“The Right Kind of Pity”:
Notes on O’Neill’s Revisions for The Iceman Cometh

MICHAEL HINDEN
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Eugene O’Neill was not only a prolific author, but also a tireless editor of his own works. His typical method of composition was to begin with notes and a scenario, sometimes accompanied by set drawings; then to draft a handwritten pencil manuscript, which would be revised; then to have a first typescript prepared from the revised manuscript. O’Neill scrutinized these first typescripts with a cold eye, adding, revising, and deleting, sometimes to an astonishing degree. Key phrases appear at this stage in his composition process, inserted by carets or in the margins, and long stretches of dialogue are crossed out (but still legible). Ruthless cuts are routine, and not many pages escape unaltered. Next, O’Neill would prepare a second typescript based on the one that had been heavily edited. There might also be subsequent typescripts, but O’Neill’s revisions become progressively minor in these iterations.

O’Neill’s manuscript and typescript materials (most of which are housed in the Beinecke Library at Yale University) have been available to scholars since the 1980s and have inspired a number of useful studies. In 1981, Virginia Floyd published Eugene O’Neill at Work: Newly Released Ideas for Plays, which examined O’Neill’s composition process from his first plays to his last, by analyzing his notebooks, work diaries, and scenarios (though not the manuscripts and typescripts). In 1985, Judith Barlow produced an exemplary study of O’Neill’s composition of his final masterpieces. In Final Acts: The Creation of Three Late O’Neill Plays, Barlow traced the evolution of The Iceman Cometh, Long Day’s Journey into Night, and A Moon for the Misbegotten from their beginnings through their final states, with close attention to the manuscripts and typescripts. In 1992, using primary sources, Martha Bower reconstructed O’Neill’s intentions for his unfinished “Cycle Plays” in Eugene O’Neill’s Unfinished Threnody and Process of Invention in Four Cycle Plays. Collectively, these studies have enriched our understanding of the most important phase of O’Neill’s career. The dramatist’s early plays now await similar scrutiny, and one hopes that such work will be forthcoming.
Recovering O’Neill’s revisions invariably sheds light on the completed plays. One of Floyd’s most startling discoveries about The Iceman Cometh is that Hickey, the protagonist of the play, was absent from O’Neill’s original list of characters and might have been added as an afterthought. Equally interesting is Barlow’s discovery that O’Neill himself had trouble deciding the issue of Hickey’s sanity and self-awareness. Barlow’s discussion of the divergence between the published text and the production text of the play is also highly valuable. Of course, no single approach can be exhaustive. Now that the groundwork for textual criticism of The Iceman Cometh has been established, it is possible to concentrate on smaller sections of O’Neill’s canvas than might have been practical in these pioneering studies. Such is my intention here. As Barlow observes, the question “Why did the playwright make that change?” sometimes can be a key that unlocks the mystery of the finished text (2). I want to put that question to what becomes (quite literally) a defining moment in The Iceman Cometh by focusing on a crucial passage that O’Neill reworked quite carefully. The scene in question occurs midway through the second act when Hickey challenges Larry Slade to give up his practice of ministering to the drunkards in Harry Hope’s saloon by refusing to challenge their illusions. In response to Larry’s query, “Have you no decency or pity?” Hickey replies: “Of course I have pity. But now I’ve seen the light, it isn’t my old kind of pity—the kind yours is. It isn’t the kind that lets itself off easy by encouraging some poor guy to go on kidding himself with a lie. . . . I know all about that kind of pity. I’ve had a bellyful of it in my time, and it’s all wrong” (115). The conversation then turns to Parritt, the guilt-ridden son of Larry’s former lover, and Hickey adds: “He’s licked, Larry. I think there is only one possible way out you can help him take. That is, if you have the right kind of pity for him.” Uneasily, Larry replies: “What do you mean?” (117).

It’s an important question, the answer to which is worked out through the ensuing action, for much of the play turns on the debate between Hickey and Larry over truth and illusion and what Hickey claims are two types of pity, one right and one wrong. Believing that the forlorn drunkards who live and sleep in Harry Hope’s bar are too weak to battle life, Larry chooses to accept them on their own terms and urges Hickey not to destroy their pipe dreams. To Hickey, that is the wrong kind of pity. He contends that Larry’s feckless encouragement is cruel because it nurtures false hopes and fails to bring real peace. Larry’s pity supports a hope that the future can be altered, a hope that will lead to only more disappointment. In opposition, Hickey counsels “the right kind of pity,” which exposes illusions in order to produce “final results” (116). Later in the play, when we discover that Hickey has murdered his
wife to end her pipe dream about their marriage, his doctrine is discredited. Yet, ironically, Larry applies Hickey’s kind of pity to Parritt, urging him to face his guilt for betraying his mother: “Go, get the hell out of life, God damn you, before I choke it out of you!” (248). Parritt heeds this advice and jumps from the fire escape, presenting us with the play’s second grim instance of “final results.” Since Larry perceives that Parritt will never find peace until he punishes himself, his advice may be seen as an act of compassion. But Hickey’s version of pity brings death, and the irony of the ending is dark.

The passage in which O’Neill establishes a dialectic on pity is central to *The Iceman Cometh*. The playwright considerably reworked this conversation as he emended the first typewritten draft of the play, which was a copy of his revised original pencil manuscript. An examination of this typescript, housed with the Eugene O’Neill Papers in the Yale Collection of American Literature at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, reveals that he inserted the phrase “right kind of pity” by means of a caret, as if he had discovered the idea through the writing process itself. The earlier version of the line in which Hickey refers to Parritt was “I think there’s only one way out you can advise him to take: That is, if you pity him, and want to see him find peace.” O’Neill corrected the typescript in pencil, first changing advise to help, as if to distance Hickey from Larry’s decision making, and then qualifying pity by adding the phrase “the right kind of.” Presumably at the same time, he also emended the previous page of his typescript to strengthen the contrast between Hickey’s concept of pity and Larry’s. In the earlier version, Hickey says: “I know all about that kind of pity. I’ve had a bellyful of it in my time and it’s the bunk” (first typescript 2, 14). O’Neill crossed out “the bunk” and added the phrase “all wrong” to establish the opposition between the two types of pity that now appears in the text. Why O’Neill made these particular changes is clear. The argument about pity resonates throughout the play and serves as the axis of thematic conflict. As any good dramatist would, O’Neill heightened the essential. Hickey later refers back to the discussion when he chides Larry: “You know what I told you about the wrong kind of pity” (Iceman 199), and Larry agrees with him when he catches himself falling into old ways after Parritt’s death: “Ah, the damned pity—the wrong kind, as Hickey said!” (258).

Hickey’s understanding of pity changes over the course of the play and is a marker for the explosive insight that takes him (and the audience) by surprise in the last act. We learn that for years Hickey had been an unfaithful husband and that for years Evelyn had coddled him, feeding their joint illusion that one day he would reform. Hickey has modeled his doctrine of pity on this negative example. Better to have faced
the failure of their marriage, he now believes, than to have continued in that cycle of pity and forgiveness, which brought suffering to them both. Hickey could not tolerate the pity that Evelyn lavished on him, which only diminished his self-worth: pity as hopeless encouragement, or “the wrong kind.” Might things have turned out differently had Evelyn agreed to face the truth? Perhaps. But since she couldn’t, did Hickey take “the right kind of pity” on his wife by deciding to end her life? He would like his comrades to think so, to believe that his murder of Evelyn was based on altruism, making his crime an act of mercy killing: “I felt such pity for her, it drove me crazy. You wouldn’t believe a guy like me, that’s knocked around so much, could feel such pity. . . . And then it came to me—the only possible way out, for her sake” (239-40). However, as Hickey relives the shooting, he dredges up a hidden emotion that leads to the unraveling of his doctrine: “There’s a limit to the guilt you can feel and the forgiveness and the pity you can take! You have to begin blaming someone else, too! I got so sometimes when she’d kiss me it was like she did it on purpose to humiliate me, as if she’d spit in my face!” (239).

A new element enters the picture here. As Hickey talks on, he reveals an angry suspicion that Evelyn’s pity was manipulative as well as misguided, that it was based on her position of moral superiority in their relationship. By feeding his illusions, she controlled him, and by forgiving him, she kept him dependent. For that Hickey hated her. At the climax of his monologue, he admits, to his own horror, that what he really wanted to say to Evelyn as he stood over her corpse was “Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, you damned bitch!” (241). As soon as these words slip out, Hickey tries to take them back, but it is too late.

Parritt, who all along has served as an echo of Hickey, confesses to Larry at this very moment that he betrayed his anarchist mother to the police, not for patriotic or financial reasons, but because he hated her, thus underscoring Hickey’s true motivation. At this point in the first typescript, O’Neill made an interesting deletion. The parallel confessions of Hickey and Parritt are more starkly apparent in the first typescript than they appear in the published text. Here is the published version, omitting stage directions:

Hickey: So I killed her.

Parritt: I may as well confess, Larry. There’s no use lying any more. You know, anyway, I didn’t give a damn about the money. It was because I hated her.

(241)
And here is the version in the first typescript, again omitting stage directions:

Hickey: So I killed her.
Parritt: I may as well confess, Larry. I can’t go on like this. There’s no use in my lying and stalling anymore. I know you know it, anyway. That’s what I meant to do.
Hickey: Because I loved her so much.
Parritt: Because I hated her, Larry. You know her. You can understand why.

There is a chilling beauty to the counterpoint of this arrangement, but evidently O’Neill decided that he had overplayed his hand. In deleting the preceding lines, he left it to the spectator to make the connection between Hickey’s suppressed hatred and Parritt’s overt acknowledgment. There may have been an additional reason for the change. Keeping the lines, powerful though they are in terms of counterpoint, would have undercut the momentum of Hickey’s monologue as it builds toward its crescendo: “Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, you damned bitch! [stage directions deleted] No! I never—!” (Iceman 241–42). In the published text, O’Neill finds another way to reinforce the parallel between Parritt and Hickey by having Parritt apply Hickey’s outburst to his mother, whom he also calls “a damned old bitch” (247). It is instructive to compare O’Neill’s decisions here to those in act 2 involving the two types of pity. In the first instance, O’Neill heightened contrast to increase the effectiveness of a dramatic point; in the second instance, he sacrificed contrast for the greater good of a scene.

In the context of Hickey’s confession, we recognize why his doctrine of pity must founder. Based on the part of his experience that he understands, he urges the derelicts to test their pipe dreams against reality, knowing in advance that they will fail and believing that the truth will bring them peace, just as Evelyn’s death has brought him peace—or so he thinks. Of course, he misjudges the men who are the objects of his experiment because he misjudges himself. In a sense, Hickey adopts Evelyn’s tactic in reverse. She tried to change Hickey by managing his pipe dream, just as he tries to change the drinkers by destroying theirs. The two experiments, both manipulative and based on an illusion of superior knowledge, fail.

What changes Hickey in act 4 is his perception that, like the other roomers in Hope’s saloon, he is unable to continue without his own lifesaving lie, which is that he killed Evelyn for pity’s sake instead of revenge.
Now, like them, he craves acceptance and the collusion of comradeship. One of the play’s deeper ironies is that, while Larry claims at the end that he is the only convert to death Hickey has made and admonishes himself for still “looking with pity at the two sides of everything” (258), Hickey seems converted to Larry’s view that we all need our lies and that it is best to respond to human weakness with compassion. Just before the police lead him away, Hickey comforts the lodgers with the explanation that his truth experiment can be dismissed as insanity and therefore need no longer disturb them. This maneuver may be a dodge, but it is made more for the benefit of the men (and for Hickey’s own peace of mind) than for the police, who think that Hickey is just trying to lay the groundwork for an insanity plea. Rather, Hickey now sees himself as a full member of this community, one whose need for illusion is as great as any other’s and whose obligation is to comfort his companions.

By the end of the play, Hickey’s concept of pity has progressed toward congruence with O’Neill’s. And here it might be helpful to explore the playwright’s broader understanding of the term. Among O’Neill’s manuscript notes at the Beinecke Library are eight pages of handwritten quotations from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, including the following lines: “God is dead: of His pity for man hath God died” ("Nietzsche Quotations"). O’Neill must have been struck by the concept that God could die as an act of commiseration with suffering humanity; indeed, Edmund quotes this line in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (78). However, the passage in Nietzsche continues: “But remember this also: all great love is lifted above all its pity; for it seeketh to create what it loveth!” (202). Like Nietzsche, O’Neill came to believe that the right kind of pity demands a transcendence of commiseration; it requires a creative act.

As he grew older, O’Neill significantly modified his views on the issues of guilt and responsibility. His early plays exact stern moral judgments on characters who are shaped in the Sophoclean mold and who spread disaster through acts of arrogance and blindness. But O’Neill’s emphasis in his later plays shifts from attributing guilt to absolving it. Reflecting this interest, the terms compassion, pity, sympathy, and forgiveness appear with greater frequency in his later writing, including his personal correspondence. In a letter to Kenneth Macgowan in which O’Neill defends his scrupulous attention to each of the seventeen characters in *The Iceman Cometh*, he argues: “[I]f I did not build up the complete picture of the group as it now is in the first part, . . . [Y]ou wouldn’t feel the same sympathy and understanding for them, or be so moved by what Hickey does to them” (*Theatre* 257). The choice of the word sympathy in this context is arresting, particularly in juxtaposition to Hickey’s relation to the denizens of the saloon. Here is a clue to help
us understand what the right kind of pity means to O’Neill and why Hickey’s machinations fall short. Hickey’s pity is calculating; it implies condescension, distance, and superiority. O’Neill’s pity is closer to sympathy, which the Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines as “harmony or agreement in feeling . . . especially in sorrow or trouble.” The kind of pity advocated by the playwright is predicated on acceptance and understanding. O’Neill feels that kind of pity for his characters and wants us to feel it for them, too. Indeed, that is how the play is designed to touch us. But Hickey, despite his self-assessment, is incapable of such a response until the last moments of the play when, against his will, he admits to himself that his motive for killing Evelyn was impure.

Yet what is Hickey’s final state of mind? To answer that question, Michael Manheim (“Transcendence”) reminds us of a central pattern in The Iceman Cometh. He points out that every lodger at Harry Hope’s bar struggles with two stories about his past. In one version, the drinker is to blame for the failure that led him to the “No Chance Saloon,” and in the other someone else is the guilty party. In each of the stories, someone is at fault. Either Willie Oban’s father ruined his career or Willy let him down and was a bad son. Either Jimmy Tomorrow’s wife drove him to drink by committing adultery or she resorted to adultery because he was an alcoholic. Either Harry’s wife Bessie was a saint who enabled his political career or a nag who pushed him beyond his talents to fail. The roomers oscillate between one version or the other, finding reprieve only in drink and acceptance from their fellows. Hickey’s enactment of this pattern is representative. For years, he has been the villain of his own story, betraying an innocent wife and hating himself. Until his final monologue, he believes that he has ended the story by giving peace to Evelyn. However, once he permits himself to express a new version of his story that shifts the blame to Evelyn for her stubborn adherence to a pipe dream, he becomes, like the others, trapped between two unacceptable scenarios. That he is able to glimpse the complexity of his dilemma gives Hickey some of the dignity of a tragic hero, as Manheim suggests.

Bearing in mind this background, let us return to the passage with which we began. Earlier in the play, when Hickey tells Larry about the right kind of pity, he has not yet grasped the futility of his actions or the fragility of his emotional state. In act 2, he is still out of touch with his feelings. And it is this circumstance that explains an otherwise puzzling change that O’Neill made in Hickey’s pivotal speech. Several lines after Hickey tells Larry that his pity is the wrong kind, he urges his friend to express his true fears. An earlier version of this speech contains a significant line that O’Neill deleted from the play. Here is the revised ver-
sion of the speech as it appears in the published text, with the canceled line from the first typescript (2, 14) capitalized for emphasis: “You’ll say to yourself, I’m just an old man who is scared of life, but even more scared of dying. So I’m keeping drunk and hanging onto life at any price, and what of it? I AM WHAT LIFE HAS MADE ME, AND ANY-ONE THAT DOESN’T LIKE WHAT I AM CAN GO TO HELL! Then you’ll know what real peace means, Larry because you won’t be scared of either life or death anymore.” This memorable line—“I am what life has made me”—memorable because it reappears elsewhere in O’Neill, was stricken from the text. Why? The answer, I think, is that O’Neill realized during the course of his revision that the line would have been out of character for Hickey. He cannot recommend a nonjudgmental view of life to Larry because, as we later learn, he is unable to accept himself. When Hickey pierces his own veil of illusion in act 4, he realizes that he forgives neither himself nor Evelyn, and his only recourse is a belated attempt to restore the status quo in Hope’s saloon.

However, the phrase that O’Neill canceled here lingered in his mind and flowered in the play that he was germinating even as he put the finishing touches to The Iceman Cometh: Long Day’s Journey into Night. Mary speaks it, defending Tyrone (and, by implication, herself for her lack of will to resist her addiction): “But I suppose life has made him like that, and he can’t help it. None of us can help the things that life has done to us” (61). Her line becomes a litany in that play, which is preoccupied with forgiveness. Indeed, Hickey’s line seems more at home in Long Day’s Journey into Night, with its emphasis on forgiveness, than in The Iceman Cometh, with its emphasis on illusion.

The refrain that life makes us what we are—and therefore we all are pitiable—reverberates throughout Long Day’s Journey into Night and helps clarify O’Neill’s evolving vision. Tyrone may claim to reject Mary’s fatalism that the past determines the present and the future, too, when he quotes Cassius’s line from Julius Caesar: “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings” (152). However, there are two observations to make about this speech. The first is that O’Neill planned to use it somewhere in the final act, but had not decided where it would be placed at the time he completed his first draft. Among his handwritten notes for the play is a page containing a list of verse quotations for distribution in act 4, including this famous passage (unbound holograph note). He later inserted it by means of a caret in the pencil manuscript (Barlow, 183n). The striking fact that both “the right kind of pity” speech in The Iceman Cometh and “the fault, dear Brutus” speech in Long Day’s Journey into Night were added during the revision process suggests that O’Neill was trying to sort out his feelings about pity and blame as he composed both plays.
The second observation about this speech is that Tyrone doesn’t really believe it. On the occasions when Tyrone speaks in his own voice, he echoes Mary’s sentiments about determinism. We hear the authentic Tyrone during his confession to Edmund about his squandered career: “Maybe life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake ruined my career as a fine actor” (149). “Then life had me where it wanted me,” he admits, and it was too late to change (150). None of us, Mary says, can help the things life has done to us. Deep down, Tyrone believes that, too. So does Edmund. “What the devil are you laughing at?” Tyrone demands, after he has completed his confessional monologue. “Not at you, Papa,” Edmund replies. “At life. It’s so damned crazy” (151). Elsewhere O’Neill espoused this view in his own voice. In 1927, writing to Agnes Boulton about the breakup of their marriage, he avows: “I am not blaming you. I have been as much as you, perhaps more so. Or rather, neither of us is to blame. It is life which made us what we are” (Selected Letters 271).

O’Neill’s inclination to exonerate his characters in Long Day’s Journey into Night almost certainly stems from the play’s autobiographical content. However, as several critics have observed, there are strong autobiographical elements in The Iceman Cometh, too. O’Neill’s guilt-ridden brother Jamie may have served as a model for Hickey, as well as for Jamie Tyrone in the subsequent play (see, e.g., Gelb and Gelb 285; Manheim, O’Neill 133, 138). Certainly, Jamie and Hickey share similar traits: they are hale and hearty on the surface but cynical, bitter, and capable of viciousness underneath. The most striking parallels appear in their confessions about love-hate relationships. Hickey discloses that his love for Evelyn is riddled with hate, while Jamie confesses to Edmund that, as much as he loves him, “I can’t help hating your guts—!” (166). After this confession, Jamie does more than merely advise Edmund to be on his guard against him. He pronounces his own symbolic death: “[T]hink of me as dead—tell people, ‘I had a brother, but he’s dead’” (166). Jamie reinforces his meaning by recasting a line from one of his favorite poems by Oscar Wilde, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol.” The original lines by Wilde are “The man had killed the thing he loved, / And so he had to die” (Wilde 274). According to Jamie, Wilde got the meaning twisted: “The man was dead and so he had to kill the thing he loved. That’s what it ought to be” (166).

Jamie’s allusion to “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” indicates a strong link between his appearance in Long Day’s Journey into Night and, in the guise of Hickey, in The Iceman Cometh. Wilde’s poem may have been among the many sources for The Iceman Cometh, for the principal figure in the ballad is a prisoner who, like Hickey, killed the woman he loved by murdering her in her bed. It is possible, moreover, that O’Neill
derived his inspiration for the psychologies of both Hickey and Parritt (his alter ego in the play) from his brother Jamie. Parritt’s betrayal repays his mother for neglecting him and is similar to Jamie’s defiance of his mother as a child, which resulted in the death of his baby brother. To Hickey, Evelyn is a maternal figure who babies him with pity and stirs his resentment. “I even caught myself hating her for making me hate myself so much,” he reveals (239). In The Iceman Cometh, Hickey enacts his murderous fantasy; but in Long Day’s Journey into Night, Jamie punishes himself instead of the woman whose love he desires (his mother) or his brother, of whom he is jealous. His confession to Edmund therefore serves as a shriving for past sins. “Gone to confession,” he tells Edmund. “Know you absolve me, don’t you kid?” (167). Hickey goes to confession through his long monologue in act 4, but no one is listening at the end, except the audience.

And the author. It is O’Neill the playwright who absolves Hickey, as he absolves each of the characters in Long Day’s Journey into Night, a play that was written, O’Neill states, “with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness.” We even can trace the absolution process as O’Neill works through the drafts of these plays, softening the portraits of the major characters as the plays grow closer to completion. Barlow provides evidence to demonstrate how Hickey changes during O’Neill’s revision process, moving from a malevolent figure in his first appearance to a self-deluded figure, and therefore one eligible for sympathy, in the final text (Barlow 30–39). Similarly, the four Tyrones became more acceptable to their creator as they progressed through their incarnations in the drafts. As I have written elsewhere, it is as if O’Neill regarded his characters in draft as souls in purgatory, sloughing their worst sins until at last they were ready for the stage, where in their nakedness they could be forgiven (Hinden 90). What is most extraordinary is the symmetry between O’Neill’s process of composition and the process the audience undergoes in refining its initial perception of his characters. In the completed plays, the characters forgive more readily, and so do we. They lose track of who is to blame, and so do we. Our responses are orchestrated to recapitulate O’Neill’s revisions.

This process occurs in each of the great plays that O’Neill completed after 1935. However, it was during the writing of The Iceman Cometh, as O’Neill struggled with the themes of human failure and acceptance, that his ultimate vision became clear. The playwright conveyed his best understanding of “the right kind of pity” in a letter to Lawrence Langner written on 11 August 1940. It seems fitting to end with O’Neill’s words:

The Iceman Cometh . . . is one of the best things I’ve ever done. In some ways, perhaps the best. What I mean is, there are moments in it that suddenly strip the secret soul of a man stark naked, not in cruelty or
moral superiority, but with an understanding compassion which sees him as a victim of the ironies of life and of himself. Those moments are for me the depth of tragedy, with nothing more that can possibly be said. (Selected Letters 511)

NOTES

1. Eugene O’Neill, The Iceman Cometh, the first typewritten manuscript. The reference is to act 2, page 15, of the typescript; subsequent references to this document are identified as “first typescript,” followed by act and page number. Grateful acknowledgment is made to Yale University for permission to quote from these materials and those cited elsewhere in my paper, all of which are housed in the Yale Collection of American Literature, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

In Final Acts, Barlow summarizes the numerous incarnations of the play for both the published text and the performance versions of the text. The first typescript, she notes, is particularly significant for its copious and substantive revisions. A second typescript, containing relatively minor alterations, was produced incorporating O’Neill’s revisions in the first typescript. According to Barlow, “The drama remained in this form, untouched by the playwright, for nearly five years. The fact that O’Neill did not alter it all during this time testifies to his satisfaction with Iceman in this draft. The history of the Iceman text becomes rather complicated after this point. From the second typescript, the play developed in two directions: toward the printed version and toward the script of the first production” (21). My argument here is based on an examination of the first typescript, which eventually became the basis for the published text. For a discussion of script variations in the production versions of the play, see Barlow (21ff.).

2. I agree in part with Barlow’s suggestion that O’Neill may have deleted the lines because they seemed to him too schematic (41).

3. This passage is from a section of Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra entitled “On the Pitying.”

4. Scholars have discovered numerous links between the characters in The Iceman Cometh and figures drawn from life whom O’Neill either knew or read about. It has been suggested that Parritt was based on an informer named Donald Vose who betrayed his comrades in the anarchist movement (see Sheaffer 491–93; Frazer 43–64). There is persuasive evidence to support this link; however, while the Vose case may have provided O’Neill with a plot line for the character, Parritt’s psychological portrait may well have been limned from Jamie. Sheaffer goes even further and suggests that O’Neill’s portrait of a son who betrayed his mother was autobiographical (499).

5. These lines are from the playwright’s dedication to Long Day’s Journey into Night.

WORKS CITED


O’Neill, Eugene. The Iceman Cometh. The first typewritten ms., copy of original holograph, with
author's ms. corrections. The Eugene O’Neill Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.


———. Unbound holograph note. Filed with ms. material for Long Day’s Journey into Night. The Eugene O’Neill Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

