

# O'Neill's Unconscious Shakespearean Orientation:

## The Comparative Study of *The Emperor Jones* and *Macbeth*

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**Abstract:** Based on the formers' research, the paper mainly lays stress on a systematic new comparison between *The Emperor Jones* and *Macbeth* from much wider and specific aspects in order to unearth William Shakespeare's influence on Eugene O'Neill, especially *Macbeth* on *The Emperor Jones*. In *Macbeth* and *The Emperor Jones*, both Macbeth's hunger for power and Jones' lust for materialistic grab result in their destruction. Besides, they are mercilessly mocked by fate, and become the victim of the then society. Thematically speaking, both Macbeth's and Jones' tragedies actually are not one-dimensional but three-dimensional, and can be interpreted as the combination of personality, fate and society. In both plays, Shakespeare and O'Neill adopt aural effect to create the frightful atmosphere and externalize the internal fear of our heroes. And both plays resort to similar symbols such as blackness or darkness, the royal robe and sea to depict the characters. Besides, through soliloquies, both plays tend to reveal the character's conscious thought and unconscious emotions. Therefore, it can be proved that when Eugene O'Neill chooses the themes and special dramaturgy for *The Emperor Jones*, he unconsciously adopts much from *Macbeth*.

**Key words:** *The Emperor Jones*; *Macbeth*; Dramatic themes; Dramatic devices

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As the founder of the American drama, Eugene O'Neill's literary influences have been thoroughly studied and well documented. Among the several playwrights who have aided to model the distinguished American dramatist, Swede August Strindberg's influence had received the most attention by far. Besides, scholars have also demonstrated the important effects that Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw had wrought on his works. O'Neill also readily acknowledges his indebtedness to them. As to William Shakespeare, the most extraordinary playwright of all ages, though, seemingly, O'Neill doesn't pay much respect to him and even a bit resents him, maybe as a reaction against the taste of his father-cum-actor, many a critic still find numerous traces of Shakespeare in O'Neill's canons. A lot of theatrical critics of O'Neill's times had claimed that O'Neill, to some extent, had recreated Shakespeare both in theme and shape unconsciously, and a few modern critics have repeated this point. O'Neill's famous recent critic Normand Berlin, through his comparison between O'Neill's plays and Shakespeare's plays, points out that quite a few O'Neill's

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works are attuned to Shakespeare's in various aspects without his own awareness. In this present paper, the author aims at unearthing Shakespeare's influence on O'Neill, especially *Macbeth* on *The Emperor Jones*, rather than denying others' influence on *The Emperor Jones*.

## 2. THE REASONS OF O'NEILL'S SHAKESPEAREAN ORIENTATION

As a matter of fact, O'Neill's unconscious Shakespearean orientation is not accidental, and at least two factors are contributed to planting Shakespeare in his heart. One is from his family background and informal education. O'Neill's was born into the theatre. His father, James O'Neill, was a famous actor who early in his career had been hailed as a potentially great tragedian, more precisely, Shakespearean tragedian. In O'Neill's home autobiographical play *Long Day's Journey into Night*, his father's archetype, James Tyrone exalts Shakespeare as his idol by placing three sets of Shakespeare in his bookcase and reading and rereading them. And he trustfully deemed that his studious study of Shakespearean dramas had led him to his acting career. Of course, he had supervised his boys' education in Shakespeare endlessly. In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, both Edmund and Jamie, the self-portraits of O'Neill and his elder brother, can recite Shakespearean lines without further thinking. Just as Edmund, O'Neill's archetype, rebukes his father when James accuses him of not remembering Shakespeare but some third-raters, "Didn't I win five dollar from you once when you bet I couldn't learn a leading part of his in a week, as you used to do in stock in the old days. I learned *Macbeth* and recited it letter perfect with you giving me the cues" (Bogard, *Eugene* 799). Hence, it was Shakespeare who had accompanied little O'Neill's growth. More than that, later when he decided to be a dramatist or nothing else, he indulged himself in the works of the great dramatists, both ancient and modern, just as he recalled, "I read about everything I could lay hands on: the Greeks, the Elizabethans—practically all the classics" (qtd. in Carpenter 33). Therefore, it is not exaggerated to say that Shakespeare enriches O'Neill's childhood and the preparing stage for a playwright. And, it is not groundless to admit that Shakespeare is already in O'Neill's heart and he can't completely cast off the yoke of Shakespeare during his creative process, though he is contemptuous of Shakespeare.

Another factor contributed to cultivate O'Neill's Shakespearean tendency is an indirect force. Critics have regarded O'Neill as the genuine creator of American native drama. And most critics believe that he is not only the greatest but the most representative American playwright. Even so, the facts that O'Neill, too is largely a European playwright manqué for all the influential figures he claims indebtedness, by and large, are from Europe. Bentley remarks that, "his (O'Neill's) works is pastiche of borrowed and mostly indigested bits of Strindberg, George Kaiser and other European playwrights" (54). Furthermore, the source of European drama should definitely be traced back to the Elizabethan drama, especially Shakespearean. Neither Ibsen nor Strindberg, O'Neill's two biggest debtors, denies their obligation to Shakespeare. In this sense, to O'Neill, Strindberg may be in his conscious mind, but Shakespeare certainly verily holds a place in his unconscious mind.

## 3. THE COMPARISON BETWEEN *MACBETH* AND *THE EMPEROR JONES*

### 3.1 Literary Review

Critics find that O'Neill's unconscious Shakespeare is repeatedly demonstrated in O'Neill's writings, among which, *The Emperor Jones* is ranked as one which is affected by Shakespeare.

*The Emperor Jones* was written by Eugene O'Neill in 1920. The Provincetown Production was an overnight success. Criticism pours in, and myriad disputes naturally come forth, of which, the argument about the play's origin is one of the fiercest. O'Neill's famous scholar and editor Bogard puts forward that two of O'Neill's favorite authors Jack London and Joseph Conrad might have contributed something to the

formation of the play. Yet, he further exemplifies the parallel and similarities between *The Emperor Jones* and *Peer Gynt* by Ibsen not only in the dramatic rhythm, emotional pattern and general shape of the action but also in specific episodes. So, Bogard sums up, "in its dramatic form and in many aspects of its theme, the primary source of O'Neill's play is, unexpected Ibsen" (*Contour* 136). Carpenter also points out Joseph Conrad's influence on the design of the play, especially, his *Hearts of Darkness*. Besides, Floyd demonstrates a marked similarity between *The Emperor Jones* and Strindberg's *A Dream Play* relating to the main characters' journey. All the three search the play's source from modern writers, causing a wide-scale resonance. Still, different voices venture out. Just after the successful staging, critic O. W. Finkens in *Weekly Review* aired his opinion that "Negro different charlatan corresponds to Edgar's imagined description of himself in the health-scene in *King Lear*"(qtd. in Houchin 20-1). His statement admits that Shakespeare, the classical dramatist, has also shed some light on the play. Finkens' opinion is also followed by a large number of other critics and they go further to find some more conformity of *The Emperor Jones* with *Macbeth*, and come to a mutual agreement that both explore the downfall of tyranny, adopt the device of externalization of the inner mind to pierce into characters' souls, and bear a special tragic effect. And some radical critics even suggest classifying them into the expressionistic plays. The authentic comparative study of the two began as early as 1930s, and two American scholars H. A. Heydrick and M. A. May had put forward this research topic, and laid out a detailed outline for further study. However, it is a pity that they didn't set forth their points of views. Until the last decade of the past century, critics once again picked the topic up. In 1993, Normand made a lot of comparison between O'Neill's plays and Shakespearean in his *O'Neill's Shakespeare*, but his study is too general to make direct influence. In addition to this, there are also several articles dedicated to comparing the two, but their scope and aspects are only limited to some single aspects. As a whole, the comparative study of the two plays is inadequate and controversies still remain, therefore, a systematic re-comparison and rediscovery is apt.

### 3.2 The Similarities between *The Emperor Jones* and *Macbeth*

*Macbeth* is the last-written and also the shortest of Shakespeare four great tragedies. But, simultaneously, Bradley praises it as "the most vehement, the most concentrated," and "the most tremendous of the tragedies" (278). Then, he continues to explore its popularity and finds out that its special charm is largely due to the following notable characteristics: the vividness magnitude, violence of the imagery, the special sound effect, etc. Besides, nearly all famous Shakespearean critics reach an agreement that the biggest difference between *Macbeth* and the other three tragedies lies in the design of the hero, Macbeth, a merciless killer, a tyranny drastically unlike the noble Hamlet and Othello.

*The Emperor Jones* is one of O'Neill's least autobiographical plays. And the publication of the plays won a wider success and a greater acclaim, and the Provincetown Production of it achieved a success equaled by few American plays, which established O'Neill as an international figure. The success and popularity of the play, according to Floyd, owns greatly to O'Neill's "efforts to integrate form and subject matter" (141). Bogard explains the reasons of its success in detail as follows:

An ordinary American could become a subject of pathetic concern and on occasion could rise to the height of a tragic figure-was abundantly demonstrated in the account of the rise and fall of Brutus Jones, moreover, the technical excitements of the plays with its drums, its sustained monologue were almost binding in their virtuosity and in their assurance of important theatrical things to come (142). Both Floyd and Bogard mark its speciality with subject matters and techniques.

Comparatively speaking, both plays strike our inner hearts to run and to speed with them through their thought-provoking subject matters and superb dramatic arts. Hence, an embedded comparison between their dramatic themes and dramatic devices seems to be appropriate and necessary to understand Shakespeare's influence on O'Neill.

#### 3.2.1 Dramatic themes

It is generally acknowledged that both *Macbeth* and *The Emperor Jones* belong in tragedies, but their specific themes differ and have long been the arguing stock of critics. As for what *Macbeth* is about, millions of words have been written about it since Shakespeare's times. Currently, three interpretations are popular in the literary world. In the first place, a good many critics ascribe the downfall of Macbeth to the

flaw in his personality and hold that his ambition for power leads him to killing out of his own judgment and conscience. In the second place, some European and American scholars consider it as a fate tragedy, and believe that the brave Macbeth steps into the blood under the manipulation of the God of Fate. Apart from the two ideas, in some scholars' eyes, *Macbeth* is more a social tragedy. And according to them, it is the social dark corrupt reality and Macbeth's surrounding environment that decomposes Macbeth and pushes him on to climbing the ladder of higher rank and absolute power, and eventually causes his fall. Actually, it is impossible to determine a definite one theme for *Macbeth*, because the play itself works on so many different levels, and a multitude of interpretation is possible—all the above three-mentioned with a claim to truth. As far as *The Emperor Jones* is concerned, likewise, three similar explanations to Jones' destruction are dominant, namely, the personality tragedy, fate tragedy and social tragedy. Herewith, a detailed analyse and comparison from these three angels will be indispensable to decipher the thematic link between the two plays.

### 3.2.1.1 Personality tragedy

Whenever talking about the motif of *Macbeth*, people usually think *Macbeth* as an ambitious tragedy, which is also affirmed by a large number of authoritative voices. Indeed, Shakespeare attacks and condemns the corruption of power-pursuit in *Macbeth*. Originally, Macbeth is a great honorable warrior, but he has a fatal flaw in his character, which is his thirst for power just like the heel of Hercules. Before meeting the witches, in the light of Bradley,

He was exceedingly ambitious. Actually, he must have been so by nature. And the tendency has strengthened by his marriage with another ambitious woman, Lay Macbeth, and it is been further stimulated by his remarkable success and by the consciousness of exceptional powers and merit, it becomes a passion (288).

Wherefore, the witches soliciting can only make him but not Banquo “start, and seem to fear” (Clarke 286), and to conceive thereupon immediately of the thought of murder. The lust for the crown must be long already slumbered in his breast, which increases and drives him to murder Duncan to obtain the absolute power, so he murders Duncan to usurp the Crown, and hires murderers to butcher Banquo in order to assure the throne for his generations to come after the accession. Instead of ceasing killing, he strides from crime to crime, kills everyone who endangers him and later even expands to kill the innocent women and children—the slaughter of Macduff's wife and children. Ultimately, he paves his way by killing for his own destruction.

As for *The Emperor Jones*, Floyd thinks the dominate motif—the Faust theme and believes that Jones is a man who clearly has sold his soul for materialistic possession. Like Macbeth, Jones is no other than an ambitious person. But he is slightly different from Macbeth, his lust for power is secondary, and the hunger for materialistic grab especially money is foremost. Though he was born humble, a Negro, an ex-Pullman porter, as Macbeth, his tendency to grabble money is strong. Before his accession, he commits his first crime, Jeff's murder in a squabble over money. After being the emperor, he succumbs more heavily to greed and the lure of “white quality talk” assuming the role normally played by white oppressors. He mercilessly exploits his black subjects for money, “I se after de coin”, and intends to “get all de money in sight” (Bogard, *Eugene* 1037). The coins pursue him until he surrenders his soul in death.

Bentley puts, Shakespeare and O'Neill seem to agree that “human beings are great and terrible creatures when they are in the grip of great passions” (67). And the downfall of Macbeth and Jones appears to suggest that the exceeding obsession with pursuit of something probably will result in one person's corruption and destruction, Macbeth is led by the ambition for power to death and Jones is also driven by thirst for money to his destruction. In these cases, their tragedies are individual and can be called personality tragedies.

### 3.2.1.2 Fate tragedy

*Macbeth*, introduced to readers as a general of extraordinary power, who has covered himself with glory in putting down a rebellion and repelling the invasion of a foreign army. His courage, prominent war strategy and strong capacity really dwarf the old king Duncan. In modern times, he is well qualified to be a good king, but, facts go to the contrary, Duncan's son Malcolm but not Duncan's cousin Macbeth should be counted as the orthodox heir to the throne, though Macbeth is 1000 better, braver, fitter to be a king than Malcolm, still he is not a prop heir by blood. After he has illegally claimed the crown, it seems that he is

always in the power of some kind of secret forces lurking below, which is independent of his consciousness and will. According to Bradley, the secret force lurking below “frightened men and awed them, it made them feel that man is blind and helpless, the plaything of an inscrutable power” (4). In other Shakespearean plays, this immeasurable power usually leads their heroes into the abyss of death. Critics call the force as fate. The fatalism in *Macbeth* has long attracted many scholars. The 18<sup>th</sup> century famous critics Hazilett believed that the fate played a part in destroying Macbeth. B. B. Harrison further confirms that the three witches stand for the three Goddesses of destinies, and Coleridge also approves that. Just as *Macbeth* calls them “thou unknown power”(Clarke 301). At first, it is the witches’ ambiguous three hails “Thane of Glamis”, “Thane of Cawdor” and “king hereafter” (Ibid. 285-6) which ignite Macbeth’s uncontrollable passion for power, and push him onto the road of murdering Duncan. After his accession, the three weird sisters again assure Macbeth that he will be harmed by none of woman born and will never be vanquished till Birnam Wood shall come against him, which arouses his brutality and cruelty to strengthen his crown via merciless killings. Though Macbeth desperately struggles to overthrow the malicious power of fate, which is blind, cruel, indifferent to human happiness and goodness, he is still doomed. In the end, the Birnam Wood does move to Dunsinane and he is killed by Macduff, who “was from his mother’s womb untimely ripp’d” (Ibid. 310). Before the cold-blooded fate, he and others drift “struggling to destruction like helpless creatures born on an irresistible flood towards a cataract” (Bradley 19).

Jones, like Macbeth, is capable, full of wit and courage. The opening scene of *The Emperor Jones* shows that he is superior to both the White cockney trader Smithers and any other native. Jones, in his two years on the island, has learned the language of the natives and taught some of them English, but Smithers has been there 10 years and still cannot communicate verbally with them. Jones forges his way from a lowly stowaway, after his escape from an American jail, to the emperor because of his intelligence and bravery. When the natives rebel, he arranges everything in advance and has thought that all are in his hand. However, out of his expectation, he first goes astray in the Great Forest. It appears that there is a strong force to hamper him from reaching the French boat waiting. His situation is just akin to what O’Neill said in a letter to the critic Arthur Hobson Quinn, “he was always actually aware of the reality and power of determinism” (qtd. in Bigsby 52), and he verily believes “life is a struggle, often, if not usually unsuccessful struggle for most of us have something within us which prevents us from accomplishing what we dream and desire” (Ibid. 42). And Berkowitz once suggested that “any discussion of O’Neill’s idea must begin with the fatalism and sense of doom already apparent in his early plays with rare exception” (31). In this play, Bogard holds the opinion that the silver bullet is his fate. In fact, the origin title of *The Emperor Jones* is *The Silver Bullet*, an indication of the importance of the bullet in the play’s design. According to Bogard, “Jones’ bullet is his emperorhood epitomized in a single destructive symbol. It is his talisman, his rabbit’s foot, his fate, when it is gone, he must go to death” (136). At first, Jones fully accepts that he can not be killed unless it is of a silver bullet. But, in the end, Jones is just shot dead by the silver bullet made by the native rebels.

Both Macbeth and Jones have fought bravely and desperately to flee from the unknowable force—fate, but they still fail to be out of the magic hand of the fate. In their cases, the two plays can be regarded as fate tragedies.

### 3.2.1.3 Social tragedies

Being the giant playwright of the Renaissance, Shakespeare doesn’t limit his eyesight on individual or fate, but he also extends his horizon to the society at large. Readers can often gain an insight into the picture of Renaissance by reading his plays, especially the dark sides of the then society. Tolstoy affirms that Shakespeare creates not only the typical characters, but also the typical age. Macbeth, originally, is a general with a noble heart, admired and beloved by both the king and the people. Yet, why does he choose the road to commit murdering? To pierce through the real forces that cause Macbeth’s fall, except his flaw in character and the manipulation of fate, the abnormal dark society can’t also shake off its responsibility. In the light of John Russell Brown, “present-day study of Shakespeare sees that the plays presently carefully delineated societies as well as single heroes and interesting individuals” (qtd. in Bradley XX). When Shakespeare was writing *Macbeth*, England was ruled by James I. James I was an extremely ambitious king and believed the Divine Right of Kings and the absolute reign, so he reigned England and Scotland absolutely and exploited the people with high taxes to satisfy his strong desire. When Macbeth accesses the throne, he also wants to rule Scotland absolutely and even resorts to killing in order to reinforce his reign.

And, with the awakening of self-awareness in the Renaissance, human's desires strongly expand during the process of self-realization. In politics, the negative effect from over-expansion of desire turns into ambition and lust for power. Macbeth is living in it and deeply involved in it. Though he is a person with virtue, he also can't help being attracted and seduced by the lust for power, and let ambition and evil outrival his conscience and virtue, so he stamps on the road of crime, and finally falls into a tyranny. As a matter of fact, the abnormal society not only affects Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, but also stretches his hands onto Banquo and others. Banquo also holds hope for the crown after Macbeth's successful accession is conformed to the prophecies of the weird sisters. Banquo also dreams his futures, "myself should be the root and father of many kings" (Clarke 294).

Apart from the absolute rule and over-expanding ambition, the chaos of society also has a negative influence on Macbeth. In the then society, just as the witches have sung in the very beginning "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (Ibid. 284), and Macbeth's first remark "so foul and fair a day I have not seen" (Ibid. 285). The then society is one where the good and evil or the fair and foul reverse. Being in it, Macbeth is deeply infected, so he takes the evil for the fair. From this aspect, Macbeth is a social tragedy, and his crime is not only a great disaster of society, but also rooted profoundly in the abnormal society.

Quite similar to Shakespeare, O'Neill, being the first serious writer of American theatre, his concern, likewise, is not only about the fate of an individual, but also the society as a whole. Bigsby observed that "to him, theater was trivial if it did not tackle what he regarded as the 'big issues', he was always concerned with penetrating the social" (41). Regarding *The Emperor Jones*, Emil Roy comments that "O'Neill uses Jones' naïve, though shrewdly effective projections of self-aggrandizement to expose a debased vulgarized present" (qtd. in Houchin 45). In Jones' then America, money worshipping was rampant. Jones is also deeply contaminated by it, and his ultimate goal of being the emperor is to squeeze all the coins. Besides, the then society was rather corrupt, for the white take "for de little stealin' dey qits you in jail soon or late, for de big stealin' dey make you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' Fame when you croaks" (Bogard, *Eugene* 1035) as their social credo. Jones uses the lesson he has learned by "listen' to de white quality talk" (Ibid) during his 10 years as a Pullman porter to exploit his subjects and plunder the island. Moreover, in the 1920s and 1930s, racial discrimination was serious. *The Emperor Jones* is the first of many attempts O'Neill has made to depict the plight of the blacks in America. Putting a black at the place of an emperor seems to suggest that the black sits higher than the white, which of course is intolerable to the superior white. So, Jones' failure is American failure in dealing with the 1920s social problems such as the money-worshipping, social corruption and racial discrimination.

Both Shakespeare and O'Neill use their plays more to expose and deal with social problems, in the case of this, *Macbeth* and *The Emperor Jones* are tragedies socially.

To sum up, both Macbeth's and Jones' tragedies actually are not one-dimensional but three-dimensional, and both can be interpreted as the combination of personality, fate and society.

### 3.2.2 Dramatic devices

William Shakespeare innovates the world drama theatrically and guides the later generations to follow him without looking back. His dramatic innovations are varied and superb, for example, he puts the use of supernatural beings into the full extent, creates various sounds to express the different atmosphere and human emotions, borrows symbols to carry deeper meaning, and grasps soliloquies to the point of excellence. He also demonstrates his masterly dramatic art in *Macbeth* for all dramatic techniques in Shakespeare tragedies can be found in this shortest play, especially the frightening sound effect, the overwhelming darkness, the vividness of imagery, and a large multitude of soliloquies etc.

It is also undeniable that O'Neill revolutionizes the American dramatic scene. He is universally honored for his skillful dramaturgy such as his use of such startling devices as the masks in *The Great God Brown* or the drums in *The Emperor Jones*, his innovative use of an exterior-interior setting for *Desire Under the Elms*, his pioneering use of sound and light as integral parts of his plays. *The Emperor Jones*, his first expressionistic play, shows O'Neill's boldness in technical experimentation, such as the long monologues (used superbly to the fullest extent), symbolic sets, and the drumbeat throughout the play.

Comparing *Macbeth* and *The Emperor Jones*, both have adopted aural effect, symbols, and soliloquies. Therefore, a comparative analysis from the above three techniques is apt to understanding the similarities between their technical skills.

### 3.2.2.1 Aural effect

*Macbeth* is full of tumult and storm. Whenever the witches are present, a thunder storm with lightening is heard; when they are absent, shipwrecking storms and direful thunders, the tempest that blow down tress and churches, castles, palaces and pyramids, the frightful hurricane of the night when Duncan was murdered are in ear. The heart-throbbing knocking on the gate after Duncan's murdering is the most terrific. Nearly all kinds of frightful sound weave throughout the play. In general, critics agree that all those sounds, on one hand, help to enhance the terrible frightful atmosphere, on the other hand, are useful to externalize the inner fear of Macbeth, especially the consistent knocking on the gate.

In *The Emperor Jones*, two sound devices are superbly used in full swing. One is the famous steady background beating of the tom-tom. It begins in the first scene, which starts at a normal pulse beat—72 to the minute and gradually accelerates to the end of the play, ceasing only when Jones is dead. The beating of the tom-tom, just like the knocking on the gate in *Macbeth* powerfully projects Jones' panic. And this incessant throbbing is augmented by other sounds in the play—the wind moaning in the leaves, the Formless Fears laughing mockingly, the moans of the Slaves on the Ship, the Witch-Doctor's croon and howl, and especially the various sounds that come from Jones himself from murmurs to wails, which function the same as the tumult and storm in *Macbeth*, and aid to create the frightful atmosphere around Jones. Synchronized with the Tom-tom, the six gun reports from the emperor's revolver—ending with the shooting of the magic silver bullet at the end, equally, do favor to the play's general atmosphere of fear. O'Neill's adoption of sound effect in this play is universally acknowledged to be the marvelous dramatic devices to reveal Jones' fear through the forest, to display his inner experience.

So, the frightful atmosphere and the internal fear are perfectly displayed via the sound effect used in both *Macbeth* and *The Emperor Jones*.

### 3.2.2.2 Symbolic images

Symbolism is a fact of style in Shakespearean drama. O'Neill is also obsessed with symbols. The myriad symbols and metaphors are floated in Shakespeare's early plays and gradually become more and more rooted in the totality of the play. In Shakespearean earlier plays, he shows superficial adornment for imagery, gradually in his later plays, symbols becomes the vehicle of his thought. Like Shakespeare's imagery, symbols in O'Neill's plays seem to register a similar pattern of development. And talking about symbols in *The Emperor Jones*, some appears to be borrowed from *Macbeth* for their marked similarities, such as blackness, royal robe and sea.

Blackness or darkness broods over *Macbeth*. Bradley points out that Macbeth is the darkest in all Shakespearean plays. It is remarkable that almost all the scenes which take place either at night or in some dark spot, for instance, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth, all come in night scenes. Except that many scenes are set at night, verbal images of thick night, strangled light, and the instrument of Darkness are all the same permeated with the play. Besides, by the contrast of a torch dashed out by Banquo's murders and a candle that Lady Macbeth has in his sleep-walking the darkness is also marked. *The Emperor Jones* is regarded as a play of darkness by Bgisy. Similar blackness or darkness also overshadows Jones' flight. In the Great Forest where he fled to, it is "a wall of darkness dividing the world" (Ibid. 1044). In the third scene, the blackness of the woods resembles an encompassing barrier. In addition, Jones repeats dark once and once again verbally.

Images of darkness in both plays to the hero are a thing of fear, even of horror, turns out to be the embodiment of the dark society, and the presentation of their dark soul. Theatrically speaking, darkness intensifies the dramatic effect of the action and language in both plays.

Both Macbeth and Brutus Jones have strived hard to put on the royal robe. However, after succeeding in wearing it, both feel like having new clothes and always experience uncomforted, unfit and unaccustomed, and even "hamper" them. When Jones is in flight, he condemns the robe. At that moment, they dislike it, and even are scare of it. In this sense, the royal robe reflects their inner fear of crime.

Sea is a recurrent image in O'Neill's plays. Though *The Emperor Jones* does not belong to O'Neill's sea plays, but the sea coast in it means great to Jones. As long as he can reach the sea coast, he will take the French gunboats to Martinique, then, he will be safe and be a new man. Therefore, sea means safe harbor, freedom, cleaning tub or resurrection place for Jones. The sea of freedom, cleansing or resurrection suggested by the sea symbolism in O'Neill's plays parallel with the sea in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the cleaning power of sea is implied when Macbeth feels that the multitudinous seas cannot clean the blood stains from his hands.

### 3.2.2.1 Soliloquy

Soliloquy has been a cogent dramatic unit of the theatre both at present and in the past. Soliloquy is a speech by a person who is the only flesh and blood character on the stage or who believes himself to be so, and it has different subtle variations upon it, such as monologues, modified monologues and thought asides. Coghill, discussing the professional skill of Shakespeare, says:

Nothing is more certain than that soliloquy is the most intimate and potent of all the instruments of discourse in theatre, it is of perennial power in a medium that has ranged from heaven to hell and can explore the internal as well as the external world (qtd. in Prasad 80).

In *Macbeth*, Macbeth reveals his great ambition in thought asides after listening to the hails from the witches, and continues to expose his thinking of murdering in thought asides. Lady Macbeth shows her ambition and her design to propel her husband to kill in long monologues. Before the murder of Duncan, Macbeth presents his doubt and conscientiousness in his soliloquy. So Shakespeare resorts to soliloquies to reveal the characters' inner mind and unconscious emotions. As for Eugene O'Neill, an essential aspect and, probable, the most distinctive trait of O'Neill's dialogue is the structural use of soliloquy and the subtle variations upon it. According to Bogard, his uses of soliloquies are "akin to Shakespearean soliloquies as they serve to reveal the characters' more or less conscious thoughts as well as their more or less unconscious emotions" (81). The whole play of *The Emperor Jones* is woven with the monologues of Jones as he races through the terrible forest, for example, in scene two, he reveals his inner fear. Then in scene three and scene four, he goes backward in his memory (a murder he committed, a chain gant) and exposes his crime. And then in scene five, he goes to the racial memory (a slave ship to present his racial sadness). He finally goes to a nightmarish encounter with an African witch-doctor and a crocodile god to repent his crime. Therefore, both Shakespeare and O'Neill use soliloquy to reveal the character's conscious thought and unconscious emotions.

Hence, as far as O'Neill is concerned, Shakespeare's dramatic art is always in his heart, and O'Neill refers to them unwarily.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Though O'Neill was born three hundreds years later than William Shakespeare, his unconscious Shakespeare orientation is deep-rooted in his childhood and continues to throw light on his creating career. Regardless his agreement or not, the shadow of Shakespeare does exist in his works.

*The Emperor Jones*, O'Neill's first important play, which takes him to the unprecedented level in the history of the American drama, is mostly out of his original creation, but in some aspects, Shakespearean elements are demonstrated surely in the play. Thematically speaking, both *Macbeth* and *The Emperor Jones* are definitely tragedies. Moreover, as for the reasons of the fall of the heroes, Macbeth and Jones, the two plays are the same, namely, are not one-dimensional but three-dimensional, and both can be interpreted as the integration of personality, fate and society. Technically speaking, both plays use sound effect to create the frightful atmosphere and externalize the internal fear of our heroes. And both use blackness to symbolize the heroes' dark soul and suggest the dark society simultaneously. The royal robe and sea in both plays bear the same symbolic meanings. Besides, through soliloquies, both plays tend to externalize what is inside, to display the characters' inner reality, and to convey the psychological depth of individual



characters. Thereby, it can be proved that when Eugene O'Neill chooses the themes and special dramaturgy for *The Emperor Jones*, he unconsciously adopts much from *Macbeth*.

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