Yet O'Neill was drawn to Paul's manifest intellectual depth. As he expressed in a 1923 letter:

> Yes, Gilpin is all "ham." So I've corralled another Negro to do it *[The Emperor Jones]*—a young fellow [Robeson] with considerable experience, wonderful presence and voice, full of ambition and a damn fine man personally with real brains—not a "ham"! He'll be bigger than Gilpin was even at the start. No, I don't think Gilpin's color had much—or anything—to do with the "warping" you speak of. He's just a regular actor-brain, that's all. Most white actors, under the same circumstances, would have gone the same route. The point is, none of them would have *dared* go so far.[21]

While O'Neill was attracted by Paul's insightful exploration of the role, he was disconcerted with the way in which Paul shaded the Harlem-street-stereotype side of Brutus Jones. But Paul's performance, which drew on his own knowledge and experience, added a dimension to the role that O'Neill could not have written. For example, he apparently didn't know that Pullman porters were highly educated. Most, including Paul's brother Bill, had college degrees and possessed a far more sophisticated vision than the character Jones as O'Neill had conceived him. Paul minimized the street-smart aspect of Jones. Playing him as intelligent, rather than merely crafty, Paul brought greater realism, as well as greater dimension, to the role. Furthermore, because of the greater dignity Paul created in the first scene, there was a more shattering dramatic effect when Jones subsequently unraveled.

From Paul's point of view, he achieved his most important contribution to the play by *not* following the playwright's intent exactly. Shrewdly, he avoided public acknowledgment of this digression. Thus, from the beginning of Paul's career, a disparity emerged between his realistic, fully conceived analysis of his stage roles and the critics' overall perception of him as merely an "instinctive" or "natural" actor.

O'Neill, to the contrary, never reconciled himself to Paul's interpretation of his heroes, and expressed that view in a September 27, 1931, interview in the *New York Herald Tribune*. His lingering reservations about Paul's performance in *Chillun* were informative:

> Last year in Paris the Kamerny Theater of Moscow presented its production of *All God's Chillun*. O'Neill was enchanted with the