

## STUDY OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF EUGENE O NEIL WITH HIS CONTEMPORARY PLAYWRIGHTS

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### ABSTRACT

*It would seem that Eugene O'Neill has been responsible for the development of an ambiguous perception on the self-destructive fantasies and illusions that his characters hold. Throughout the course of his career as a playwright, O'Neill has undergone a tremendous transformation in this specific trait of his. It is the purpose of this research to demonstrate how much O'Neill's perspective has shifted over time. As part of the research, three of O'Neill's masterpieces will be analysed, and an attempt will be made to determine the extent to which his perspective on the dreams and illusions of his characters has evolved over time. Within the context of *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill has addressed the problem of dreams and illusions with the intention of bringing the protagonists back to the actual world. This play presents his characters as being more predisposed towards such dreams, and it also indicates the beginning of the form in which O'Neill has altered his strategy. His approach to dreams shifts in *The Iceman Cometh*, and this production also signals the beginning of the transformation. Finally, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill takes a new approach to the problem of dreams and illusions presented in the novel. By the time he reached the end of his career, we noticed that his understanding had shifted, and he acknowledged the necessity of such illusions and dreams as props and crutches in the lives of ordinary human beings. Initially, his attitude towards such illusions and "pipe dreams" was one of disapproval. However, as his career concluded, we noticed that his understanding had changed.*

**keywords:** Works, Playwrights, Night, O'Neill

### INTRODUCTION

A well-known writer who was active in the post-war era, Eugene O'Neill is considered to be one of the best. His plays have a very sincere tone, and they discuss modern issues such as destitution, suicide, seduction, conflict, love, and a sense of being alone in the world. Only five of his plays are devoid of any unsettling or violent elements, such as a character's death by suicide or by the hands of another character. Others have taken their own lives, been killed, or been the victims of homicides. For instance, the mother of the main character, Lavinia, commits herself in the book *Mourning Becomes Electra*, but the kid of the main character, Eben, dies in the book *Desire Beneath the Elms*.

Plays written by a number of different postwar dramatists often address similar topics and concepts in their narratives. Willy Loman, the main character in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, ends his own life as a consequence of his company's failure to earn the necessary amount of cash and sell the products that he has

to sell. Willy Loman's suicide is the play's tragic conclusion. The works of Tennessee Williams, "The Glass Menagerie" and "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," are instances of social realism and naturalism, respectively, in the form of literature. Tom Wingfield, Amanda Wingfield's son, is the protagonist of Tennessee Williams's play The Glass Menagerie, which is classified as a memory play since it centers on Tom's memories of earlier activities that took place in his home. In certain instances, Williams has even based fictional characters on members of his own real-life family. Tom is strong and powerful, much like his father, but Laura, the daughter of Amanda Wingfield, is timid and weak. Tom is more like his father in these characteristics than Laura is. Williams draws a clear line of demarcation between the two characters' sexual orientations by having Tom be physically robust and authoritative, much as his father was.

Williams is responsible for writing and directing the play "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," in which contemporary forms of homosexuality, prostitution, and seduction are all presented in a way that is comparable to one another. The vast majority of the individuals featured in this play are from a variety of different households. In addition, Brick's passivity and lack of excitement when it comes to participating in sexual activities is causing sexual tension for his wife, Margaret, who is feeling this strain in their sexual relationship.

Both the longest and the shortest of the plays that O'Neill has written throughout the course of his career are today considered to be his most famous works in other nations. The plays Beyond the Horizon, Anna Christie, Strange Interlude, and Long Day's Journey Into Night that he wrote were honored with the Pulitzer Prize, which was presented to him in celebration of his body of work. The majority of the praise he received was due to the innovative and forward-thinking writings that he had produced.

O'Neill is unable to really rest as a result of the fact that he is always on the go, which is one factor that adds to his lack of fear. He is constantly seeking for new ways to improve his abilities and yells out loud enough from the smashing waves to be heard above the sounds of the strongest gusts. He has a reputation for being one of the best surfers in the world. He continues doing this until the peace and tranquility that accompany death, which he has rightfully earned, is restored.

T.S. Eliot, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Samuel Beckett are the authors of the large bulk of the plays that were created following World War II. Other notable playwrights include Tennessee Williams. When it comes to these authors, O'Neill's plays stand out as having a specific resonance with present reality since they give a full depiction of human behavior. This is why O'Neill is considered to be one of the most important American playwrights. In the plays, there are characters who are penniless, there is a large scene, there are arguments, egos, intoxication, and crude language is used with an American accent that is gruff.

O'Neill, who is credited with finding the world, has recently accomplished a degree of fame that positions him above luminaries like as Shaw, Synge, Galsworthy, Barrie, and Robinson, as well as every continental. In comparison to Chekhov and Andreyev, this recent phenomena in the United States is far more striking. His plays often include conversations on the complexities of societal systems in addition to mental or spiritual states of the characters. Instead of the action being the primary emphasis of Shaw's plays, the dialogue receives a disproportionate amount of attention, weight, and significance. In contrast to Chekhov and Shaw, Eugene O'Neill is famous for creating plays that have scenarios that are uncomplicated and simple enough for anybody to understand. It's not uncommon for people to get into physical altercations, become intoxicated, and engage in combative, no-holds-barred discourse in the United States. There is a significant chance that individuals

who are now living in the post-war era will have sophisticated tastes and find enjoyment in all aspects of life. The kind of speech that, in 1914, the audience members of the play would have thought was too aggressive to be effective. Those who are familiar with the vernacular of an infantry unit will undoubtedly judge O'Neill's language to be appropriately light; in fact, this very feature will probably contribute to his appeal among former members of battalions. It is be that the quality he brings to the stage that is most valuable to others is his command of the language.

It is an intriguing fact to take into mind that Eugene O'Neill has just recently achieved success in his profession, despite the fact that he created and published plays both before and after the war. In 1914, a compilation of his early plays was published in Boston; nevertheless, he did not achieve renown in New York until 1919, when more plays of his were shortly produced there. Prior to that year, the collection of his early plays had been published in Boston. Boston was the location where the collection of his early plays was released. Because we are able to see the characters' innate propensities toward experimenting, the volume of his early plays gives the sense of being pretty organic. This is owing to the fact that we can perceive the characters' internal struggles.

O'Neill wrote many of his earliest plays at the Provincetown Playhouse in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Every one of his plays takes place in rural surroundings, which provide an air of calm and serenity to the proceedings. The cultivation of these plants thrives in a variety of environments, including forests, roadside ditches, riverbanks, and farmsteads. For instance, the scene of a road and farm residence can be found in his play *Beyond the Horizon*; the scene of a woodland and river edge can be found in *Emperor Jones*; and the scene of a kitchen room, a crossroads, and the magnificent surroundings around the kitchen habitation can be found in *The Straw*. All of these scenes can be found in his plays. His plays have examples of each of these different scenarios. O'Neill wrote many of his earliest plays at the Provincetown Playhouse in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Every one of his plays takes place in rural surroundings, which provide an air of calm and serenity to the proceedings. The cultivation of these plants thrives in a variety of environments, including forests, roadside ditches, riverbanks, and farmsteads. For instance, the scene of a road and farm residence can be found in his play *Beyond the Horizon*; the scene of a woodland and river edge can be found in *Emperor Jones*; and the scene of a kitchen room, a crossroads, and the magnificent surroundings around the kitchen habitation can be found in *The Straw*. All of these scenes can be found in his plays. His plays have examples of each of these different scenarios.

The settings of O'Neill's plays are analogous to those of traditional plays; they feature genuine scenes and people who unintentionally meet tragedy as a consequence of their own personal inclinations as well as external social and economic factors. O'Neill's plays are also similar to conventional plays in that they include realistic scenarios and characters.

Because O'Neill based his plays totally on observation and experimenting with real occurrences that have taken place in the world, you may be certain that they are among the absolute best that can be discovered anywhere. Even their personalities are very instinctual, as they adhere more closely to antiquated notions than to contemporary standards. This is because they continue to adhere to the values that were established in the past. For instance, Eben, the protagonist of "*Desire Beneath the Elms*," is a reasonably typical illustration of a protagonist. He is the major character of the story. If and when he decides to tie the knot, he will be eligible to inherit the acreage that his mother bought from his grandmother when she was his age. *Beyond the Horizon* is

a good example of how realistic his plays are since they deal with family dynamics and show how people struggle with pride, property, and love as they go through life.

Joy and the brutal realities of life may be found in O'Neill's drama, and both can be found there. His lexicon is jam-packed with words that describe the many guises in which existence and creation might manifest themselves. In spite of the advancements made by modernization, his people have managed to preserve a certain degree of their natural condition. His words are infused with the poetry of human toil and human suffering, and they possess a flavor that is as layered and nuanced as that of a nut or an apple. His words are also filled with a sense of lyricism. As can be observed from the poems that these poets have produced that highlight O'Neill's pragmatism in the house, O'Neill has been surrounded by poets who have not completely given up on poetry. This is evident from the poems that these poets have written.

O'Neill is well-known in a number of other countries as well, including Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Berlin, Paris, London, and Rome. His works that have been most successful have been staged in almost all of Europe's major cities. The fact that he is now in the middle of his career and that the progressively rising social and intellectual suffering he endures is the driving force behind his creative practice is the most beneficial part of the situation.

Because they address issues on a global scale, such as worry, alienation, restlessness, and pollution, the lengthy plays that O'Neill has written are considered to be important works of art. A common thread runs through almost all of them, and that thread is the purging of the universe of the corrupting influence of human behavior. This way of looking at the world has many similarities with O'Neill's way of thinking. Because he could not control the women and children, he was compelled to alter not just the cruel behavior of his own father but also that of society as a whole. As a direct consequence of this, he has a very pessimistic outlook on life. The war that O'Neill was in needed him to exhibit courage at every juncture.

The bulk of his plays center primarily on the human condition as their principal topic of discussion. On top of that, he is recognized as being the pioneer of serious drama, which is what contributed to the respect and distinction that American theater has achieved globally. This distinction was obtained as a result of the serious drama that was created by him. Because of this, he is the first person discussed when discussing current theater in the United States, and he is the only American playwright who has a big reputation in other countries. As a result of this, he is the first person mentioned when discussing contemporary theater in the United States. The following is something that Joseph Wood Krutch put in the preface that he wrote for Eugene O'Neill's Nine Plays:

*The group that founded the serious American drama is generally agreed to have produced the most notable member, Eugene O'Neill.*

*If it were untrue that the finest of his successful work is also the best of our present dramatic writing, he would still be considered one of the pioneers of the genre because of the sheer volume of his accomplishments.*

*If one were to analyze modern American theater, this name would come up first, and he is the only writer from our country to have widespread recognition on a global scale.*

O'Neill does not make use of the same methods on a regular basis. His plays all take quite distinct approaches to the subject matter that they explore. In a nutshell, his level of expertise was so high that he used a tactic and tactic that would have been very beneficial for the telling of his narrative. He accomplished this goal by using

a strategy and a set of procedures. He would use a variety of creative strategies, such as expressionistic, naturalistic, and realistic approaches, in the hope that the play would come out the way he had envisioned it. According to the words of Andrew E. Malone, "His method is as changeable as the sea, and it is perfectly obvious that he has learned more from the sea than he did from professor Baker".

He was a theatrical explorer who dabbled in a wide variety of subgenres and styles throughout the course of his career. His exploits were never-ending. Even after obtaining a great deal of success with one style of expression, he continued to experiment with other ways and remained open to new avenues of exploration throughout the whole of his career. He began his professional life as a writer and maintained an objective perspective throughout his employment. In his earlier works, he had a rare talent for accurately portraying both speech and reality. According to Andrew E. Malone, "He is still experimenting and his experiments, O' Neill may discover a form which in its apparent formlessness may be more intensely dramatic than anything the theater has yet known" in this regard. O' Neill is "still experimenting and his experiments, O' Neill may discover a form which in its apparent formlessness may be more intensely dramatic than anything the theatre has yet known."

O'Neill is in no way similar to any of his forebears in any way at all. According to what is said in Aristotle's book "The Poetics," the tragic heroes in his stories are neither powerful military generals, nor are they royal figures such as kings or princes. According to Aristotle, the tragic hero has to be a noteworthy person who comes from a high position in order for the tragic sentiments of dread and sadness to grow after the tragic hero's fall from glory. This is because Aristotle believes that these feelings are necessary for the development of the tragic hero. This makes it possible for the audience to identify with the predicament of the tragic hero. On the other hand, every single one of O'Neill's tragic protagonists comes from a lower socioeconomic stratum. This is true for all of them. They are all just regular guys, but they are going through a rough period and are sad as a result of it. The characters of the plays *Hairy Ape*, *Emperor Jones*, and *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, for instance, are all everyday individuals who find themselves in precarious circumstances. Keith Winther, who writes for *Sophos*, has already covered this subject in his writing:

*In the finest contemporary tragedies, from Ibsen and Steinberg to O'Neill,*

*neither the classic Aristotelian character nor the devout*

*conviction in a divine order of things have any place.*

*those, O'Neill is the least affected. However,*

*O'Neill was neither Greek nor Elizabethan, nor a romantic*

*of the nineteenth century. He had to translate the old concept*

*into phrases and symbols appropriate to a man living in the*

*twentieth century. He discovered them in the context of*

*contemporary life and in the vocabulary of psychoanalysis.*

Realism and symbolism are two of the most prevalent themes that run throughout O'Neill's play, which is defined by a variety of other topics as well. According to his point of view, realism is a literary art form that tries to show reality as it is on the surface, rejecting its darker edges and emphasizing the primordial instinct as the driving force behind human conduct. Naturalism is a literary art form that aims to depict reality as it is on the surface. Naturalism is a literary style that makes an effort to depict reality in the same way that it appears on the surface, and he is a naturalist. On the other hand, realism represents life in a manner that is more surface-level and concentrates on showing objective objects, while naturalism shows life in a way that is more faithful to how people really feel it. In his opinion, naturalism cannot coexist with either symbolism or melodrama since they are both artificial. Symbolism, owing to the fact that it routinely compromises the illusion of reality in favor of the presentation of an idea, and melodrama, due to the fact that it routinely sacrifices many aspects of life in order to generate stage effects. Both of these practices are problematic for the reasons stated above. The dramatic works of O'Neill may be comprehended by looking at the plays through the lens of the basic conflicts that exist between the many characters who comprise each play. His pieces are firmly rooted in the real world since he is always experimenting with new techniques and styles. In his plays, he presents a society in which the acts of each character are impacted not only by their surroundings but also by their own personal past and the history of their family.

Within the context of her interaction with Andrew and Robert Mayo, a little girl by the name of Ruth displays features indicative of realism. Her love is more malleable than other people's because she loves mainly for money gain rather than for genuine affection. She first has feelings for Andrew, but all of a sudden she turns her back on him and starts developing feelings for Robert since she believes he is a wealthy guy. Later on, when Robert Mayo's funds become an issue, she wants to leave him and tries to get back in contact with Andrew. This occurs when Robert Mayo's finances become a problem. Concurrently, she communicates to Robert, "Yes, I truly mean it if you were to kill me! The answer is yes, I love Andy. You bet I do! You bet I do! I had always been in love with him. Additionally, he loves me! It is beyond my doubt that he does. In most cases, he was. You are conscious of the fact that he did. Her objective is to develop romantic feelings for Andrew. She does not see him at any point, not even when Robert is really sick. The fact that she did this indicates her false obsession with money.

The behaviors of Robert and Andrew Mayo indicate, moreover, the impact that environment and heredity may have. They are unable to avoid being confronted with these authentic elements in any manner, shape, or form. They are unable to overcome this inherent characteristic that they possess in themselves. They ought to accept this conclusion regardless of the circumstances due to the inherent character of the situation. They recommend to one another that they stay indoors. For example, Andrew explains it to Robert as follows:

*If so, you may as well remain here as this farm has everything you could possibly need. Enough broad space is available. Lord knows, you can walk a mile down to the shore and have all the sea you want. There's also enough of horizon to gaze at and enough beauty for everyone.*

However, Mary's body displays evidence of having a realistic impact despite the fact that she died as a kid owing to a genetically constructed body that was weak and was inherited from her father. This was the case despite the fact that she had a body that was inherited from her father.

A feeling of reality is added to the drama by the fact that Robert Mayo and Mrs. Mayo, as well as Andrew and James Mayo, have bodies and personalities that are comparable to one another. O'Neill makes the remark that

"Any similarity Robert may have with his parents can be attributed to her." [She] is responsible for whatever similarities Robert may have with his parents. This time around, James Mayo has assumed the identity of his son Andrew, complete with his look and physique.

## DEATH AND SELF-DELUSION

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Death and self-delusion are two extremely difficult and interconnected facets of the human experience that have always piqued the interest of thinkers, artists, and intellectuals throughout history. Our inevitable and all-encompassing end has a significant bearing on the choices we make, the stresses we face, and the things we strive to do throughout our time here on earth. It is a subject that provokes thoughts of introspection and horror, as well as an insatiable need for knowledge about the world that lies beyond the veil of mortality. Self-delusion, on the other hand, is a psychological defense mechanism that protects us from the harsh facts of life while also providing us with a sense of confidence and importance in ourselves as we go through life. Ironically, self-delusion may allow us to disregard or incorrectly understand death, which then leads to a complex relationship between these two occurrences. In the pages that follow, we will investigate the intricate connection between death and self-delusion. More specifically, we will investigate how, in the face of our ultimate and unavoidable fate, the capacity to mislead oneself serves as both a method of dealing with the reality of our situation and a source of existential reflection.

It is a frightening specter that forces us to confront our own mortality and bestows upon us the paradoxical gift of perspective. This is the last certainty that each and every one of us must confront. It is an unmoving clock that, with incomprehensible precision, constantly counts down the seconds of our existence, acting as a continuous reminder that our time on Earth is limited. When confronted with this inevitable reality, humans have a tendency to engage in self-delusional behavior, erecting intricate mental barriers to shield themselves from the weight of the knowledge that they will perish. The existential dread that we face would otherwise be too much for us to bear if it weren't for the coping mechanisms that we use, whether those mechanisms take the form of high ambitions, religious beliefs, or mundane distractions. Death is a natural and unavoidable aspect of the human experience, and the complex relationship that exists between death and self-delusion has been the subject of inquiry, analysis, and reflection by thinkers, artists, and intellectuals throughout the course of human history. In this lesson, we will investigate the complex connections that exist between these two existential ideas in order to get an understanding of how these ideas impact our lives, our civilizations, and our sense of who we are. Discovering the core of our being and having a dramatic impact on our perspectives and actions is one of the goals of this course.

## NIHILISM: HH PHILOSOPHY AND CONCEPT

Nihilism is defined as "a viewpoint that all traditional beliefs are unfounded and that all existence is consequently senseless and useless: a denial of intrinsic meaning and value in life" by the Webster's International Dictionary. Ivan Turgenev and Friedrich Nietzsche both contributed to the development of nihilism via their works, which may be found in the Dictionary of Literary Terms. The concept gained widespread attention in the 20th century because to the contributions of intellectuals such as Nietzsche, Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus, to mention just a few. Nietzsche defines nihilism as the condition of mind that arises as a consequence of the "everything is permitted" Glicksberg. To put it another way, Rosen asserts that nihilism may be recognized by its hallmarks of boredom, pessimism, and even, on occasion, despair. In this kind of circumstance, life loses any feeling of having a base or roots, and it ultimately becomes rootless. Rosen

goes on to explain that this sense of boredom or despair is the most destructive result of nihilism, and he says this in the following way. In addition, individuals whose lives are touched by nihilism will experience a spiritual rupture since nihilism has a close connection to the Nietzschean idea of the "death of God." This will cause a breach in their lives. As a direct consequence of this, these individuals will be unable to get any type of financial or spiritual assistance during their time of anguish and misery. It is surprising to realize how many distinct factors might be responsible for these unhappy feelings. The two World Wars, on the other hand, are the most consequential events to have taken place in the 20th century.

There is no doubt that the two World Wars in particular, as well as the Second World War in general, had an effect on the lives of people in general, as well as the lives of writers in particular. The war and its aftermath of human fatalities, damage, unnecessary killing, and displacement left post-war writers in Europe and America with a feeling of alienation and pessimism. This is in part owing to the fact that the war itself caused so many deaths. Their conception of man as the pinnacle of civilization and progress was therefore called into question. The war not only left an indelible impression on their conscience, but it also compelled them to rethink and investigate the commonly held concept of human humanity. As a consequence of this, these writers decided to make use of their creative abilities in order to teach the general public about the existential difficulties that are plaguing mankind at this time when hopelessness and futility are rife. It is only logical that the problematic concepts that the authors struggle with end up being personified by the characters in their works. There is little question that one of the tragedies written after the war that captures these feelings is Arthur Miller's play "Death of a Salesman."

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the entire study project has been formulated based on the essence of a minute examination of the play *Beyond the Horizon*, with reference to the play's utilisation of nature, symbol, irony, setting, and the characters. The realistic perspective that O'Neill had on life has been included into the play. The portrayal of life that arises from naturalism is more accurate than that of realism. At the end of the nineteenth century, it is first seen. The difference between realism and naturalism lies in the fact that naturalism is characterised by the premise of scientific determinism. This belief causes naturalistic authors to place more emphasis on the psychological and naturalistic aspects of their characters, rather than on their moral and rational characteristics. Within the framework of naturalism, individual individuals are portrayed as helpless products of their environment and their genetic makeup. On the other hand, *Beyond the Horizon* is a realistic drama written by O'Neill. The title of the play itself suggests that in order for man to discover the truth about nature, which lies beyond the horizon, he must reject the genetic and environmental tendencies that he has acquired from his predecessors. In that case, it is impossible for human beings to attain the fruit of truth. As a result of the fact that the ancient tree and its newly fallen leaves represent Robert Mayo, Andrew Mayo, and their parents, the setting of the play is quite organic. The leaves represent the children, while the elderly tree represents the parents. In the same way as the old tree does not forget to pass on its impulses to the young leaves, parents do not forget to pass on their own naturally occurring attributes to their children. These parents have shaped their boys in accordance with the atmosphere that they have established for them. In a similar vein, the inside scene represents our genetic makeup, while the exterior landscape represents our surroundings. At the conclusion of the play, the characters come to terms with the fact that they have failed in life as a result of the degrading effect of these two distinct forces.

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