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孙筱珍 编著

# 美国的戏剧

## THE AMERICAN THEATER

DISCOURSES ON AMERICAN DRAMATISTS  
AND SELECTED PLAYS



山东大学出版社

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## 序

戏剧被认为是人类文化的最高形式。美国的戏剧在殖民地时期已初见端倪，到18世纪末美国的民族戏剧逐渐形成。19世纪和20世纪初期美国的戏剧尚没有取得类似小说、诗歌方面的重要成果。第一次世界大战爆发后，美国的戏剧同商业剧院的戏剧传统一刀两断，小剧场运动蓬勃兴起。各地小型业余剧团积极尝试演出新戏，易卜生、布莱希特、斯特林堡、萧伯纳等人的剧作产生积极影响。美国的第一流剧作家尤金·奥尼尔就产生于这个时代。他的剧作把现实主义的风格、大胆创新的表现主义技巧和希腊悲剧结合起来，影响遍及美国且远及欧洲和中国。20年代美国的戏剧家主要以个人精神上的自由为写作主题，30年代则是抗议戏剧独领风骚。美国的戏剧在20世纪二三十年代达到前所未有的繁荣局面，一大批优秀剧作家脱颖而出。他们是马克思韦尔·安德森、罗伯特·舍伍德、埃尔默·莱斯、约翰·霍华德·劳森、克利福德·奥德兹、利莲·海尔曼、桑顿·怀尔德。他们对美国戏剧作出了多方面的重大贡献。第二次世界大战后的十多年内是田纳西·威廉斯和阿瑟·密勒领导着美国戏剧舞台的潮流；前者深入刺探人类心灵的底蕴，后者以现实主义戏剧见长，所关注的主要是社会问题。到50年代后期荒诞派戏剧在美国开始崛起。爱德华·阿尔比、杰克·理查森、杰克·吉尔伯、肯尼斯·H·布朗、阿瑟·科皮特是外百老汇剧作家中的佼佼者。到了60年代中期，外外

百老汇出现了一些更年轻的剧作家。他们创作比荒诞派戏剧更不受限制的惊奇剧。其中最著名的有保罗·福斯特、琼·克劳德·范·伊塔利、萨姆·谢泼德。80年代美国剧坛上实验戏剧相对减少，少数族裔戏剧、新现实主义戏剧开始兴旺起来。时至今日美国已成为当之无愧的西方戏剧大国，对世界戏剧的发展产生了深远影响，作出了积极贡献。

80年代以来，我国国内出版过几种《美国文学选读》的教材，然而却还没有一本较系统的美国戏剧教材面世。《美国的戏剧》的出版填补了这方面的空白。作者在这本教材中所做的实际上是对美国戏剧史上最具有代表性的八位著名剧作家的评传，对他们的写作主题、创作技巧、表现手法、艺术风格和语言技巧等的综合分析研究，以及对他们的重要作品和教材中使用的剧本选文所进行的具体评析。选用的剧本采用了现实主义、象征主义、表现主义和荒诞派戏剧的表现手法，具有一定的思想性和社会意义，体现了本世纪以来美国戏剧创作的最高水平。

这样一本用英文编著的《美国的戏剧》作为大专院校教材和美国文学爱好者的读物都是佳作，能够让学生和广大读者对美国著名剧作家及重要戏剧流派有较系统的认识，培养学生直接阅读美国戏剧原著的能力，尤其是识别其中生动活泼的口语和俚语。近几年来各大专院校非英语专业的大学生和研究生的英语水平越来越高，相信他们尤其是中文系和艺术院校的高年级学生和研究生也一定能从中得到启迪和教益。

中国美国文学研究会会长

吴富恒

1998年9月

## 前 言

《美国的戏剧》是一本剧作家评传和作品阅读结合、并重的教科书。可作为高等院校英语专业本科生或研究生的教材、中文系或艺术院校学生的选修教材或参考书，也可供美国戏剧的爱好者阅读欣赏。编纂本书的目的在于精选美国戏剧史上最著名、最有代表性的剧作家，分别作出评传；并提供他们的代表作品，给予正确评价。从而让学生或广大读者对美国著名剧作家及重要戏剧流派有一定认识，培养他们直接阅读美国戏剧原著的能力。

鉴于篇幅的关系，本书选了八位美国剧作家。全书共分八章，每章一个剧作家专题。各章体例如下：

第一部分是剧作家评传。内容包括剧作家生平、主要剧作介绍，对剧作家的写作主题、创作技巧、表现手法、艺术风格的综合分析研究，对剧作家的思想倾向、文学主张、对文学的贡献、在文学史上的地位、对后代作家的影响的评析，以及对选文的具体分析。

第二部分是选文。包括八位剧作家的剧本，较长的使用选段。先后顺序按剧作家出生年代排列。

第三部分是注释。全部用英语。

第四部分是讨论题。供课堂讨论，有助于加深对选文的理解。本书在编写过程中着重参考的书目如下：

Richard E. Amacher, *Edward Albee*; Ruby Cohn, *New*

*American Dramatists*; 1960~1980; Robert W. Corrigan, ed. ,  
*Arthur Miller——A Collection of Critical Essays*; Martin  
Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*; Sandra M. Gilbert and  
Susan Guba, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*;  
Ihab Hassan, *Contemporary American Literature 1945~1972*;  
John D. Hurrel, *Two Modern American Tragedies*; Lee A. Ja-  
cobus, *The Bedford Introduction to Drama*; Lee A. Jacobus,  
ed. , *The Longman Anthology of American Drama*; John Mac-  
Nicholas, ed. , *Dictionary of Literary Biography——Twenti-  
eth-Century American Dramatists*; George McMichael, ed. ,  
*Anthology of American Literature*; Donald McQuade, ed. ,  
*The Harper American Literature*; Joseph Mersand, ed. , *Three  
Plays about Business in America*; Robert Nemiroff, ed. , *Lor-  
raine Hansberry——The Collected Last Plays* 以及国内出版的  
其他有关美国戏剧和剧作家的评论集及文章等。

本书的出版得到山东大学老校长吴富恒教授、美国文学研究  
专家陆凡教授和山东大学现代美国文学研究所所长王誉公教授的  
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# Eugene O'Neill

(1888~1953)

Eugene O'Neill is America's greatest playwright, the first universally recognized world dramatist America produced. He virtually established the modern American theatre. It is first due to his achievements in dramatic creation that American drama has become a part of American literature, reached a prosperous state and has been valued universally by various countries in the world. Eugene O'Neill made explorations and experiments as a playwright in many ways, and worked with all his might and life. In the history of American theatre he is second to none of the others. He wrote all together nearly fifty plays, attracted enormous attention, and won numerous prizes. The Pulitzer Prize was his four times. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1936 for his excellent contributions to literature.

Nineteenth-century American drama is marked by its relative lack of quality, integrity and national originality when compared with other types of American literature. The gulf between drama

and serious literature continued into the twentieth century, and was bridged effectively in the period of 1915~1940. The rough date for the beginning of the modern American drama is 1920, the year of the production of Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*.

Eugene Glastone O'Neill was born in a hotel room on October 16, 1888. His father, James O'Neill, was an actor, who toured with his own small company giving performances of *The Count of Monte Cristo* adapted from Alexandre Dumas' famous romantic novel. For a brief time, Eugene also acted in his father's theatrical company, but he would be more inclined to revolt against the romantic tradition than to preserve it. His family was a tragically disturbed one since his mother suffered from drug addiction and his elder brother was an alcoholic. He had an unstable childhood, touring the country with his parents and receiving an irregular education in different private boarding schools. He took a year in Princeton University from which he was expelled for a student prank. He went to sea and voyaged to South America, where he worked in Buenos Aires at a variety of jobs. He spent time totally unemployed in Argentina. Back in America, he was out of work for some time. He made friends with the lowest of society and got to know life better.

In 1912 he developed tuberculosis and was sent to a sanatorium for six months. He read widely there in the world's dramatic literature and became infatuated with the works of Ibsen and Strindberg. After he recovered from tuberculosis in 1914, he studied briefly with the greatest drama teacher in his time; George Pierce Baker of Harvard. Thus he was determined to write.

His literary career can be divided into three periods: the early

period (1916~1920), the middle period (1920~1934), and the late period (1934~1947).

In 1916 he joined an avant-garde group of writers and artists who had established an amateur theatrical company, the Provincetown Players. It produced many of his one-act plays during the next three years. *Bound East for Cardiff*, an atmospheric drama of the death of a common sailor with relatively little plot but strong characters, was produced in 1916 by the company in the dilapidated Wharf Theatre. It was O'Neill's first performed play. This event marked the beginning of O'Neill's long and successful dramatic career and ushered in the modern era of the American theatre.

*Beyond the Horizon*, the drama of naturalistic study of fate and frustration, produced in New York in 1920, was the first of his early full-length plays. It won him a Pulitzer Prize for the first time. It was an important watershed in his career. With it he moved from little theatres in Greenwich Village to prominent producers on Broadway. After *Beyond the Horizon* a series of theatrical triumphs followed in fairly quick succession.

*Anna Christie*, first produced under the title *Chris Christopher-son* in 1920 and revived successfully in 1921, is another naturalistic study of tragic frustration. The heroine had been neglected by her father, a sea captain incapable of resisting the seduction of seafaring life. She became a prostitute. The captain, unable to understand his own behavior and overwhelmed by his sense of failure as a father, speaks of the sea as a demon and equates it with diabolic fate. This play won his second Pulitzer Prize for O'Neill.

In one way or another the characters in these and other early

works were entangled with circumstances which were destructive of happiness.

Following *Anna Christie*, O'Neill began a period of restless experimentation and colossal productivity. *The Emperor Jones*, perhaps the most remarkable of O'Neill's early plays, was also staged in 1920. It is the drama of an African American Pullman car porter who flees the country after killing a man and holds imperial sway over a West Indies island until the natives revolt and murder him. O'Neill presented American audiences with their first black tragic hero. It is presented in scenes, rather than in acts. The scenes shift rapidly, almost like dream sequence, and some are fantasy moments, meant to parallel the feverish anxiety of Brutus Jones as he tries to flee from his rebellious people through the jungle. The play is a study of power and politics, just as much as it is a study in racial awareness. It marks a turning point in O'Neill's career and established him as America's most promising playwright. It was the first American play to adapt expressionistic techniques. O'Neill effectively uses the scenic design of the play (sets, lights, and sound) to bring the audience into Jones' psyche. It is more than an imitation of European plays.

*The Emperor Jones* was followed by an even more exciting and certainly more provocative expressionistic drama, *The Hairy Ape* (1922), which was more complex in action and symbolization than *The Emperor Jones*.

O'Neill continued the naturalistic approach in *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) and *Desire Under the Elms* (1924). *All God's Chillun Got Wings* involves the marriage of a tarnished white girl

and a devoted Negro lover. *Desire Under the Elms* is a tragedy of passion. It lays particular stress on psychological analysis, and represents aberrant personality. Suffering in this play was produced by strong passions and conflicts of will on the part of determined characters. Eben and his stepmother Abbie, the fateful lovers, are drawn irresistibly toward each other despite an initial conflict of interests. O'Neill contrasted the passions of his youthful characters with the hardness and lovelessness of a Calvinist view of life represented by the old farmer Ephraim Cabot. Eben, who betrays his tyrannical father Cabot, is engaged in Oedipal conflict with him; and the young stepmother Abbie, who married Ephraim because she sought security and coveted his farm, becomes tragically involved with her stepson when her suppressed hunger for love turns into reckless passion. Over the developing destiny of the fateful lovers brood the elm trees, symbolic of natural fertility and mystery of a flourishing New England farm. This play is a naturalistic treatment of a classic theme in which the Theseus is a lusty elderly farmer, the Hippolytus a mother-fixated son and jealous stepson, and the Phaedra a farmer household drudge with an ambition to secure her future as the inheritor of a thriving farm. *Desire Under the Elms* possesses the strength of classic tragedy. It reflects the wind-swept landscape of the human soul. In any case, nothing comparable to this work in power derived from a sense of tragic character and situation that had been achieved by the American theatre in the hundred and fifty years of its history.

Though O'Neill used masks occasionally in earlier plays, *The Great God Brown* (1926) is the first play devoted to restoring masks to the theatre. It is another play of O'Neill's that emphasizes psy-

choanalysis. In this play O'Neill hits upon a recognizable social fact, the defeat of the artist in a materialistic and unsympathetic society. The mask in the play is a defense, a pose, a lie that a character presents to the world to protect the vulnerable self beneath it. With such a device O'Neill splits his characters into sharply contrasted personalities. Dion, a poet artist, and Brown, a soulless, materialistic businessman, represent two different types of characters in the society. They also can be regarded as the two sides of human nature. The conflict between them represents the conflict between the two sides of human nature.

*Lazarus Laughed* (1927) is a mystic affirmation of life that employs masked choruses. *Marco Millions* (1928) attacks the contemporary emphasis on acquisition and material standards.

O'Neill started a return to modified realism and interest in character-drama with *Strange Interlude*, which became a great Theatre Guild success in the year 1928 and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. It was much the longest play yet produced in this country. It consisted of 9 acts, covering a period of 25 years in Nina's busy emotional life. The daily performance began at 5:30 P. M. and continued until nearly midnight save for an eighty-minute dinner interval. Aberrant sexual personality occupies an important place in this play. Nina, the daughter of a possessive university professor, lost her lover in World War I, she regrets not having consummated her love with him, and seeks fulfillment in desperate promiscuity. After her father dies, she marries Sam Evans. She will not bear children to Sam after his mother reveals to her a strain of insanity in his family. Then she has a child by Dr. Darrel but can not divorce her husband and never can reveal the boy's true parentage. For the

first time, her life is complete for she has a husband, a lover, a family friend, and a son. But the strange interlude is short-lived. Her husband dies, her lover returns to his work, and her son marries. She is left with Charlie Marsden, a lifeless father figure. In the play a vital modern woman is observed from many angles and in many situations. Its stream-of-consciousness technique uses asides to reveal the inner thoughts of the characters, often in ironic contrast to their speech. It adds depth to the characters and complexity to the dynamics between characters. The play established O'Neill as a popular playwright and writer.

His next play *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), a dramatic trilogy, is another naturalistic adaptation of classic subject matter. Its three parts are: ( I ) Homecoming; ( II ) The Hunted; ( III ) The Haunted. Turning to the Orestean theme, O'Neill localized it in New England immediately after the conclusion of the Civil War (instead of the Trojan War) and translated and paralleled it in terms of the American environment of the period. General Ezra Mannon returns from the Civil War only to learn that his wife Christine has been unfaithful to him with the seafaring Adam Brant, and to be poisoned by her. In the second part of O'Neill's trilogy their daughter Lavinia, the Electra figure, and her brother Orin avenge their father's death by killing their mother's lover Adam Brant, whereupon the mother commits suicide. In the third part, the burden of guilt rests heavily on the son. He is virtually mad, and so dependent on his sister Lavinia that he won't allow her to marry anyone. Lavinia drives Orin to suicide. After that she is so overwhelmed with remorse that she entombs herself in the Mannon mansion.

The play is a "modern psychological approximation of Greek

sense of fate." O'Neill did not only transcribe Greek matter into American terms, but also translate fate into modern terms. Locating the determinism more directly in the human psyche, O'Neill adopted the Freudian emphasis upon the sexual instinct, especially the Oedipus complex. It is chiefly Oedipal resentment that pits the Electra(Lavinia) of O'Neill's trilogy against his Cytemnestra(Christine), and it is Oedipal attachment that makes O'Neill's Orestes (Orin) the tool of his sister's animosity, which results in his killing Adam Brant. Orin's act leads step by step to his mother's suicide, his disturbed state of mind, his incestuous dependency on the sister (who has begun to resemble the mother she has destroyed), and his own death.

In this play O'Neill incorporated but later abandoned spoken thoughts, half-masks and stylized soliloquies. The abandoned experiments indicate that O'Neill was moving back to a simpler, more traditional theatre. Critics welcomed the trilogy as one of O'Neill's best plays; some called it his masterpiece.

In the late period of O'Neill's career he suffered from ill-health but planned and wrote new plays, and in 1936 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In this period he worked on a massive project of at least eleven plays that would record the Irish struggle in America. Before he died, he destroyed the bulk of these plays in the belief that they were not successful. Of the eleven-play cycle, *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed*, two have been acted and issued; *A Touch of the Poet* (written in 1936, produced in 1957) and its immediate sequel, *More Stately Mansions* (written in 1938, produced in 1964). *A Touch of the Poet* is set in early 19th century



Boston and deals with Con Melody, an Irish ex-officer, who becomes a saloon-keeper. He is dignified by his sense of distinction though he is a liar and often an inconsiderate one. His daughter Sara scorns his pretensions but mourns for him for as one dead when he renounces them. In *More Stately Mansions* Con Melody's daughter Sara is here married to the poetical scion of a wealthy family. But her possessiveness and her rivalry with his equally possessive mother prove to be his undoing.

In this period he also worked on a series of plays dealing with more personal themes, somewhat more autobiographical material. They are *The Iceman Cometh* (written in 1939, produced in 1946), *Long Day's Journey into Night* (written in 1941, produced in 1956), and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (written in 1943, produced in 1947).

*The Iceman Cometh* proved to be one of O'Neill's most powerful as well as most pessimistic plays. It bears considerable resemblance to Maxim Gorki's turn of the century realistic classic *The Lower Depths*—both plays are set in a cheap boarding-house for the disreputable and the derelict, and both show man trying to subsist on illusory hopes. But Maxim Gorki expressed optimism in his play while O'Neill expressed no hope for men at all. In this play O'Neill portrays the loss of illusion and the coming of death. It is rich in detail, complex in contrivance yet seemingly natural, realistic in speech and situation yet also somewhat symbolic and grotesque.

In many ways, *Long Day's Journey into Night* is the play O'Neill had been trying to write all of his career. It is Eugene O'Neill's first posthumously produced play, and won for him the fourth Pulitzer Prize. This play is a simple realistic family drama.