



Fall 2018

# O'Neill Society News

The official newsletter of the Eugene O'Neill International Society

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## New York & Los Angeles Theatres filled with the sounds of O'Neill

### Boston Selected as the Site of the 2020 O'Neill Conference

The membership of the O'Neill Society voted at their May 26, 2018 business meeting that the site of the next Eugene O'Neill International Conference will be Boston, MA. The conference will be held in the summer of 2020 and will take advantage of engaging with the many sites in the city with which O'Neill was involved.

Initial planning for the conference will be helmed by O'Neill Society Board Chair Steve Bloom and Secretary/ Treasurer Beth Wynstra, both of whom live and work in the Boston area. Watch for more details in the near future about this exciting Society gathering.

New York audiences were given the gift of two major productions of plays by Eugene O'Neill in the spring of 2018. First, *The Iceman Cometh* was given a Broadway staging with Denzel Washington in the lead role of Theodore "Hickey" Hickman and direction by George C. Wolfe. The play opened at the Bernard Jacobs Theatre on April 26, and the cast featured some of Broadway's most accomplished character actors, including David Morse as Larry Slade, Frank Wood and Bill Irwin as Lewis and Mosher, Colm Meaney as Harry Hope, and Dakin Matthews as Piet Wetjoen. Austin Butler made an auspicious debut as the young Don Parritt. The production, which performed at almost an hour shorter than typical, ran through July 1. *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley stated that "Mr. Wolfe's energetic interpretation of this 1946 drama...is likely to be divisive" because he



"laughed more often than I teared up," contrasting with other productions that "tend to elicit adjectives like 'searing' and 'devastating' (on the positive side) and 'narcotic' and 'way too long' (on the negative)." One new approach of Wolfe and Washington was to have Hickey deliver his monumental final monologue "in one," sitting in a chair and talking directly to the audience. Brantley also felt that "with its heightened performances and tone-poem visuals, this production also clearly elicits the musical nature of 'Iceman,' which is in some ways closer to opera or oratorio than it is to conventional drama." (Continued on p2)



## O'Neillians Participate at Nancy, France IDEA Conference

by David Palmer

The Eugene O'Neill Society had two sessions at the 5th International Conference on American Drama and Theater hosted by the Université de Lorraine in Nancy, France, June 4-6 (<https://idea-udl.org/migrations/>). The conference was co-sponsored by the American Theatre and Drama Society (ATDS). Its theme was migration.

In the first session, Jeff Kennedy (Arizona State University) discussed how core ideas migrated through O'Neill's works as his career developed; Thierry Dubost (Université de Caen Normandie) explored the theme of migration in O'Neill's early one-act *Fog* (1914); and David Palmer (Massachusetts Maritime Academy) spoke about changes in his own views on O'Neill's conception of tragedy based on seeing the depictions of Slade and Parritt in last spring's George C. Wolfe and Denzel Washington production of *The Iceman Cometh*. The session was chaired by Ciarán Leinster, an Irish graduate student at the Universidad de Sevilla, who also gave a paper in a session for the Arthur Miller Society on productions of Miller's and O'Neill's plays in Latin America.

Ryder Thornton (Tulane University) opened the second O'Neill panel with a paper on the American Dream in *More Stately Mansions* (written between 1936 and 1939). Chloé Lucidarme, a graduate student at the Université de Lorraine studying with conference coordinator John Bak, then spoke on the influence

## O'Neill on Broadway, Brooklyn, LA

(Continued from pg1)

Soon after *Iceman* opened on Broadway, Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) presented the British production of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* directed by Richard Eyre and starring Jeremy Irons and Leslie Manville. The production had begun in 2016 at the Bristol Old Vic, the oldest continuously working theatre in the English-speaking world. Two years later, after Manville's Academy Award-nominated performance in the film *Phantom Thread* with Daniel Day Lewis, the production was remounted in London's West End, came to BAM, and then went on to the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills, CA, where, like the Broadway *Iceman*, it closed on July 1.

### IDEA Conference, con't

of European writers on O'Neill, particularly Saki, Gerhart Hauptmann, and Maurice Maeterlinck. Adel Bahroun (University of Kairouan, Tunisia) concluded the session with remarks on how ideas from Friedrich Nietzsche were developed by O'Neill in *The Hairy Ape* (1922) and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941).

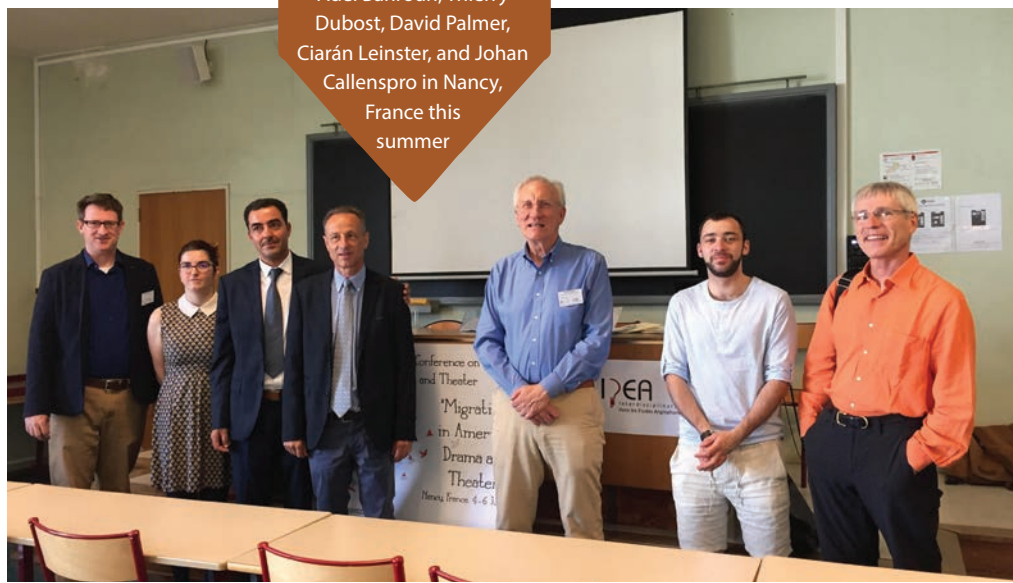
Other O'Neill Society members Drew Eisenhauer (Paris College of Art) and Johan Callens (Vrije Universiteit Brussels) gave papers on panels devoted to O'Neill's Provincetown Players colleague Susan Glaspell, along with a paper by Jeff Kennedy, and

*Los Angeles Times* theatre critic Charles McNulty in his review of the production writes that the two main reasons to see the production were "Manville's breathtaking performance as Mary Tyrone, who is not played as an excuse for flamboyant virtuosity but as a credible wife and mother imprisoned in addiction," and the other is "Irons' suave and subtle portrayal of James Tyrone--one consummate actor stepping into the raffish skin of another." Of the play, McNulty writes that "O'Neill's tragedy wounds without providing the salve of catharsis. But the acting artistry of Manville and Irons redeems this grueling journey into the heart of a family's darkness." Like the Broadway *Iceman*, this production shaved an hour off the play's typical running time.

chaired by Glaspell Society member Emeline Jouve (Campollion University). Plenary talks were given by Susan Abbotson (Rhode Island College), who spoke on Arthur Miller; Annette Saddik (City University of New York), who discussed grotesque drama; and theatre luminaries Lee Breuer and Maude Mitchell, who in two different sessions spoke of their research and experimental theatre experiences in creating stage work, particularly on their recent pieces by and about Tennessee Williams.

*David Palmer is a Society Board Member & our Conference Coordinator*

Society members Ryder Thornton, Chloé Lucidarme, Adel Bahroun, Thierry Dubost, David Palmer, Ciarán Leinster, and Johan Callenspro in Nancy, France this summer



Memorial Day Weekend 2018 was memorable for the Society as we combined our annual business meeting with the American Literature Association conference in San Francisco and took advantage of a gracious invitation from the Eugene O'Neill Foundation to spend a day at Tao House while we were there.

The conference began with a series of papers organized by the Arthur Miller Society and chaired by O'Neill Society Secretary/Treasurer Beth Wynstra, titled "Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill: Dramatic Theory and the Business of Performance." This panel included papers by members David Palmer ("Fate, Dignity, Love and Tragedy: O'Neill, Miller and Their Successors"), Foundation President Dan McGovern ("Performing Miller's *After the Fall*, Lincoln Center, 1964"), and Foundation artistic director Eric Fraisher Hayes ("O'Neill and Miller in Repertory").

On Friday, May 25, we crossed the bay via BART and were taken to Tao House, former home of Eugene and Carlotta O'Neill, now the only National Park dedicated to theatre in the country, with programming and events led year-round by the Eugene O'Neill Foundation. After a sumptuous lunch on the Tao House grounds, Society and Foundation member Wendy Cooper led us on an informative tour of Tao House. It's always exciting to visit the site where O'Neill wrote some of his monumental plays and to get a sense of his life while writing there, and Cooper's knowledge enlightened us even more.

Following the tour, we were treated to an exclusive performance in the O'Neill Barn of *Hughie* as it was being developed for a future performance in the Foundation's fall festival. Foundation artistic director Hayes conceived of a performance of the play in which a third voice/character was added to divulge O'Neill's stage directions for the play. After the performance, the audience was invited to give their feedback on the unique production and a lively discussion was had as members responded to what they had seen.

Members enjoyed a tour of Tao House by Wendy Cooper, lunch by Wynstra Catering and a performance of *Hughie*



## American Lit Conference 2018 in San Francisco Includes Visit to Tao House and Business Meeting

Saturday was another full day that began with a panel of papers chaired by our Society Conference coordinator David Palmer titled "Eugene O'Neill: Context, Development, and Influence." Papers were given by Janet M. Roberts ("Unmasking the Mask: Eugene O'Neill, Sam Shepard, and W. B. Yeats in an Alternative Universe"), Lauren Luedtke ("All the World's a Capitalist Structure: The Allegory of O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* through Performance"), and Isadora Grevan de Carvalho ("The Influence of Eugene O'Neill's Theatre on the Modern Brazilian Stage").

That afternoon, Steve Bloom moderated a roundtable discussion titled "Eugene O'Neill Today: Pedagogy, Dramaturgy and Transnationality" that featured participation by Robert M. Dowling, Eric Fraisher Hayes, Katie Johnson, Jeff Kennedy, Dan McGovern, Alex Pettit, Beth Wynstra and Mariette Ogg. This was followed by the Society's annual Business Meeting (minutes of this meeting are available to be read on the Society's website: [eugeneoneillsociety.org](http://eugeneoneillsociety.org)). What a full and satisfying weekend was enjoyed by our members.



August 31 through September 30, 2018 were special days in the life of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation as it presented their 19th Annual Eugene O'Neill Festival. Collaborating with the Role Players Ensemble and the National Park Service, the Festival produced two works by two great American playwrights, *Hughie* by Eugene O'Neill and *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller.

Because the Foundation was also celebrating "One Festival, Two Countries," with activities schedule for later in the fall in New Ross, Ireland, they partnered with the Museum of the San Ramon Valley to present two concerts of Irish music. They also featured their annual hike to Tao House, a history walk in downtown Danville, and a Danville Public Library exhibit honoring their Friendship City ties with New Ross, Ireland.

The Festival was titled "Passing the Torch," and its production of O'Neill's *Hughie* was unique in that a third "voice" was added to the play to embody O'Neill's stage directions. Director Eric Fraisher Hayes writes that "When I first read *Hughie* I was charmed by the stage directions. Along with adding to the expected drama, the stage directions expressed multiple layers of insight into the characters of the play and a rich ironic humor." He felt that they "exuded a personality at times," causing this production to be an "exercise and exploration into how to fully realize a dramatic performance, a third character, from what Eugene O'Neill wrote between the lines of the dialogue."

"One Festival, Two Countries" is a partnership of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, and the O'Neill Ancestral Trust of Ireland, designed to mount O'Neill theatre festivals in both Danville in September and New Ross in October. The brainchild of Foundation president Dan McGovern, who visited New Ross after the 2017 O'Neill Society Conference in Ireland, the Irish town was chosen because James O'Neill, Eugene's father, lived with his parents and seven siblings in

## 19th Eugene O'Neill Festival in Danville merges with "One Festival, Two Countries" in New Ross, Ireland

nearby Tinneranny. Also, when James emigrated to America with his family at age five, they left from the Port of New Ross. Inspired by Eugene famously saying "The one thing that explains more than anything about me is the fact that I'm Irish," the New Ross festival, co-chaired by O'Neill Ancestral Trust's Sean Reidy, utilized the historic St. Michael's Theatre from October 11-14 to present three plays and a film.

Waterford Institute of Technology presented a screening of Edwin Porter's 1913 silent film of *The Count of Monte Cristo* starting James O'Neill. The Danville production of *Hughie* was remounted in New Ross, along with a two-part staged reading of *Mourning*

*Becomes Electra* directed by Ben Barnes, and a one-man play written and performed by Don Wycherley titled *My Real Life*. Three of O'Neill's one-act plays from the "Glencairn" cycle, *Bound East for Cardiff*, *The Long Voyage Home* and *In the Zone*, were presented on board the Dunbrody Famine Ship in New Ross. To this was supplemented two lunchtime talks at the New Ross Library presented by Waterford Institute of Technology.

This cultural and civic celebration between Danville and New Ross connected by the legacy of O'Neill's work and family has become a bond that the organizers hope will continue.



EONF Pres Dan McGovern leads hike from Danville's downtown to Tao House



Production of *Hughie* at Tao House



Dunbrody Famine Ship in New Ross



St. Michael's Theatre in New Ross



Director Hayes addresses audience at Tao House

## O'Neill's *The Dreamy Kid* and *The Movie Man* performed in Japan, available on video

by Yuko Sano

Our theatrical group, directed by film and stage director Tomonori Fujii, staged in Tokyo *The Dreamy Kid* and *The Movie Man* last fall on November 25 & 26. Those two plays were performed four times in two days at the Theater X in Ryogoku, the heartland of professional sumo wrestlers. It was such an exciting experience to translate and perform them, given the challenge to touch the essential part of human beings that goes beyond the cultural difference and at the same time staying aware not to ignore completely the cultural influence over the way we interpret each persona. The director

and I had to talk a lot to find the accurate balance of those two. Despite this difficulty, we've found a way to perform O'Neill's works, staying as faithful as possible to what he intends to show as human fate and its various aspects through a Japanese point of view, especially for the ending of *The Dreamy Kid*. Convinced by the success, our group intends to perform more of the one-act plays of Eugene O'Neill from now on. You can enjoy the video of our performance at <http://tl-studio.jp/data/20171125m.wmv> (it takes a bit of time to download).

*Yuko Sano is an actor and translator of English-French to Japanese*

## Call for Papers for the American Literature Association Conference in Boston May 2019

The Eugene O'Neill International Society is planning to have two academic sessions at the 2019 American Literature Association conference during Memorial Day weekend, May 23-26, in Boston. These may be either three-paper panels or round-table discussions. Each session will be 75 minutes long. Papers should be no more than 15-18 minutes long (roughly 2500 words) to allow sufficient time for discussion at the end of the session. Round-table discussions should include 4-6 participants. Proposals for papers and round-table topics on any

aspect of O'Neill's life and work will be considered.

Please email proposals for papers or ideas for round tables together with a brief academic biography to David Palmer (dpalmer@maritime.edu) by January 15. Selection of papers and session proposals will be made by the O'Neill Society within the following week. The O'Neill Society will submit its proposal for the Society's sessions to the conference administrators for their consideration by their deadline of January 30.

Society member Rupendra Majumdar, fondly remembering his time at Tao House, has created this new sketch of O'Neill and Blemie, his dalmatian, relaxing on his Tao House hill



## News From Our Members

Bess Rowen reports that while attending the Association for Theatre in Higher Education's (ATHE) annual conference in Boston this past summer, she took the opportunity to visit O'Neill's grave and shares this photo above.

Rowen also reports that an excellent production of *Desire Under the Elms* by the South African theatre troupe Abrahamse and Meyers was presented by EgoPo Classic Theatre in Philadelphia in October. Their production added a layer of apartheid South African racial tension to the play via casting, which highlighted different aspects of the action. This same company is also touring O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* this season. More information about them can be found at [this link](#).



Mark Scharf reports that to celebrate the centennial of O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* being performed in Baltimore by the Vagabond Players, he organized and directed a staged reading of the play on December 7, 2016, 100 years to the day of the first production. Originally "found" in Provincetown in 1916 by Adele Gutman Nathan, looking for plays for the Vagabonds, she paid O'Neill his first money ever made as a playwright: \$15.





# Flock Theatre Revives Production of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* at Monte Cristo Cottage

by Roberta Eisel

"You came all the way from California for this?" On the morning of April 21, 2018, I arrived at 325 Pequot Avenue in New London, CT. This was my second visit to the address, my first being during the 2015 Eugene O'Neill Conference. I had come for the Flock Theatre's remount of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. As we introduced ourselves at the door, someone said, "So you're the one from California! Did you come all the way just for this?" The question was unexpected. Given time and resources, who wouldn't rise to the opportunity to be here? I missed out in 2017; I wouldn't miss out this time.

It was an added bonus that *Anna Christie* would be performed in Boston at the Lyric Stage April 18. So, while on countdown toward retirement in June 2018, I spent my final spring break indulging my passion for literary expression of the tragic grace I find in the works of O'Neill.

Once at Monte Cristo Cottage, the 26 audience members were immersed

in a 12-hour experience of drama, education, and affinity. Director Derron Wood shared fascinating tidbits about the home, the O'Neill family, the New London community, and the text. He pointed out examples of how things in the home actually were "done in the cheapest way." The performance began at a moment that approximated the lighting one would have expected in August 1912.

Staged in the very room that O'Neill knew so well, the performance was powerful. Following the first act, we were encouraged to go downtown to tour the Thames Club frequented by James O'Neill. Following lunch, we returned for more of the play followed by a stimulating talkback with the well-informed cast. Finally, we returned for the slow progression into the loss and heartbreak night's arrival brings. The room, the mood, darkened as evening slogged toward night, just as in the text. The four-fold tragedy subsumed all the love, laughter, regret and loss. Confessions oozed forth with Edmund reeling from the burden of comprehension. Finally, we

found ourselves in tears and complete darkness as we apprehended the terrible understanding of being "so happy for a time."

My journey—my long-term quest to plumb our capacity to become more fully human—takes me again and again to moments and places where Eugene O'Neill's work is the toil and trouble of fellows who "stammer" to find the "native eloquence" of all us "fog people." The Flock Theatre's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* provided one of the most productive of such moments.

Yes, I will come all the way from California for moments like this. After all O'Neill suffered to share his understanding; after all, the cast, director, and crew gave of themselves to provide this experience; the least I could do is make a jaunt from California to bear witness to their offerings. Thank you to all the folks affiliated with the Flock Theatre remount of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in the spring of 2018.

*Roberta Eisel is a retired instructor of literature & composition at Citrus College*

## More Photos of Society Members and O'Neill Activities



Society Members tour Tao House during ALA conference



Alex and Bette Mandl with Steve Bloom and Judi Barlow enjoying a meal together in Brookline, MA



Beth Wynstra, Eliane Dubost, Margie Mitlin, Steve Bloom and Thierry Dubost attending *Richard III* together on the Boston Common this past summer



Rob Dowling visiting Yangzhou with Shiyun Xu on his lecture tour in China



Over 80 guests introduced to the history of O'Neill's "Hills of Solace" at O'Neill Festival at Tao House



Members enjoying a banquet meal in Nancy, France at the American Theatre Idea Conference, June 2018



One of the two O'Neill Society Panels at the American Theatre Idea Conference in Nancy, France, June 2018

## Membership Renewals due January 1, 2019

Remember that the Eugene O'Neill Society Membership renewals are due January 1, 2019 and can easily be paid for with credit or debit card by going to our Society [website](#) and choosing "Membership." The dues from our members continues the work of the Society and entitles each member to receive copies of the

society's journal, *The Eugene O'Neill Review* and our newsletter. Your attention to this matter allows us to keep functioning as an active society, furthering the study, research, performances and public interest in the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

# Upcoming Events for the O'Neill Society 2019

January 1: RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP by going to [Society website](#) and choosing "Membership," where you can pay online for another year's membership in the Society.

January 3: O'Neill Society Panel at Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference in Chicago (7:00pm, Session 146)

January 15: Paper submissions for American Literature Association Conference in Boston due to David Palmer (dpalmer@maritime.edu)

April 4-6: Comparative Drama Conference at Rollins College, Orlando, FL. The O'Neill Society will have a panel of papers given

May 23-26: American Literature Association Conference in Boston, MA. O'Neill Society will have two panels and the membership annual Business Meeting will take place

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jeff Kennedy

NEWSLETTER PHOTO CREDITS:

Page 1: Sara Krulwich, Hugo Clendinning

Page 2: Jeff Kennedy, David Palmer

Page 3: Charlie Jarrett, Jeff Kennedy

Page 4: Marcia Harmon, John Carter, Sheila Hickey Garvey

Page 5: Bess Rowen, Fiona McPherson, Mark Scharf

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Shiyan Xu, Marica Harmon, Jeff Kennedy

For future newsletter submissions, send to the editor at [jtkennedy@asu.edu](mailto:jtkennedy@asu.edu). Deadlines are March 15 and October 15.

For up-to-the-minute news, like and/or follow the "Eugene O'Neill International Society" Facebook page. The Eugene O'Neill International [Society Web site](#).

For info on submitting to the *O'Neill Review*, go to our web site, then "Journal"

## O'Neill Panel at the MLA Conference in Chicago, Jan 2019

The O'Neill Society will host a session at the MLA Convention in Chicago on Thursday, January 3, at 7:00 p.m. (Session #146). Its title is "Tao House and O'Neill's Late Plays" and explores the themes of O'Neill's late plays, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *The Iceman Cometh*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, and the role that Tao House and O'Neill's wife, Carlotta, had in their creation. The panel explores a place, a man, and his confrontation with his past.

The session participants are:

- Anne Fletcher, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
- William Davies King, University of California, Santa Barbara
- Patrick Midgley, Texas Tech University
- Chair: David Palmer, Massachusetts Maritime Academy

All four of these people have been Travis Bogard Fellows at Tao House and they will talk about how their time at Tao House has helped them to understand O'Neill's experience there and what he was doing in the plays he wrote there.

## O'Neill Society Pres. Dowling tours in China

by Robert M. Dowling

The Chinese translation of *Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts* was released in the early spring of 2018. At that time, I was elected President of the O'Neill Society and my inimitable translator, Professor Shiyan Xu of Nanjing Normal University, was elected the Society's Secretary for Asia. Professor Xu's translation is distinctive on many levels, but in no small part that no American biography of O'Neill that was written in the last half a century had been translated into Chinese. My hope is that its recent appearance in China will allow O'Neill's reputation to grow and flourish long into the future of that most important of world nations.

The challenges for this project were legion: How does the translator and the author ensure that the fidelity of the original text is maintained while delivering a complete narrative in fluent and engaging Chinese? How and to what extent do we clarify the contextual background? To what extent can American idiomatic English be translated into idiomatic Chinese that still maintains the original's texture and allusions? What efforts do we make to convey O'Neill's ethnic Irishness in such a way that will be comprehensible to a Chinese audience? For this last, Professor Xu and I, of course, presented our findings for a session titled "How O'Neill's Irishness 'Translates' for the Chinese" at the International

O'Neill Conference in Galway, Ireland in late July 2017. And I discussed my experience touring China for the O'Neill Society panel at the American Literature Association. (One of my core platforms as president of the Society is that that we must expand our international outreach efforts, starting with East Asia.)

During April 2018, we gave presentations on O'Neill at twelve Chinese universities and other venues, including Hangzhou Dianzi University, Hangzhou Normal University, Nanjing Normal University, Fudan University (Shanghai), Minzu University of China (Beijing), Harbin Normal University, the Royal Asiatic Society (Shanghai), Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Zhengzhou University, Nanjing University, and Librairie Avant-Garde (Nanjing). I was also the keynote speaker at the Annual Symposium of the Shandong Provincial Foreign Literature Association at my university's sister school Shandong Normal University (Jinan). By every measure, the tour was a remarkable success, and Professor Xu and I have agreed that it would be beneficial—especially now that the book has been well-reviewed in multiple Chinese literary journals, newspapers, and websites—to tour new universities and cities in the south of China this coming late May and early June (the only city we will return to is Shanghai) and continue our discussion of the challenges of translating the life of America's foremost playwright.