

## *Dynamo*: Complication and Obscurity

Kumi Ohno

In analyzing the play, we, first of all, need to define the complexity of *Dynamo*, which lies in the appearance of four gods: the Puritan god, the electrical god (= the machine god), *Dynamo*, and 'the real God' or the god of eternal life.

As Professor James A. Robinson points out in his *Eugene O'Neill and Oriental Thought*, O'Neill on one hand was deeply affected by the concept of a super consciousness as explained in Asian philosophy, but on the other hand he was not able to escape from conventional morality, nor was he able to overcome the Freudian concept of self-consciousness.

The 'electrical god,' who represents 'material science,' appears in a scene to disapprove and deny the Puritan god. However, the powerful electrical god is not able to understand the significance of human life, nor how human information is processed in the mind. Later, this same god evolves as the god who is capable of unveiling the mysteries of how human psychology is structured.

O'Neill, then, denies the idea of an 'omnipotent electrical god.' He 'dug' deeply in the human psyche to represent successfully the conflict of the sexual libido and psychological libido that exists in the human consciousness, which is the embodiment of human information (e.g. human greed and emotion). The author then projects these elements onto *Dynamo*. His attempt to resolve the conflict between the true self and the other self, which is the embodiment of his consciousness, is represented here as *Dynamo*.

## ***Dynamo*: Complication and Obscurity**

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### **I. Introduction**

*Dynamo*, is a play in three acts by Eugene O'Neill which opened in New York on February 11th, 1929, at Martin Beck Theatre. When he composed *Dynamo*, O'Neill expressed his ambitions in the following letter to George Nathan:

The playwright today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for surviving primitive religious instinct to find meaning of life and to comfort his fears of death with. It seems to me anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around on the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlor entertainer.<sup>1</sup>

*Dynamo* is the first play of a trilogy aiming to 'dig at the roots of the sickness of today.' O'Neill's enthusiasm about his intended trilogy can be seen from the fact that he talked and wrote about this project to a number of people.

The American economy was at the peak of a major boom when this play was written, just before the Great Depression began in October 1929. *Dynamo* was premiered during a period when not only

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1 B.H Clark, *Eugene O'Neill, The Man and His Play* (New York, 1948), p. 165 (translated by Hiroshi Narumi, *Guide to 20th century English and American literature 14. O'Neill*, p. 38 was referenced to provide a summary of these points)

Americans but also people around the globe were enjoying the fruits of a surging economy, though with an underlying fear, namely the dilemma twentieth-century humanity faced. This anxiety syndrome is also present today as what is often called 'modern world sickness.' Nonetheless, few authors in the 1920s created literary works that would 'dig at the roots of the sickness.'

This situation is very similar to that of America today, where most people have enjoyed several years of strong economic performance while still foreseeing approaching dark shadows. There are no other authors except Eugene O'Neill who depicted the roots of the twentieth-century sickness of 'anxiety amid prosperity' in such depth.

The 1920s was the decade in which the U.S. overtook Britain, the home of the industrial revolution, with its development of highly advanced technology in automobiles, electricity, and the mechanical industries. The age of science and materialistic culture was brought about by applying technology to various industries, though none of its literary works questioned the meaning of the 'principle of mechanization' from a cultural and theatrical viewpoint. O'Neill brought the 'shadow of a machine culture' into the light through theatrical works.

The author tried to analyze the impact of economic maturity, or over-maturity, brought by the technological advancement of 'machine culture' on the psychology of the American people, and to expose the 'roots of the sickness of machine culture.' To realize his intention, he had to understand the problems and issues of technology, economy, society, and culture that America faced at the time, which was an overwhelmingly difficult task.

O'Neill's efforts to take the initiative to tackle various issues resulting from the machine culture associated with the sickness of all mankind enabled him to get at these problems in depth through the representation of reality in *Dynamo*. At the same time, he tried to explore the roots of the sickness using a 'play' as leverage to derive a remedy in what was the challenge of confronting a global issue. On the one hand, resolving the grave issue facing mankind through a play certainly is a challenge and offers the possibility of accomplishing a 'big work' or creating a great work of art, but on the other hand, the

work may end up merely offering a partial solution or message. There was a limitation to a drama in cross-examining this arduous problem. O'Neill, himself, mentions that *Dynamo* was not a critical success. He also describes the play's obscure and complex treatment of its theme.<sup>2</sup>

We can say, however, that *Dynamo* is without question a work that heightens the awareness of a critical problem.

## II. Obscurity in *Dynamo*

In *Dynamo*, the 'Puritan god,' representing traditional religion, appears in a scene and is criticized by 'the god of materialism and science.' This occurrence in life was often a major concern for people, but the meaning of life and the 'surviving primitive religious instinct' that comforts us against the fear of death, which was the author's intent, was not emphasized.

However, contrasting the Puritan god with the 'machine god' was not sufficient to explain the meaning of life and significance of human existence. Neither god was capable of illustrating the author's intention.

O'Neill's aim of pursuing a 'new god' to replace the two gods began. As a result, he created *Dynamo* to present an electrical god. *Dynamo* itself takes the form of a human being. The strong prayer of a character, which is the communication channel available to man, enables the formation of *Dynamo*. In other words, the strong human emotions put into a prayer are communicated to a machine god who answers the prayer by transforming into *Dynamo*.

The main character, Reuben, imagines *Dynamo* as a female idol and projects his sexual libido onto the object of worship, but later, in the shadow of his mother's death, Reuben accepts *Dynamo* as the result of the psychological projection of his libido and projects himself onto the god while also praying to it. As a result, the conflicting energy of sexual libido and emotional libido offset each other, and 'the real God' appears on the scene. This is evident from the following lines spoken by Reuben in Scene One of Act Three, where the real God represents the 'mother of eternal life.'

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2 Gelb, Arthur and Barbara, *O'Neill* (N.Y: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 690

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Reuben

...But there must be a center around which all this moves, mustn't there There is in everything else! And that center must be the Great Mother of Eternal Life, Electricity, and Dynamo is her Divine Image on earth!

Act Three Scene One

As seen from the above lines, Reuben views Dynamo as the 'Great Mother of Eternal Life,' the manifestation of the sacred mother of the earth. 'The real God' perceives all things; it is 'a secret of the truth,' 'a new savior'. 'The real God' is described as the god of the universe, beyond Jung's 'Great Mother.'<sup>3</sup> These four gods appear on the stage one after another.

The main character, Reuben, is a son of a stern, rigid minister, the Reverend Hutchins Light, and of a mother who is always thinking about her son. He is suffering from doubt over God and uncertainty about his future. He falls in love with Ada, the daughter of the superintendent of a hydroelectric power plant, Ramsay Fife, which leads to a family problem and sparks off Reuben's rebellion against his parents until he leaves his parents and home. One year and a few months later, during which he acquires various experiences, including love affairs, he returns home. Reuben is no longer a teenager when he returns, having now the adult face of a young man. In Act Three, Scene One he confesses to Mrs. Fife:

Reuben

But I've got to finish telling you all I've come to know about her—how all things end up in her! Did I tell you that our blood plasm is the same right now as the sea was when life came out of it? We've got the sea in our blood still! It's what makes our hearts live! And it's the sea rising up in clouds, falling on the earth in rain, made that river that drives the turbines that drive Dynamo! The sea makes her heart beat, too!—but the sea is only hydrogen and oxygen and minerals, and they're only atoms, and atoms are only

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3 Hayao Kawai, 『無意識の構造』 (*Structure of SubConscious*) Chuo Shinsho 1993, p. 69

protons and electrons—even our blood and the sea are only electricity in the end!?

Act Three Scene One

In other words, O'Neill used Reuben to criticize the 'Puritan god' and to introduce an electrical god into the scene.

A sad fact was waiting for Reuben on his return: his mother's death. She passed away two weeks before he returned. Light tells him her last words:

Light

Forgive me, Reuben! You are my son as well as hers, remember. I haven't the strength to resist evil. I wanted to punish you. She didn't curse you. Her last words were the very words you had written her. "Don't be a fool!" she kept saying to me!

Act Two Scene One

After he heard her last words, Reuben learns that she had converted to the 'electrical god' from Puritanism. From his Oedipus complex and from a guilty conscience that he has killed his mother, Reuben suffers in pain and agony, inflicting self-punishment. On the one hand, he overlaps the image of Mrs. Fife with Dynamo and projects his sexual libido onto the electrical god. On the other hand, he immediately develops an emotional libido operating against the object of worship when he hears of the conversion of his mother to the electrical god and then projects his feelings against Dynamo, through his mother. The urge for self-punishment is built up in his mind.

The battle of the Freudian sexual libido<sup>4</sup> and Jungian emotional libido<sup>5</sup> reaches a peak in the main character, initiating a self-adjustment mechanism which makes Reuben spend the night with his lover, Ada. However, this act does not solve his problem of antinomy. In fact, the

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4 Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVII* trans. By James Strachey. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955) p. 255

5 Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol. V, Symbols of Transformation*, ed. By Herbert Read et al. (New York: Princeton University Press, 1956) p. 408

situation is aggravated. The conflict is exacerbated in his psyche and the consequence is severe. Reuben shoots Ada in front of Dynamo and commits suicide. The author leaves the conflict unresolved. He poses a question to the audience and antinomy remains as a controversy. The psychological conflict is the result of what Eugene O'Neill intended to do after his dedicated hours of suffering in trying to develop characters that could accomplish his initial purpose. The answer remains in the obscure ending, where his message lies.

### III. The Complexity of *Dynamo*

In analyzing the play we have to define the complexity of *Dynamo*, which lies in the appearance of four gods: the Puritan god, the electrical god (= the machine god), Dynamo, and 'the real God' or the god of eternal life.

As Professor James A. Robinson points out in his *Eugene O'Neill and Oriental Thought*,<sup>6</sup> O'Neill on the one hand was deeply affected by the concept of a super consciousness as explained in Asian philosophy, but on the other hand he was not able to escape from conventional morality, nor was he able to overcome the Freudian concept of self-consciousness. It was true, though, that he was deeply influenced by the primitive religions of the East, which worship multiple gods. We cannot say, however, that the polytheistic religious elements found in *Dynamo* and the beliefs in multiple gods in Eastern religions are necessarily equivalent. The gods of Asian religions evolved from the concept that each god represents and controls a natural phenomenon. In other words, these natural occurrences are the manifestations of the deities. However, in *Dynamo*, the four gods appear in chronological order, reflecting historical trends, and each of these correlates with each other in contradiction.

The 'electrical god,' who represents 'material science,' appears in a scene to disapprove of and deny the Puritan god. However, the powerful electrical god is not able to understand the significance of a human life, nor how human information is processed in the mind.

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6 James A. Robinson, *Eugene O'Neill and Oriental Thought* (Southern Illinois University Press), p. 164

Moreover, this god is able to unveil the mysteries of how human psychology is structured.

O'Neill, then, denied the idea of an 'omnipotent electrical god.' He 'dug' deeply in the human psyche to represent successfully the conflict of the sexual libido and psychological libido that exists in the human consciousness, which is the embodiment of human information (e.g. human greed and emotion). The author then projected these elements onto Dynamo. His attempt to resolve the conflict between the true self and the other self, which is the embodiment of his consciousness, is represented here as Dynamo.

The conflict between the Freudian concept of the sexual libido and the Jungian psychological libido are not resolved in the play. As a result the main character was not able to adapt and self-adjust so as to unravel the friction of antimony. The consequence appears in his killing of his lover, Ada, and his committing suicide.

In other words, the author, though he created Dynamo as the 'sacred incarnation of eternal life on earth,' was not able to depend completely on this god, and this resulted in the complexity of the play.

At the time this play was premiered, stage effects were two-dimensional and many critics thought poorly of the theatrical technique of the play. But what happens if a three-dimensional cyberspace is used? *Dynamo* was played on the stage where the stage-audience relationship is one-way, where communication is in one direction, and the audience sees and hears only what is performed by the actors. In order to show the complexity of the play effectively, the use of modern technology such as three-dimensional cyberspace is required, where the performers and the audience interact in some way or another and which offers a two-way communication-type of approach (or a play in which the audience actually participates in the play). For example, the relationship between an actor himself (the real person) and the role (embodiment) he plays can be used to configure a three-dimensional stage and integrate the audience with the play by involving and immersing them in the play. As I anticipate it, the use of this technique would have resulted in a more efficient and effective performance that would reveal the true value of *Dynamo* and convey the intent of the author.



In order to unveil the mystery of the complexity behind the play, it is vital to analyze the roles and order of appearance of the four gods in the play from a logical and historical viewpoint. In other words, we have to understand the changes in the significance of the gods in the play from a simple multiple-deity belief to more complex representation with respect to human psychology. At the same time, a three-dimensional viewpoint is the key to understanding the characters' conflicts.

As mentioned earlier, besides the Puritan god, the common element of the other three gods is Dynamo. The key is how we view Dynamo. From a Freudian viewpoint, the 'machine god' or 'electrical god' is Dynamo itself, which represents a materialistic reality based on the concept of materialism. Only from this viewpoint is a Freudian approach to understanding the significance of the gods possible.<sup>7</sup>

However, the difficulty of this play does not come from Dynamo itself. The problem is the human greed and emotions projected onto Dynamo that complicate the issue. Those emotions evolve as a conflict between the true self and the incarnated self, and then the integration of the two selves, representing a Jungian concept.

Jung defines Dynamo as the manifestation of the collective conscious that signifies human emotions. O'Neill, however, projected human greed and emotional feelings onto Dynamo and tried to present the results as feedback from Dynamo. Unfortunately, because the tools such as sensor and display which were made possible with modern technology were not available at the time, O'Neill was not able to express Dynamo sufficiently as the embodiment of human emotions.

The author tried to represent 'the real God' as the manifestation of an eternal life on earth through Dynamo, but again he was not able to express this sufficiently on the stage.

#### **IV. Complexity Seen in the Characters**

To identify the exact position of Dynamo in the play, we have to understand that there are two axes that structure the play: one is Puritanism and the other is materialism. Dynamo exists on the cross

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<sup>7</sup> Keigo Okonogi, Hayao Kawai, *Freud and Jung*, Shisakusha1990, p. 110

section of these two axes. This is not seen in any other works by O'Neill. It is a three-dimensional vertical structure.

O'Neill used this structure to place his major characters and created the Reverend 'Light,' who represents Puritanism. Light's appearance is described in the following stage directions:

He is a man in his early sixties, slightly under medium height, ponderously built. His face is square, ribbed with wrinkles, the forehead low, the nose heavy, the eyes small and gray-blue, the reddish hair grizzled and bushy, the stubborn jaw weakened by a big indecisive mouth. His voice is the bullying one of a sermonizer who is the victim of an inner uncertainty that compensates itself by being booming overassertive.

Act One Scene One

At the same time, O'Neill placed the character of Fife in an opposing role against Light. This is quite apparent from his appearance, as described in the following instructions:

Fife is a small wiry man of fifty, of Scotch-Irish origin, with a sharp face and keen black eyes. His thin mouth is full of the malicious humor of the practical joker. He has a biting tongue, but at bottom is a good-natured man except where the religious bigotry of his atheism is concerned.

Act One Scene Two

The following lines show very well Fife's character as a man of science who judges a person by testing and proving. Regarding Reuben, the lover of his daughter Ada, Fife says:

FIFE So you don't believe that lad's yellow, don't you? What'll you bet he isn't?

*then as she doesn't answer*

I dare you to bring him in tonight, and let me talk to him and you listen, and if I don't show him up yellow then I'll buy you the best dress you can find in the town!

*as she hesitates—tauntingly*

Are you afraid to take me up?

Act One, Scene Two

From the term 'bet' we know that he is a modern materialistic character who believes in science. From the next lines, we also know that he is an admirer of electricity.

FIFE What's the trouble, young fellow? Are you afraid of a bit of lightning? Don't worry about me. The devil looks after his own! But a minister's son has reason to worry, maybe, when he's in a den of atheism, holding intimate converse with a damned man! I'm thinking your Jehovah might aim a thunderbolt at me but Lucifer would deflect it on to you—and he's the better electrical expert of the two, being more modern in his methods than your God!

Act One Scene Three

Beyond these two characters who represent the two main axes of Puritanism and materialism, the character who symbolizes the deep psychology of human beings appears in the scene and represents the Freudian aspect of the play. Later, another character appears who represents the layer of the collective conscious<sup>9</sup> as explained in the archetypal psychology<sup>8</sup> of Jung, in a position contrary to Freud.

However, due to the obscurity of the play, the psychological exploration of the inner minds of the characters does not emerge distinctively. In other words, depending on the situation and the scene, the author sometimes describes these characters by incorporating Freudian concepts but on other occasions they are described using Jungian psychology. In the play these attributes of the characters result in inner conflicts.

Light, who represents Puritanism, is described as someone with a personality that reflects Freudian concepts in the following lines:

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8 Carl G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol. XVI, Psychology and Religion* ed. Herbert Read et al. (New York: Princeton University Press, 1958) p. 345

9 *Ibid.*, p. 345

LIGHT

I must be honest with myself ... who am I to cast the first stone at Reuben if he desires a woman? ... hasn't my love for Amelia been one long desire of the senses? ... I should understand Reuben's weakness and forgive him ...

Act One Scene Three

Mrs. Light also possesses dual characteristics: Puritanism and a Freudian character. This is evident from the description of her appearance.

Her expression is one of virtuous resignation. Only her mouth is rebellious. It is a thin small mouth, determined and stubborn.

Act One Scene Four

Mrs. Light is annoyed, and complains to her son that he does not speak out about his lover because he was instructed not to tell anyone by her father, Fife:

MRS. LIGHT

And to think he's had those same arms hugging that little filthpot this very evening! ...Do you mean to say you refuse to tell your own mother, just because you were forced into promising not to by that atheist? Then all I can say is that my boy I thought I could trust has turned into a liar and a sneak, and I don't wonder you feel guilty in God's sight!

Act One Scene Four

The psychology behind the scene can be interpreted as a negative Oedipus complex.

The next lines also signify the dual personality of Ada—Freudian and Jungian aspects:

ADA

I love him! ... I want him as much as he wants me! ... what of it? ... But his eyes are so queer ... like lumps of ice with fire inside them ...

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and he never said he loved me ... aw, of course he does! ... he was nuts about me before he went away, wasn't he? ...I've got to make Pop give him that job or he might beat it again ...?

Act Two Scene One

Next, Ada's lines show the conflict and integration within herself which reflect Jungian concepts.

ADA

Oh, Rube, when you kiss me like that nothing in the world matters but you! Up on the hill when we—oh, I felt I was just you, a part of you and you were part of me! I forgot everything!

Act Two Scene Two

As explained in above passages, Light, Fife, Mrs. Light, and Ada are all described as having elements of not only Puritanism and materialism but also of Freudian and Jungian concepts, although these attributes are not very clearly expressed and are obscured in the play.

Reuben, the main character, is presented as having a much more complex personality and he symbolizes the above antinomies through the conflict that exists inside his conscious. This conflict within his character, which represents Freudian and Jungian psychology, results in the sexual libido and emotional libido. The author skillfully describes the psychological mind of the main character and successfully illustrates the inner conflict of a man.

Dynamo is used to describe the inner conflict of Reuben, the main character, in a battle between Freudian and Jungian types of character. The words of Dynamo further influence Reuben. As mentioned earlier, this complication is caused by the existence of several gods: the Puritan god, the machine god (Dynamo), Dynamo (i.e. the Freudian sexual libido and Jungian emotional libido targeted at Dynamo), and the real God that is the manifestation of eternal life. These four gods appear on the stage as causes of complication.

The main character, Reuben, is not only the human reflection of Dynamo but also of all these four gods who cohabit in his conscious mind. Dynamo is transformed into the real God; but this is a reflection

in Reuben's mind, where transitions occur in a diversity which signifies that the contradictions evolving in his mind develop and take the form of a new existence.

The following lines show the Freudian part of Reuben. After being away from home, during which he experienced numerous love affairs with various women, he returns no longer a boy and now able to take the lead with Ada in their relationship.

REUBEN

...I don't want to see him but I want to have a talk with Mother. I've got over my hard feelings about her. She was so crazy jealous of you she didn't care what she did. I can make allowances for her—now. So I'll be friends again if she wants to—and then you watch me convert her over from that old God stuff of his!

Act Two Scene One

In the above lines, we can see Freudian self-adaptation in regard to Reuben's relationship with his mother. In the next lines, Reuben reveals his sexual libido.

REUBEN

...And you're the one that used to be always kidding me about being a goody boy! There's nothing to be scared about or sorry for. What we did was just plain sex—an act of nature—and that's all there is to it!

Act Two Scene Two

Reuben meets his father for the first time in 15 months and hears of his mother's death. At the sad news, Reuben says:

REUBEN

Two weeks ... it was about then I first felt that hunch to come home and see her ... that's damn queer ...

Act Two Scene One

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'Hunch' here represents the 'synchronicity'<sup>10</sup> which is described as 'meaningful coincidence' by Jung.

Later Reuben projects his sexual libido and emotional libido against Dynamo in search of the object of his libidos. Reuben tells Mrs. Fife:

REUBEN

Did you ever watch dynamos? What I mean is in them—somehow.

Act Two Scene One

However, the conflict inside his conscious accelerates and gets worse by projecting his libidos. The following lines show this:

REUBEN

That I was living in sin—that Dynamo would never find me worthy of her secret until I'd given up the flesh and purified myself! ...She won't answer me ... there must still be something I've got to do ...Maybe she feels I haven't killed all desire for Ada yet? ... that I ought to face her and conquer the flesh once for all ...

Act Three Scene One

Reuben suffers in pain and agony from the antinomy within himself: the conflict between the sexual and emotional libidos. He sees 'the Great Mother' (as defined by Jung) in Mrs. Fife and reveals his feelings:

REUBEN

Can't you tell me?

You know what she means sometimes.

Act Three Scene One

The next lines of Reuben show that Dynamo is transforming into 'the real god' in his consciousness:

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10 Carl G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol. VIII, On Synchronicity* pp. 520–531

REUBEN

It's like a great dark idol ... like the old stone statues of gods people prayed to ... only it's living and they were dead ... that part on top is like a head ... with eyes that see you without seeing you ... and below it is like a body ... not a man's ... round like a woman's ... as if it had breasts ... but not like a girl ... not like Ada ... no, like a woman ... like her mother ... or mine ... a great, dark mother! ... that's what the dynamo is! ... that's what life is! ... Listen to her singing ... that beats all organs in church ... it's the hymn of electricity ... "always singing about everything in the world" ... if you could only get back into that ... know what it means ... then you'd know the real God! ...

Act Two Scene Three

From the above lines, we know that Reuben struggles at trying to overcome the inner conflict between the two images he sees in the dynamo and in evolving the real God. However, in the play's final scene, the Oedipus complex emerges in Reuben:

REUBEN

Mother! ... have mercy on me! ... I hate her now! ... as much as you hate her! ... give me one more chance! ... what can I do to get you to forgive me? ... tell me! ... yes! ... I hear you, Mother!

Act Three Scene Three

As these lines show, Reuben's conflicts result in his mental breakdown and, without touching her, he shoots Ada. He then cries out:

REUBEN

I don't want any miracle, Mother! I don't want to know the truth! I only want you to hide me, Mother! Never let me go from you again! Please, Mother!

Act Three Scene Three

and commits suicide. This is not caused by the symptom of 'maternal recurrence' nor is it the result of 'self-punishment.' During the process of the development and transformation of Dynamo into 'the mother of



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eternal life' or 'the mother of the super consciousness,' which is 'the real God' in Reuben's consciousness, the Oedipus complex has evolved, resulting in a severe self-contradiction. This caused his breakdown and in the end he commits suicide. Reuben was able to find the real God but was not able to reach God.

Mrs. Fife was the key to embodying the existence of the real God. She was the person who was able to overcome the electrical god and Dynamo to become the 'Great Mother' from Reuben's viewpoint. The following lines show that Mrs. Fife blindly worships Dynamo:

MRS. FIFE

I love the plant ... I love the dynamos ... I could sit forever and listen to them sing ... they're always singing about everything in the world ...

Act One Scene Three

Later Mrs. Fife cries out in front of the dead Reuben:

MRS. FIFE

What are you singing for? I should think you'd be ashamed! And I thought you was nice and loved us! You hateful old thing, you!

Act Three Scene Three

'You hateful old thing, you!' words of anger, are the final words shouted against Dynamo, who was the cause of Reuben's suicide.

### **Conclusion**

O'Neill tried to resolve the conflicts between the gods but was not able to attain his goal. He seemed to be caught in a maze of obscurity and complexity as he suffered in pursuit of the answer.

O'Neill tried to unite the gods with 'the real God' in the center. However, he was not able to overcome the shadows of the 'Puritan god', the 'electrical god', and Dynamo that evolved from the conflict between Freudian and Jungian elements. He used Reuben to blatantly express the conflict within himself.

He tried to express his grand vision with a complex reality

which in turn obscured the whole play, resulting in the insufficient explanation of his theme. His efforts at experimenting with a three-dimensional play were let down by the two-dimensional stage effects and theatrical devices (stage and audience relationship) of the time.

However, I wish to praise *Dynamo* as the prototype of modern 3-D theatre. Today the virtual play that involves the interaction of computer and human has emerged and blossomed on the theatrical scene.<sup>11</sup> Actions performed by the actors are transmitted to virtual scenes and stages through sensors with their virtual images. The result is displayed on the screen as a feedback. This interaction of 3-D theatre enables the audience to synchronize with virtual reality as if they are one of the actors performing in the play, realizing the fusion of audience and stage. Needless to say, none of this advanced technology existed in O'Neill's day, though *Dynamo* was designed to be realized on a three-dimensional stage and it is a mere fact that this play became the first example of 3-D cinema.

In this respect we can say that O'Neill was a pioneer of the three-dimensional play. There are pros and cons advanced about *Dynamo* by critics,<sup>12</sup> but the play's contribution to 3-D theatre must be recognized. Regardless of the negative criticism it has suffered, it should be considered an important play in the history of theatrical entertainment.

Finally, the difference between obscurity and complexity as defined by the author of this thesis is as follows.

Obscurity: there are no distinct borderline between *Dynamo* and the real God during *Dynamo*'s transformation, and no clear definition of the relationship between these gods.

Complexity: humans are complicated beings. There was a limitation to O'Neill's attempts at expressing the complex aspects of a man using four gods on a two-dimensional theatrical stage, something which is better served with 3-D devices.

(おおの くみ・委嘱研究員)

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11 Myron W. Krueger, *Artificial Reality* (Addison-Wesley Co.,1991) trans. by Takao Shimono p. 285

12 F.I. Carpenter, *Eugene O'Neill* (N.Y. Twayne, 1964), p. 141

NOTE: All the quotes (lines) used in this thesis are cited from *Dynamo* compiled in O'Neill: Complete Plays 1920–1931 (The Library of America, 1988)