through art. Ned is a scientist, and so his salvation might be possible through biology.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that Dion's mask is society's vision of a Dionysian character, a vision that is inherently corrupted; Ned, then, is a social corruption, not of the Dionysian, but of the seeker character itself. Every seeker character that has been examined here, indeed, nearly every seeker character in O'Neill, has some

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<sup>9</sup> Charlie is wearing black in this scene because of his mother’s death.

<sup>10</sup> It seems obvious to connect Nina's regression to childhood with Ella's similar regression in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, and it seems likely that O'Neill intended them to convey a similar reading, but that is not really the reality of the text. Nina's regression seems to settle into a life of contentment, based on her own personal choice to let Ned go. Further, the platonic relationship she seems to be entering with Charlie is appropriate to their father/daughter roles. Ella, however, seems to have no choice in her regression. She retreats into childhood because it is the only avenue available to her to escape from her guilt and disgust with her husband. Further, her relationship with Jim is now platonic and that of an Uncle/Niece (and notice here that Ella is getting away from being actually related by figurative blood to her Black husband), despite the fact he has been her lover previously which just adds an additionally troubling aspect to an already disturbing scene.

sort of hope or promise for union with Nature, even if they reject it in the end, or do not recognize it in life, but, in this context, Ned's vision is incredibly disturbing. In his parting words to Nina, he says, "perhaps we'll become part of cosmic positive and negative charges and meet again [. . .] I'll get back to my cells – sensible unicellular life that floats in the sea and has never learned the cry for happiness [. . . *thinking*] Oh, God, so deaf and dumb and blind! . . . teach me to be resigned to be an atom" (815-6). His proposed afterlife is a mechanical and scientific nature rather than a romantic one. Cybel's philosophy treats individual life as meaningless but the personality or soul as sacred. Ned's utterances are in line with the former premise but not the latter. His vision represents the dissolution of not only his body but his consciousness, not into some sort of higher transcendent state but merely into nothingness. His state at the end of the play does not so much resemble Robert's or Dion's but Larry Slade's in *The Iceman Cometh* – he has completely run out of purpose in his life and has nothing left to do but wait, and hope, for death and oblivion. Perhaps because, as Nina says, "life is . . . and the is is beyond reason" (715), there simply is no empirical truth to be found for the theoretical scientist Ned attempts to be, and forgetting a past to which he cannot return is preferable to remembering it. It seems clear that, for O'Neill, the seeker is supposed to be an artist, be he an Apollonian or Dionysian one, and that his corruption into a theoretical seeker is the worst possible fate because it precludes the possibility of the traditional seeker's salvation.

The themes of nature and fertility that arise in the earlier plays also make their return in *Strange Interlude*, but they are initially distorted. Professor Leeds looks out the window and observes that the "Grass is parched in the middle . . . Tom [has] forgotten the

sprinkler” (651). Charlie laments the death of his mother as “the sadness of spring . . . my loss of peace with Nature” (723). Nina comments on the beauty of the Evans’ family estate, saying that there “are acres and acres of apple trees in full bloom, all white and pinkish and beautiful,” but the room she sits in has heavily stained brown wall paper and “no sunlight ever gets to this room” (675). Indeed, despite the appearance of well-being, on the outside, Nina cannot “believe anyone has ever been born alive there” (676). The house and grounds reflect the benign appearance and corrupt nature of Evans’ blood and of the middle-class America that he embodies.

This scene is not the only one with artificial light instructions. Every act from the first to the sixth (excepting the fifth) calls for dimmed light through blinds, no sunlight at all, or is set in the evening. The seventh act is “*in a large sunny room*,” (758) the eighth on the shaded deck of Sam’s boat, and the final act in the garden in late afternoon. This pattern reflects a move from darkness into light (and back again, as will shortly be shown), from indoors into outdoors, and from civilization into nature.

Mrs. Evans promises a Garden of Eden beyond death, and Nina and Charlie’s final onstage moments occur in a garden<sup>11</sup> in which he observes that:

my life is cool green shade wherein comes no scorching zenith sun of passion and possession to wither the heart with bitter poisons . . . my life gathers roses, coolly crimson, in sheltered gardens, on later afternoons in love with evening . . . roses heavy with after-blooming of the long day, desiring evening . . . my life is an

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<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps interesting to note that this is not the only time O’Neill associates a regression to childhood with a garden scene. Deborah’s garden in *More Stately Mansions* will serve a similar function for Simon, but it also serves as Deborah’s seat of power to lure her son back into her machinations, though that garden is carefully walled and pruned to give it the appearance of an unnatural, and, thus, un-Daoistic Nature. Deborah’s garden uses as its base the source of salvation for seeker characters but twists that source to its own ends.



evening . . . Nina is a rose, my rose, exhausted by the long, hot day, leaning wearily toward peace. (806)

Charlie's role is now one of protection, as it has always been, but in a more active sense than before. If his entire "life is cool green shade [. . . without] passion and possession," then that would seem to leave little room or capacity for Charlie's Dionysian novel about life as it really is. That said, he also has what he has always wanted, Nina to himself, and, as a result, he seems content.

The male roles in this play serve to illustrate the different needs Nina has throughout her life in her struggle for happiness. Each of the characters enters her life as he is needed, but they each leave on their own terms (except perhaps Sam), and Nina seems to come to terms with their departure by hanging onto Charlie even tighter. Commenting on his cycle plays several years after writing this play, O'Neill says that "the United States has been a spiritual failure because it has tried to possess its own soul by possessing something outside of it" (qtd. in Gaver 1). In the case of *Strange Interlude*, Nina struggles for external self-possession throughout the play, only to find herself at last in the end. Her embrace of Charlie as her only man is not just an embrace of her (surrogate) father, or death, but also a return to the past, to nature, to her source. For a woman who does not remember her mother the closest Nina can come to returning to the womb is via Charlie, the father. Self-possession is achieved through self-recognition, and with it, Nina no longer has to struggle to maintain control of the world around her. Indeed, in a Daoist sense, Nina's final happiness, and, by implication that of America itself, comes, or will come, when she stops struggling to find it.

*Strange Interlude* is simultaneously one of most interesting of O'Neill's plays

about the Ideal Male and also one of the most frustrating. This play is the first time all four male roles are enacted on stage, allowing for examination on a larger scale. O'Neill's growth as a playwright in this period means that the characters are significantly more realized than in the earlier plays, however, they are also capable of being a little bit of more than one role or of being different roles at different times, which makes them more difficult to define simply. More importantly, since the characters can occupy more than one role, the play questions whether it is perhaps possible for one man to actually be an Ideal Male in this world. Charlie perhaps comes close, but it is too late for Nina to really recognize it since she is no longer interested in the sexual aspect, which is something Charlie is never willing to provide. Looking forward to *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill will continue to use these male roles, but they will be even more jumbled up within characters that do not have the option to leave or die like Nina's men. They have more agency to choose the role they occupy but cannot occupy all of them at once for Mary.

#### **Chapter 4. Contraction: *Long Day's Journey into Night***

The last play that we will examine here, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, is something of an aberration compared to the earlier works. It has not been chosen because it develops the characters of the seeker and the provider in new directions – quite the opposite, it collapses them – but because, as so many other scholars have previously observed, it has such deep autobiographical connections with O'Neill's own life. This study opened with a quotation from O'Neill about his third wife, Carlotta, that described her as being “mother, and wife, and mistress and friend.” Whether or not this passage describes female analogs to the four male roles, the point is that he clearly saw the roles as being not merely literary constructs but as having analogs in real life. If this is the case, then it might be possible to see these same male roles in O'Neill's representations of his own family and to see perhaps how they came about. Tyrone and Jamie both have Apollonian provider and Dionysian seeker aspects, but Edmund has not yet made a definitive choice either way (though he does seem to be on the path of a Dionysian seeker). *Long Day's Journey into Night* also represents the male characters as influenced principally by their interpersonal relationships with Mary and with each other and least influenced by external society as in O'Neill's earlier plays.

This play is significantly different structurally than the earlier plays that we have examined. Its central conflicts and choices occurred years prior to its events, leaving the audience with only the repercussions. For no one is this more true than James Tyrone. The Tyrone that the audience meets on stage is clearly a strongly Apollonian provider

figure as the order-minded family patriarch, and his constant financial interests connect him closely with Andrew, Billy, and Sam. He describes his difficult childhood, working in a machine shop to support his mother and siblings, to Edmund as a justification for his tightfistedness. He says that “it was in those days I learned to be a miser. A dollar was worth so much then. And once you’ve learned a lesson, it’s hard to unlearn it. You have to look for bargains” (151). Tyrone’s early life in the factory and his struggles to educate himself have more in common with Andrew’s “hard work and determination” work ethic than with the easy money that Billy and Sam seem to stumble into, but his “good bad luck” (153) in finding his money-making play seems more like an echo of the latter. Between his mother and siblings and, later, his wife and children, Tyrone has experienced the same sorts of social pressures to be a provider that both Robert and Dion feel in their own plays, though, unlike them, he has been able to adapt himself properly to fill that role. He may not particularly enjoy it, but he is at least *capable*, which is more than can be said of the other two.

However, it is extremely important that Tyrone does not seem to enjoy being a provider because, in his heart, he is at least somewhat the same Dionysian seeker that Robert and Dion are. His own personal dream is to be a great Shakespearean actor, an artistic endeavour that mirrors Robert’s books and Dion’s drawing. He even says that he would give up all his money and security for a chance to return to the Shakespearean stage. Whether he would *actually* do so, given his over-developed sense of financial fear is perhaps a good question, but the point remains that given the choice he would, at least, much rather be a well-paid actor-artist than a well-paid actor.

For Tyrone, Shakespeare is a fount of truth because “you’ll find what you’re

trying to say in him – as you’ll find everything worth saying” (134), but it is not the brutal Dionysian truth usually associated with seeker characters. Edmund is quick to subvert Tyrone’s Shakespeare into “we are such stuff as manure is made on, so let’s drink up and forget it” (134).<sup>12</sup> Tyrone’s vision of the world is quite comfortably placed in an Apollonian illusion to the point where he even “naturalizes” Shakespeare into an Irish Catholic, not unlike the way some Western Christians render Christ into a Caucasian. Tyrone views the world through a beautifying lens; he sees the world as he wishes to see it, not as it is, regardless of whether he wants to be a plutocrat or an artist. This, interestingly, renders him as an Apollonian character independent of his actual status as a provider or a seeker.

The exact timing of Tyrone's switch from Shakespeare to his money play is extremely important. He says that the great Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth's praise of him represented:

the high spot in my career. I had life where I wanted it! And for a time after that I kept on upward with ambition high. Married your mother. Ask her what I was like in those days. Her love was an added incentive to ambition. But a few years later my good bad luck made me find the big money-maker. It wasn't that in my eyes at first. It was a great romantic part I knew I could play better than anyone. But it was a great box office success from the start – and then life had me where it wanted me – at thirty-five to forty thousand net profit a season! (153)

The money, with his past poverty, certainly seems to have helped return him to a provider role, but equally important is the timeline in which these events occur. If the Shakespearean Tyrone is an artist, a Dionysian seeker, then his marriage to Mary and the sudden need to once again provide for a family places the burden of the provider squarely on his shoulders. He is almost unique among O’Neill’s characters in that he is able to, at

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<sup>12</sup> Notice the close parallel here to Cybel’s or Ned’s cavalier attitude towards physical life.

least functionally, make this switch.<sup>13</sup>

From Mary's point of view, she has married a seeker (just as both Ruth and Margaret did), but despite Tyrone's ability to adapt to his socially required role, it is not a transition Mary appreciates, just as Ruth did not appreciate Robert's *inability* to make the same transition. Mary's happiness depends on the money and love that she remembers her father's home as having, as well as a stable home life. She claims her authority on the matter, saying that "I know from experience what a home is like. I gave up one to marry you – my father's home" (74). Her vision of a perfect home includes having the best servants (which, of course, she does not because Tyrone is too cheap to pay them properly) and a fixed environment that Tyrone will not, and, she thinks, does not, want to provide because "He's lived too much in hotels. Never the best hotels, of course. Second-rate hotels. He doesn't understand a home" (64). Her father also seemed to dote on her to the point of excess, as she says of her wedding, "My father told me to buy anything I wanted and never mind the cost. The best is none too good, he said. I'm afraid he spoiled me dreadfully. My mother didn't [. . .] I think she was a little jealous" (116). Tyrone's chances of being able to be both financially successful enough to provide all this as well as pursue his art are low, but to do so in a stable location during a theatrical period characterized by repertoire acting and travelling shows is nigh impossible. Tyrone simply cannot provide all these things without a major career shift, if at all. Like the women in the earlier plays, Mary wants a man who is both a seeker and a provider but also a man who goes beyond that. She wants her own Gordon Shaw, her own Dion mask – she wants her own Ideal Male focused solely on her and her own happiness, irrespective of reality.

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<sup>13</sup> The other exception being Simon of *More Stately Mansions*.

While Tyrone's role development occurs somewhat independently of Mary, Jamie's is intrinsically linked to her. He desperately wants his mother's love and has constantly felt isolated from her throughout his life. The play is most explicit about his role in the death of Eugene, but it seems clear that Tyrone and Edmund are Oedipal rivals for his mother's affection. What has made Jamie a psychological mess is his mother's morphine addiction because it acts simultaneously to pull her away into a drug-induced fog and also to repel him from trying to get close to her himself.

In fact, Jamie's state of mind in this play can be summarized in just a few words: "I'd never dreamed before that any women but whores took dope!" (166). The morphine associates his mother with prostitutes in his mind and causes them to become twisted images of her. Early in the play, Tyrone compliments Mary saying that he "admire[s] how fat and beautiful" she has become since returning from the sanatorium (17). By comparison, Jamie says, speaking of Fat Violet, that he usually likes his women "fat, but not that fat" (163). Fat Violet is a parody of a healthy Mary, a grotesque caricature of a mother figure transfigured into a whore. But, crucially, with Fat Violet, it is also a relationship in which Jamie holds all the power. Mary is quick to isolate herself and erect her passive-aggressive defences against any attempts her family makes to get through to her. Violet, on the other hand, requires assurances of her beauty and attractiveness – assurances that Jamie is willing to provide.

Jamie, like all the others, also has, or had, a passion for art. He tells Edmund that "because I once wanted to write, I planted it in your mind that someday you'd write!" (167). Tyrone even says that Jamie once showed "brilliant promise" (171) and that he once "had the talent to become a fine actor" (33). He says that Jamie wanted to be a

newspaper man but was “never willing to start at the bottom” (36). Tyrone’s final criticism may come from a very provider-oriented “hard work and determination” world view, but his other observations about his son suggest that Tyrone, who has every inclination to think of his son as an idiot, does actually see value in him and specifically in his artistic ability. He characterizes Jamie as wanting the world presented to him on a golden platter.

Jamie, on the other hand, criticizes the stage life that he has been part of with the same sort of rhetoric that he levels at Tyrone. He says of Tyrone’s acting idol that “Edwin Booth never saw the day when he could give as good a performance as a trained seal. Seals are intelligent and honest. They don’t put up any bluffs about the Art of Acting. They admit they’re just hams earning their daily fish” (172). This may simply be Jamie airing his sour grapes at his father and the profession that has all be rejected him, but, in Jamie's view, actors like Booth only pretend to care about the artistic aspects of their trade and really only care about money, an obsession he sees in his father as well.

Unlike his father, Jamie is a solid Dionysian seeker figure. He cannot seem to function in a capitalist system, and his drinking and womanizing certainly link him with both Dion and Dionysus. It is frequently Jamie who is the most willing to confront the truth of everything, regardless of how difficult that truth might be. He frequently brings up uncomfortable conversations – be they about Mary’s addiction, Edmund’s illness, or the doctor’s recommended sanatorium. The result is a debauched Dionysian seeker character in the vein of Dion’s mask, Oedipally obsessed with a permanently absent mother, while drinking, womanizing and pursuing the brutal truths. When Tyrone confronts him about constantly shifting blame onto others, Jamie wryly assures him,



“That’s not true, Papa. You can’t hear me talking to myself, that’s all” (33). This passage draws attention to a mask-like aspect of Jamie; that, while he may play at being cool and collected, the man underneath tortures himself as much as anyone else. He is like Dion or any of the characters in *Strange Interlude*, but, for once, the audience is not privy to what is occurring in his mind, though some of his thoughts do seem to come out when he is drunk, as in his last scene with Edmund. Certainly, despite his attempts to construct a seeker persona that women can love, and, certainly, women that he has met *do* love, he ultimately fails in securing the only woman’s love that matters to him – that of his mother – and this failure is what drives a Dionysian Jamie into debauchery.

Together the two men are dual father figures to Edmund, with the Apollonian provider Tyrone as a biological father and Dionysian seeker Jamie as a deliberate molder – in his own words, a Dr. “Frankenstein” (167). Certainly Edmund has gone far down the path of his brother, with the heavy drinking, womanizing, and writing, but Tyrone observes (though perhaps it is only because of his “*worried pity*”): “You’ll always be broke until you learn the value – [. . . ] But you’ve been learning, lad. You worked hard before you took ill. You’ve done splendidly. I’m proud of you” (92). If Tyrone is telling the truth in this passage rather than just worrying that his son might die, it suggests that Edmund is far more capable than Jamie of making the same transition that Tyrone has made earlier in life from a seeker to a provider, but, because Edmund has taken only tentative steps in the direction of a Dionysian seeker, he is positioned somewhere between the other two men and still possesses the potential to do something important with his life. He seems to have the best traits of each man with very few of their bad qualities. This potential for change is reinforced by the simple fact that while Edmund

clearly loves his mother, he is not obsessed with her the way either Tyrone or Jamie is, and this detachment gives Edmund's character a sense of hope that he might be able to save himself, though it would mean a disconnection from his family. He is taking steps down a path that mark him as separate from his family and especially his mother, through his gainful employment at the newspaper and his earlier decision to leave them entirely to go to sea.

This sense of hope is in large part because the path Edmund seems to have started down is definitely that of the Dionysian seeker. Ironically, both of the other men are really fallen Dionysians – Tyrone gives it up to be a provider, while Jamie takes it to such an extreme that he becomes corrupted. Edmund is still *actively* an artist and writer, while both of the other two are not. They merely pretend at it. Indeed, Edmund justifies his title as a seeker of the truth when he describes his happiest memories to his father:

You've just told me some high spots in your memories. Want to hear mine?  
They're all connected to the sea [. . .] I lay on the bowsprit, facing astern, with the water foaming into spume under me, the masts with every sail white in the moonlight, towering high about me. I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself – actually lost my life! 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 belonged, without past or future [. . .] And several other times in my life, when I was swimming far out, or lying alone on a beach, I have had the same experience [. . .] For a second you see – and seeing the secret, are the secret. For a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again.  
(156)

Edmund is not just interested in finding the truth through his books or art – his sea visions turn him *into* the truth, however briefly.<sup>14</sup> This transcendent vision brings him full

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<sup>14</sup> Further proof that Jamie is a “fallen” Dionysian character is that he apparently cannot appreciate Edmund’s decision to go to sea, and thus cannot appreciate his visions either: “I thought that was a damn fool idea, and I told him so. You can’t imagine me getting fun out of being on the beach in South America, or living in filthy dives, drinking rotgut, can you?” (36). In fact, it links him closely with Andrew and his view of the East as dirty and boring.

circle with Robert at the end of *Beyond the Horizon*, but while Robert's vision was merely a Romantic union with nature that leaves his consciousness intact, Edmund loses his sense of self. Edmund's vision is Daoist in nature. He surrenders his own ego and personal struggles and, in the words of Lao Tzu, "become[s] one with the dusty world." It is not an experience he can trigger deliberately, however, nor is it one he can experience in a group. Edmund is the only character that exhibits a hope for salvation, but the salvation offered is temporary and individual. Eventually, he must return to this world and wait for death once more.

It is perhaps because Edmund is still an active seeker figure that Mary still demonstrates such affection for her youngest son. Both Tyrone and Jamie have been or have tried to be suitable seeker figures for her, but Edmund is the only one who currently *is*, and she certainly seems to be interested in denizens of that other realm of Edmund's vision, though she does not understand that what she wants is impossible. He tells Tyrone after coming in from the fog that he loved being out in it because it was like being "alone with myself in another world" (133).<sup>15</sup> Crucially, Mary uses the same words to describe a younger Tyrone to Kathleen. She says that in his costume he looked "different from all ordinary men, like someone from another world" (108). While Edmund wants to *be* in another world, Mary is attracted to a man who appears to from such a place, but a key aspect of Edmund's experience is being completely alone, so it is an experience Mary cannot share. Tyrone's shift to a provider role robs her of her attractive Dionysian hero, so Edmund must be his stand-in. But Edmund cannot be the Ideal Male that Mary desires

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<sup>15</sup> This passage is similar, but not identical, to Edmund's monologue vision about the sea. The crucial difference is that "alone" still implies individuation. The fog, like the alcohol and the morphine, is only an Apollonian illusion of the larger Daoistic transcendence.

and still find happiness in his visions, even if he could provide the money, love, stability, and constant attention she demands. His transcendent visions necessarily take him away from her, both physically, as he needs to be at sea, and spiritually, as he needs to be alone to see them.

Mary's memories of the convent and her family, distorted though Tyrone says they are, reflect a period of stability that she now yearns for. Certainly she was not moving around following an actor's life in the convent. She implies (and Tyrone reinforces) that the nuns always loved her, and, with her father alive, money was never a problem in her world. In many ways, the convent was a womb-like sanctuary for Mary.

Mary's early convent experience further exacerbates her problems by giving her an Ideal Female to emulate: Mary, mother of Christ, "the Blessed Virgin" (96). The Blessed Virgin's dual identity of both a mother and a virgin present an impossible binary problem for Mary – she cannot simultaneously be in both states short of divine intervention. Her two choices, to become a nun or marry Tyrone, reflect this duality. But in the time frame of the play, that choice has long ago been made. She can no longer choose *not* to be a mother, to return to being a virgin, and seeing Tyrone and her sons just reminds her of it every day. Thus, her daydreams take her back to when she was still a virgin and considering becoming a nun – to a time when she still had a choice.

The Blessed Virgin also creates a similar problem for Mary that the idea of Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" did for Billy. Mary's conception of her places conditions on the Blessed Virgin's love. She wishes that "If I could only find the faith I lost, so I could pray again! [. . .] *Sneeringly*. You expect the Blessed Virgin to be fooled by a lying dope fiend reciting words. You can't hide from her!" (109). She says

that she dreams that “sometime, without meaning it, I will take an overdose. I could never do it deliberately. The Blessed Virgin would never forgive me, then” (123). In Mary's understanding, the Blessed Virgin's love is not unconditional, just as Tyrone and his sons are constantly judging her for her drug habit and constantly leaving her alone to go out with their friends to drink, but she believes that she needs that unconditional love from someone. She needs:

the Blessed Virgin Mary [to forgive] me and [give] me back the faith in Her love and pity I used to have in my convent days, and I can pray to her again – when She sees that no one in the world can believe in me even for a moment any more, then She will believe in me, and with Her help it will be so easy [to stop using morphine]. (96)

Mary is stuck in a world where none her men, of any role, nor her divine icon can provide her with the care and understanding of herself and her addiction that she desires, which drives her to use the morphine to escape even further from them, a cyclical pattern, and continues to carry her beyond hope of redemption.

Like Nina, Mary is a devouring mother, but one who does not want to be so. She wants to emulate her Blessed Virgin, full of forgiveness, dedication, and unconditional love for her husband and sons, a goddess figure similar to Cybel. However, she expects the same unconditional love from them, but when they cannot reach that same level of dedication to her she becomes bitter. Instead she emulates the Blessed Virgin whom she now knows, the Blessed Virgin who is silent and cannot forgive her for her drug use, just as Mary will not forgive her menfolk for their drinking and detachment from her. She demands homage from the three men, but all they can offer her is the occasional word of encouragement on top of their sighs and disappointment with her, and, so, she feels she must punish them for it. In her demand to be worshipped as the centre of her men's lives

she emulates Nina's devouring Mother Goddess aspect rather than the understanding Cybel.

Compared with the earlier plays, *Long Day's Journey into Night* seems to begin its tale in the middle. The other three plays all depict the early days of their primary relationships, through marriage, and ultimately to a disintegration. This play, on the other hand, begins and ends in stasis. Through Tyrone's and Mary's reminiscing, we are offered a view of their beginnings, but never see them for ourselves, and there is no evidence, either positive or negative, of their relationship's changing in the future. It is as if *Beyond the Horizon* had ended at the end of Act Two, with Ruth desperately lost for a solution to her life, Andrew disappeared on the road to riches, and Robert driving the farm even further into destitution, or if Dion had never found the courage to actually drink himself to death. In the earlier plays, there is always a sense of release, if only for the dead, but, in this play, death is not even an option. Edmund says he has attempted (and failed) to commit suicide before, and the description of Mary's mad dash into the ocean one night certainly suggests it, but death seems to be a path closed to them. Mary hopes that "sometime, without meaning it, I will take an overdose. I could never do it deliberately. The Blessed Virgin would never forgive me, then" (123). Without death, only Edmund's transcendent visions remain as an offer of salvation, but, like Mary's subconscious attempts at suicide, the vision cannot be gained deliberately because, in order to achieve it, the ego must be surrendered, the "individual" must die and be reborn within Nature. The characters remain in their sad world, trapped but for the capricious will of God or Nature to save them.

Ultimately, the men of *Long Day's Journey* are just that, men. They are not

exceptional, Christ figures, or even character types. They each have traits from both sides of the O'Neillian character pool, but to have one or the other or some combination of both simply is not what Mary wants. She wants to be the absolute centre of her family's world, the focus of all the love, all the caring, all the attention, like Nina. What she wants them each to be, ultimately, is her own father, who doted on her, in whose home she was always safe and had everything she wanted, and where no choice between motherhood and virginity had to be made.

*Long Day's Journey into Night* demonstrates that O'Neill's conception of the male roles both extends to and is partially inspired by his own family. It shows for the first time, in Tyrone, a character who is actually capable of making a successful transition between seeker and provider, even if he is not happy about it. The play finally clearly elucidates the image of nature-based salvation that Robert saw, imperfectly, over two decades worth of writing. Ultimately, this play demonstrates that while both Tyrone's and Mary's mental anguish is informed in part by their experiences in a larger society, the problems within the play are created largely by the four characters themselves as they seek to twist and manipulate each other into being, and loving, as they should.

## Conclusion

Through the last four chapters we have seen how O'Neill conceives of the Ideal Male, the seeker and provider (not to mention the father and the child), and how all of these characters interact with the woman in their lives to fail to achieve harmony. The men never quite manage to escape from the position of victim, either of the woman herself or society. At best, they gain just enough autonomy in *Long Day's Journey* to torture Mary right back. O'Neill experiments with various permutations of the male roles but, for the women, at worst, their situation leaves them broken shells, like Ruth and Mary. At best, they are apparently happy, like Margaret and Nina, but happiness presented so ambivalently that the audience is likely to come away more troubled and disturbed than satisfied. The Ideal Male remains a fantasy illusion – the amalgamated image of two men, long dead, or the memory of a dead first love – only Charlie might have the potential to be Ideal but Nina does not recognize it. Rather than a series of witty romantic comedies, O'Neill offers us only tales of anguish and suffering caused by love.

The preceding chapters chart the development of O'Neill's conception of the Ideal Male but also the development of O'Neill's career, stretching from his first successful full-length play all the way to one of the last plays he wrote. In the intervening twenty-six years, not only his ideas of the Ideal Male expanded and evolved. A second key movement that is extremely important in his portrayal of the Ideal Male is O'Neill's transition from sociological to inter- and intra-personal concerns. This is not to say that O'Neill's preoccupation with social class ever completely disappears, or that he is *not*



concerned with inter-personal issues in his early work, but, rather, that in the later plays he is *more* interested in the latter.

In O'Neill's early work, like *Before Breakfast* and *Beyond the Horizon*, the seeker's problems arise principally from larger social and financial forces. The society (and the seekers' wives) demands that they provide financially for their families, but both Alfred and Robert are unwilling or incapable of doing so. Neither *wants* to be a provider, and it is, in part, the requirement to do so, levelled by society via their wives, that ruins them. *The Great God Brown* occupies a middle ground because Dion's trouble is not that he cannot provide for his family but that he hates the things he must do to earn it. It is still society that is making an unreasonable demand on him, but it is Dion's own internal self-torture at his inability to fulfil that demand that kills him, not society alone. In *Strange Interlude*, the extreme self-torture caused by the method of employment is largely gone. Instead the torture stems from Nina's treatment of her seeker. The struggle for family survival is no longer central to the play, as Nina and her family are comfortably middle-class. Ned runs away to Europe and takes up biology, not from dissatisfaction with medicine but because Nina rejects him, and he is tired of trying to "fix" people. The Tyrones are similarly middle-class, and, while James himself is deathly afraid of not having enough money, the play always gives the sense that his fears are largely unfounded and that the family can remain comfortably well-maintained well into the future. Mary says she wishes he would spend more money on the house, but her concern is less about money and more wishing that Tyrone would spoil her as much as her father did. Both Edmund and Jamie may dabble at real work, but they always have their father's reluctant support to fall back upon if necessary, leaving all three men free to

struggle with Mary's need for love rather than the outside world for as long as they stay in the house (and, for Jamie, even when he leaves).

Ironically, the provider's problems are principally interpersonal throughout all of these plays because a provider needs someone to provide *for*. Andrew is the most influenced by capitalism, as his providing abilities are corrupted into sheer money-making. A provider is supposed to profit for a family, and, with Ruth's rejection, Andrew can only profit for profit itself. Billy is strongly motivated by society's expectations, but he always has winning Margaret's hand as his primary focus. This desire for Margaret forces him to assume Dion's torturous mask and directly leads to his death. Sam's economic well-being is influenced by his home life, rather than vice versa. Sam's economic ability is directly tied to his perception of his relationship with Nina and his ability to procreate with her. So long as he feels Nina loves him, he can be successful and happy.

O'Neill makes the interpersonal the central focus for providers because the act of providing for others, specifically the female love interest, is what motivates them and makes them happy. Seekers, however, seem to derive no lasting joy from their relationships. Robert wonders if the secret he dreams of beyond the horizon is a woman's love, but by the end of the play the secret is still waiting for him. Dion initially hopes that he will be able to show his true self to Margaret, but she does not recognize him, forcing him to accept her “[love] by proxy” (483). Her superficial love leaves the real Dion to suffer. Nina rejects Ned's offer of marriage, which leaves him stuck in a torturous orbit, always trying to pull away but unable to escape – he can do little but pray for oblivion. The Tyrone men all love Mary dearly, but that love leaves them defenceless and chained

to the “dope fiend” that all too often just wants to be left alone.

Instead, a seeker's happiness seems to come from something external to the male/female relationship. In day to day life, seekers seem to derive simple happiness primarily from their intellectual pursuits, be they books, painting, or science, but release and salvation come from a union with nature. The exact nature of this vision may shift from Romantic to Daoistic between Robert and Edmund, be corrupted, as with Ned, or not even be seen until beyond the grave, like Dion. Nonetheless, every seeker figure, on one level or another, embraces Nature as the ultimate source of salvation in his life.

Women tend to do just the opposite. In order to achieve happiness and salvation, they seem to require an Ideal Male medium. Ruth's happiness is dependent upon having both a seeker and a provider (in one man) to keep her entertained and look after her. Margaret completely uses up two separate men creating her imagined Ideal Male who keeps her happy long after the real men are dead. Nina tries to create happiness by juggling the affections of four men, though she is eventually able to settle for only one. Even then, she is not able to achieve happiness by herself but must surrender her will to the male to do so. Like Nina, Mary demands unconditional love and complete devotion from her men, and when she does not get it she tortures both them and herself mercilessly.

While there may be room in a provider's life to fill this role for the woman, it is rare that the provider is the man she actually marries. The rebellious, romantic seeker is a much more attractive husband, but, as it turns out, the seeker is focused on finding a happiness for himself and that precludes being completely devoted to her. The woman holds onto the seeker, demanding his attention, but he is always focused externally, on

nature, and so neither is ever happy. As Charlie says, “we must all be crooks where happiness is concerned! . . . steal or starve!” (640).

Importantly, O'Neill seems to treat this problem as one created by capitalism and patriarchy. It is important that, of all the women in O'Neill's works the only one who could be seen to have a seeker's vision of nature is the prostitute Anna Christie. Looking out off her father's barge, she “*stares out into the fog astern with an expression of awed wonder*” and declares:

I love this fog [. . .] I feel as if I was – out of things altogether [. . .] It makes me feel clean – out here – 's if I'd taken a bath [. . .] I feel old [. . .] like I'd been living a long, long time – out here in the fog [. . .] It's like I'd come home after a long visit away some place. It all seems like I'd been here before lots of times – on boats – in this same fog [. . .] I feel happy for once – yes, honest! - happier than I ever been anywhere before. (979-82)

Anna is one of the few women in all of O'Neill's work who has ever worked to support herself, she makes money and *provides* for herself. As long as she is a provider, she is in a masculine role, despite the fact that she is not actually escaping from the patriarchal situation, since she is a prostitute “working” for men. While she occupies this position, O'Neill gives her a masculine salvation via this union with nature imagery. She compromises her position, however, when she decides to settle down as Matt's wife. When Matt and her father discover her past, she says, “[What if] I told you that yust [sic] getting out on this barge, and being on the sea has changed me and made me feel differently about things [. . .] Will you believe it if I tell you that loving you has made me – clean?” (1009-10). It is no longer the sea that has made her “clean” but Matt's love. In surrendering her masculine position to settle down with Matt, Anna is also forced to adopt O'Neill's conception of feminine happiness – that is, happiness through the male and the family rather than through nature.

This demonstrates that, at least for this one example, O'Neill conceives of the two separate paths to happiness as gender based, and, thus, social constructions of gender through capitalism and patriarchy are to blame rather than genetically coded sex. Curiously, the feminine happiness, through love of the man, lines up incredibly well with the provider's happiness in the love of a woman. Sidestepping for the moment that providing was just defined as a masculine role in *Anna Christie*, this would then mean that being a provider is “feminine” and the seeker is “masculine.” Throughout these four plays, we have seen both women and providers being connected with or serving as representatives of society, so it seems reasonable to say that O'Neill might conceive of a feminine orientation as being connected with society and finding happiness within it. Seekers, then, as masculine figures, are on the outside of society and find their happiness outside of it. The problems of these plays, with such a conception, arise because the society is still telling women that they should want a “masculine” mate and the women end up pulling seekers off their course.

Finally, it seems that fairly consistently the actual image of the Ideal Male is neither seeker nor provider but father. Anna, in the example above, agrees to move in with not just Matt but also her father. Ruth, for various reasons discussed in greater length earlier, sees her father as a problem-solver and hopes Robert might be like him. When Nina finally settles for a single man, it is her father figure. Even Mary has idealized memories of how her father treated her and expects the same from James. Only Margaret seems to lack a father figure completely. Though her early statements about Dion reflect a desire for him to her father, this rhetoric disappears entirely by the end of the prologue. Margaret is an unexplainable anomaly, but it seems clear that the rest of

these women exhibit a greater desire for a father than for a seeker or provider.

As much as has been done here, much work remains to do. Most importantly, perhaps, is that while these plays are excellent illustrations of the seeker and provider, they are not especially suited for intensive exploration of the father role, which is clearly very important. Such an exploration would certainly include *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *The Fountain*, and perhaps *A Touch of the Poet*.

Nor does this examination do a suitable job of examining *female* roles, whether or not such roles would be completely analogous to male roles or somehow different, and whether or not there is a coherent vision of an Ideal Female to be found in O'Neill's works, though, as just discussed, Judith Barlow has done some work in this area. After all, O'Neill's inscription to Carlotta, with which this work opened, suggests that he saw woman in similar role-based terms. Such a study would be much more difficult, as O'Neill rarely places two women on the stage in the oppositional fashion of the men in the plays studied here, but certainly *A Touch of a Poet*, *More Stately Mansions*, and *Dynamo* would be central to any such study. Additionally, such a study, since it would be dealing much more specifically with the relationship between men and woman would also benefit from the use of the works of both Freud and Jung.

The roles themselves aside, the issue of gender has also been largely avoided in this examination, largely in an effort to avoid adding any *more* ambiguous binaries that may or may not line up with the existing oppositions, especially since the brief paragraph I presented above is, if anything, completely counter to the manner in which O'Neill actually tends to construct seekers as feminine. Regardless, this issue is important but lies beyond the scope of this study.

Another topic that could yet use development is the issue of “woman as Goddess,” which has been dealt with to some degree by Thomas Porter in his excellent article on the *Magna Mater* in O'Neill's writings, but he never does more than allude to Mary in *Long Day's Journey into Night* via some discussion of the Blessed Virgin in other plays. Also, it seems valuable to continue to look at O'Neill's work not merely in terms of the Great Mother but also the larger myth concerning Attis as a Son Consort, since, according to Louis Sheaffer, O'Neill ordered a copy of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* in 1926 (*Son and Artist* 197).

Finally, given the value of Nietzsche's ideas about the Apollonian and Dionysian forces in society, and, given that the subject under study here is the conception of the Ideal Male, it seems as though it may be valuable to also investigate Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and his ideas on the Superman as it might influence the Ideal Male. Some work has already been done in this area, notably Eric Levin's dissertation that deals with *The Fountain*, *Marco Millions*, and *Days Without End*.

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