

Fall 2019

O'Neill Society News

The official newsletter of the Eugene O'Neill International Society

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Word came just as we were going to press that O'Neill Society member, celebrated scholar and poet George Monteiro died suddenly from a heart attack on Tuesday, November 5. His wife Brenda Murphy reported that he had been dealing with debilitating neurological problems for several years, a "Parkinsonism" not unlike Eugene O'Neill's. In the end, his death came as he had wished, quickly and with minimal trouble to his loved ones. In accordance with his wishes, there will be no funeral, just a small gathering of family and a few close friends to share their memories.



O'Neill Conferences, Festivals and Performances Around the Globe

The summer and fall were filled with multiple conferences, festivals and regional performances of plays by Eugene O'Neill. The activities took place in the hills of Danville, CA, at Tao House; at the American Literature Association Conference in Boston, MA; in New Ross, Ireland at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Festival, and many stops in between. We'll highlight these events in this edition of the newsletter!







O'Neill Society at American Literature Assoc. Conference in Boston

by David Palmer

Once again on Memorial Day weekend, the Eugene O'Neill Society organized two panels at the American Literature Association (ALA) conference, which in 2019 was held in Boston.

In the first panel, Yuji Omori from Takushoku University in Japan interpreted the contrasting images of the city and nature in O'Neill's plays; Zheng Fei, a Fulbright Fellow from Beihang University in China, presented a computer-aided analysis of O'Neill's use of island imagery in *Mourning Becomes Electra*; and Patrick Midgley reported on the presentation of his play about O'Neill and Shakespeare in Sharjah, United Emirates Republic. Steve Bloom chaired this session.

Jeff Kennedy chaired the second O'Neill Society session, which included Zander Brietzke's summary of his work on More Stately Mansions and O'Neill's cycle plays, which will be published next year by Yale University Press as the book Magnum Opus: The Extant Cycle Plays of Eugene O'Neill. Ron Quirk, a newcomer to the O'Neill Society and an electrical engineer, presented the second paper, a psychoanalytic analysis of Dynamo from the perspectives of John Bowlby, Donald Winnicott, and Ernest Becker concerning attachment disorders and denials of mortality. The third paper was given by Ryder Thornton on O'Neill's use of Max Stirner's philosophy of egoism in Bread and Butter and Beyond the Horizon.

On Saturday evening members of the O'Neill Society joined members of the Arthur Miller Society for a joint dinner at a Boston restaurant.

Tribute to Kurt Eisen



It is with a profoundly heavy heart that I write to you about the death of our beloved friend and colleague Kurt Eisen, who passed away Friday, September 13. He died at home, after battling with lymphoma for nearly two years, in Cookeville, Tennessee, with his family at his side.

Kurt was the soul and the conscience of the Eugene O'Neill Society. His masterful scholarship was only overshadowed by his warmth, his support of upcoming scholars (like myself and so many others), and his understated, always hilarious wit. I don't think it's premature to tell that the executive committee has awarded him the Eugene O'Neill Medallion for next year's international conference in Boston. His response to the email officially informing him of the honor was typical Kurt--equal parts humble and hilarious: "I waited a day to respond, in case a 'just kidding' email followed."

His absence in Boston will be heartrendingly painful for those of us who knew him well. What I do look forward to is joining together with the Society, Kurt's beloved community, to reminisce about him, joke about him, and mourn his loss together as a cohort of friends who loved and admired him.

Our deepest sympathies go out to his loving wife Rita, his daughter Anna, and his mother Chloe, along with all of the surviving members of his family and his colleagues at Tennessee Tech University, where he served as an associate dean of Arts and Sciences and the chair of the English Department. He was a great leader and a masterful writer. He knew O'Neill better than any of us. He had an infectious smile. He was a good man, full stop.

- Robert M. Dowling, President of the Eugene O'Neill Society



We had a productive annual business meeting in May at the ALA Conference. We heard a detailed report from Alex Pettit on the *Eugene O'Neill Review*. Alex is excited about new sections of the *Review* including "Lost and Found," "Director's Circle," and "Used Books." Alex is enthusiastically accepting articles on pedagogy and practice, and pointed out that future issues may be shorter and more selective so as to lower our high acceptance rates.

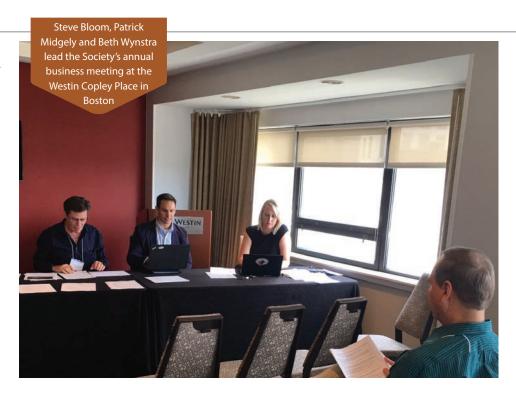
Patrick Midgley is working with Katie Johnson to include a greater group of graduate students in our 2020 conference. There will be a graduate panel and a prize for a graduate paper. Patrick is hoping that such graduate involvement will result in growing our membership.

Beth Wynstra reviewed policies on E-voting: When we have initiatives/ elections for members to vote, this is done online in advance of the annual meeting. If we make any changes in the by-laws, 2/3 of membership must approve (formerly these changes took one year to implement; that policy has been changed.)

Rob Richter provided a report on the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. The Center is spending \$250,000 on renovations to Monte Cristo Cottage. There is interest among Center staff to begin again the O'Neill Celebration that used to take place at the Cottage in the fall. Steve Bloom suggested that we might hold a business meeting there.

Steve and Beth provided a **brief update on the 2020 conference**: Preparations are well underway for the

New York Irish historian **Peter Quinn** won the 2019 Eugene O'Neill
Lifetime Achievement Award, given
in the playwright's name by the Irish
American Writers and Artists (IAWA).
The ceremony took place at Manhattan
Manor, Upstairs at Rosie O'Grady's in
New York City on October 21. Quinn is
the author of the epic novel *Banished Children of Eve*, a 1995 American Book
Award Winner, and *Looking for Jimmy:*In Search of Irish America, a collection
of non-fiction pieces.



2019 O'Neill Society Business Mtg at ALA Conference included 2020 Conference Update

next international conference in **Boston** (June 17-20, 2020). Our conference home will be **Suffolk University**, the place where the Society's first international conferences were held in the 80s and 90s. Steve and Beth, along with Katie Johnson, who is organizing the paper and presentation sessions, are excited that this conference will include performances, readings, interactive activities, a film screening, and conversations with directors, along with traditional paper presentations.

The conference will also include a walking tour of O'Neill's Boston, a bus trip to Forest Hills Cemetery, and, of

course, our Medallion Banquet. We are honored to award Medallions this year to several deserving individuals and groups: Kurt Eisen, Thierry Dubost, Zander Brietzke, The Eugene O'Neill Foundation, and the Irish Repertory Theatre. The conference hotel is the beautiful Sheraton Hotel in downtown Boston. Room rate is \$279/ night. Please plan on staying at the Sheraton as we need to fill 75 rooms! Housing will also be available in one of the Suffolk University residence halls.

The opening of conference registration will coincide with Membership Renewal in December. Watch for more!



The 20th Annual Eugene O'Neill Festival in Danville, CA at Tao House hosted a month of exciting events from August 24-September 29, many of which traveled to New Ross, Ireland for the 2nd Annual Eugene O'Neill International Festival of Theatre, the merging of the two again known as "One Festival, Two Countries."



The Danville Festival featured three plays: O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night, The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams, and The Second Girl, a new play by Irish playwright Ronan Noone, who was in attendance for a special conversation event on August 24. His unique play is set in the kitchen of the Tyrone family on the same day in 1912 that Long Day's Journey into Night takes place. At the heart of the festival was the "soul-stirring confessions of two of our greatest haunted poets," the plays by O'Neill and Williams. Long Day's Journey into Night, presented in the Old Barn at Tao House, was directed by Tao



House Artistic Director Eric Fraisher Hayes, who also directed *The Second Girl. The Glass Menagerie* was presented by the Role Players Ensemble and directed by Chloe Bronzan.

Special events during the Festival included a concert on Sept. 5 by soprano Clodagh Kinsella, performing "Irish Airs and Arias" and accompanied by Keith Stears. Three of O'Neill's S.S. Glencairn sea plays, directed by Paul Walsh with an Irish cast, were performed aboard the 1886 squarerigger Balclutha at San Francisco's Maritime National Park. And, O'Neill Foundation President Dan McGovern again led the Festival's annual Hike to Tao House.

20th Eugene O'Neill Festival at Tao House in Danville again merges with O'Neill Festival in New Ross, Ireland

McGovern was soon on a trans-Atlantic flight leading an energetic group of Americans to Ireland, where the New Ross Festival began on October 9. Co-directed with Sean Reidy, McGovern and the Festival leadership welcomed everyone at an opening reception at the Brandon House, the host hotel for the conference. The citizens and businesses of New Ross are very involved in



the Festival as it is set in locations throughout the town.

A new feature this year was the involvement of five O'Neill scholars from the US who gave presentations and took questions at the Waterford Institute of Technology and two



sessions at the New Ross Library.
William Davies King, Alex Pettit, Beth
Wynstra, Zander Brietzke and Jeff
Kennedy were able to give background
on the Festival's plays and allowed
participants to ask questions about the
plays and O'Neill's life.

Plays were performed at St. Michael's Theatre (pic on cover) and included an





encore of the production of *Long Day's Journey into Night* performed in Danville, as well as a rare staged reading of O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, excellently performed by some of Ireland's most celebrated actors that were directed by Ben Barnes.

The S. S. Glencairn plays were encored on the Dunbrody Famine Ship and noontime lunch events featured readings of O'Neill one act plays which took place in New Ross restaurants. The American group enjoyed tours of the Irish National Heritage Center, the John F. Kennedy Homestead and Arboretum, and the Viking Waterford Tour. The scholars group was invited to meet O'Neill descendent Alice McLoughlin at the site of Edmund O'Neill's homestead (Eugene's grandfather) and the remains of the



home that James O'Neill lived in as a child before coming to America. We also visited the graveyard nearby where Alice's family replaced their ancestor's original gravestone. Amazing!



The beauty of the New Ross Festival was experiencing the Irish aspects of O'Neill in a rich way amongst the beauty of his family's homeland.

Eisel's Reflections on Tao House Visit Completes *Long Day's Journey* Pilgrimage

Society Member Roberta Eisel recently journeyed to the O'Neill Festival in Danville, and has shared how attending Long Day's Journey Into Night allowed her to "witness my favorite tragedy both where it was conceived (Monte Cristo Cottage, where she saw it last year) and where it was ultimately and painfully brought into this world (Tao House)." She wrote that "to sit in the barn and look across the darkness of the grounds to that solitary light shining from the second floor study where O'Neill crafted 'this play of old sorrow' is a privilege to be indulged if at all possible."

Eisel appreciated the highlighting of symbols in this production, particularly the wedding dress and chandelier,

and the comically tipsy portrayal of Cathleen. She noted that at the end of the drama, when the chandelier is turned off, "we are all left together in the darkness of the Old Barn before light is restored for the fine cast to take their bows. Quietly, even reverently perhaps, we exit the viewing place together." She was grateful for "an excellent theatre expericence," and we're grateful she shared it with us.



Wynstra Brings Babson Students to Tao House

For the last five years Society Secretary-Treasurer Beth Wynstra has brought students studying in the Babson College San Francisco program to Tao House for a day of touring, playwriting, and performing. This year's visit coincided with the O'Neill Festival and the production of Long Day's Journey into Night. Students created and performed their original theater pieces as part of a bake-off exercise; Beth provided five O'Neill-themed ingredients that students had to include in their plays. The group then thoroughly enjoyed the production in the barn! Also there was Society VP, Katie Johnson, who was enjoying her time as a Tao House Fellow.





Federal Theatre Project Conference October 16-19 in Toulouse, France

In the week following the New Ross Festival, Society Members Jeff Kennedy, Thierry Dubost, Drew Eisenhauer, and Herman Ferrell, along with many members of the International Susan Glaspell Society, including Noelia Hernando-Real and Linda Ben-Zvi, joined other international scholars at the Universite Toulouse Jean Jaures for a conference focusing on the US Federal Theatre Project (1935-39). Organized by Glaspell Society VP Emeline Jouvre and O'Neill Scholar

Geraldine Prevot, papers, panels and performances highlighted significant productions of the Federal Theatre Project, the Project's Director Hallie Flanagan, and Glaspell's role for a time as the Mid-West Bureau's Director.



TAKE A LISTEN TO A RECENT CONNECTICUT NPR INTERVIEW ABOUT EUGENE O'NEILL WITH DOWLING

"Eugene O'Neill Deserves a Closer Look" on The Colin McEnroe Show, featured Society President Robert M. Dowling, Howard Fishman and Jeannie Hackett at https://www.wnpr.org/post/eugeneoneill-deserves-closer-look

GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER AND PANEL COMPETITION FOR 2020 BOSTON CONFERENCE

The Eugene O'Neill Society is pleased to announce a graduate student paper and panel competition for the 2020 International Conference, June 17-20 at Suffolk University in Boston. The competition is a joint effort with the Eugene O'Neill Foundation and the Eugene O'Neill Review to discover, support and publish the finest emerging scholarship on Eugene O'Neill. Three finalists will be chosen to present their papers at the conference, have their conference registration fees waived, receive a \$100 from the O'Neill Foundation Tao House Prize, and be invited to revise and expand their papers toward them being published in the O'Neill Review. The submission deadline is January 10, 2020. The CFP with instructions for submission can be viewed and downloaded at https://www.



A new film titled *Gilpin*, directed by Arthur Egeli, focuses on actor Charles Gilpin and his involvment in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. The film is still looking for a distribution deal and, if you would like to lend your support, one way is to "like" the film's Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/GilpinTheMovie. There you can view info about the film and see clips from it. Also, a trailer is available to be seen at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9612892/

2020 Conferences for the Eugene O'Neill Society

Society Conference Coordinator **David Palmer** informs that once again this coming year, the O'Neill Society will have a panel at the Modern Language Association Convention (https://www.mla.org/Convention/MLA-2020), which in 2020 is in Seattle from January 9-12. The Society's session (#530), entitled "O'Neill's Path to the Nobel Prize" in a nod to the convention's locale, will take place at noon on Saturday, January 11 (Session 530). Dan Larner will chair this round table discussion. Panel members are Steve Bloom, Patrick Midgley, and Ryder Thornton.

The Society also will have a threepaper panel at the Comparative Drama Conference (http:// comparativedramaconference.org/) at Rollins College in Orlando from April 2-4 entitled "Eugene O'Neill: Sources and Influence." Patrick Midgley will speak on references to Shakespeare in A Moon for the Misbegotten; Zander Brietzke will explore O'Neill's early friendship with the painter George Bellows as a source for Beyond the Horizon and an inspiration for O'Neill to become "an artist or nothing"; and David Palmer will present the beginnings of ideas about two types of tragedy in Long Day's Journey Into Night, one modernist and one postmodern, and consider O'Neill's influence on Edward Albee and Sam Shepard.

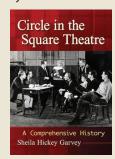
The 2020 American Literature Association conference (http://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/) will be held Memorial Day weekend, May 21-24, in San Diego. Proposals for pre-organized panels for this conference are due by January 30. Please email your ideas for papers or round tables to David Palmer (dpalmer@maritime.edu) by January 10.

Going forward, we would like to have O'Neill sessions at the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) conference (https://www.astr.org/) and at regional literature conferences, which may be easier and less expensive for graduate students to attend. Please email David Palmer about interest you may have in these.

And, of course, there is the Society's 11th International Conference on Eugene O'Neill next spring in Boston, June 17-20, which will give many of us a chance to be together again.

Sheila Garvey Comes Full Circle With New Book

by Zander Brietzke



After conducting years of dogged research, including dozens of personal interviews, Sheila Hickey Garvey will culminate her academic career with the publication next spring of Circle in the Square Theatre: A Comprehensive History (McFarland 2020). She spoke about her forthcoming book November 9 at The Players Club in New York City. Founded by Edwin Booth in 1888 at his residence on Gramercy Park South, the Club displays a number of impressive theatrical portraits, including a fulllength study of Booth by John Singer Sargent and another of the actor in character as Richelieu by John Collier. It also features two paintings and a sketch of Jason Robards, the main subject of Garvey's presentation. The evening was staged as a symposium to raise funds for the continued restoration of the Players' permanent collection of paintings.

Robards as Theodore Hickman teamed with director José Ouintero and producer Ted Mann of the Circle in the Square Theatre to produce an iconic production of The Iceman Cometh in 1956. Their success downtown convinced Carlotta Monterey to give them the rights to produce Long Day's Journey Into Night on Broadway later that same year. Robards, with Quintero directing, went on to play other leading roles in O'Neill's final dramas, including Nat Miller in Ah, Wilderness!, Erie Smith in Hughie, Con Melody in A Touch of the Poet, and James Tyrone, Jr. in A Moon for the Misbegotten. The Players Club awarded Robards the Edwin Booth Lifetime Award in 1999. A sketch of Robards as Melody downstairs in The Players Grill commemorates that occasion. Robards signed and wrote: "To the Players—What a night!! Frame me in The Grill (and Bar)."

The Circle in the Square production sparked an O'Neill renaissance, but the organization earned recognition for other landmark revivals and premieres of new plays as well. Garvey's study presents the entire seven-decade history of the organization from its nightclub origins to its status as Broadway's only arena stage. The

book features 25 photographs that document its beginnings off-Broadway as a non-profit, negotiations with trade unions, the establishment of a theatre school, and the creation of a venue for blacklisted artists. Naturally, actors are at the center of the story, and many of them have deep ties to O'Neill: Geraldine Page, Colleen Dewhurst, George C. Scott, James Earl Jones, Philip Bosco, Al Pacino, and many others.

Sheila Hickey Garvey is a professor emerita of theater at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, CT. She is a professional director and actress, a member of Actors Equity Association, and a past president of the Eugene O'Neill Society. She co-edited Jason Robards Remembered, also from McFarland, in 2002. Circle in the Square Theatre is scheduled for publication April 26, 2020 and is now available for pre-order from the publisher or through Barnes & Noble or Amazon.com.



Sheila Hickey Garvey with painting by Everett Raymond Kinstler of Jason Robards as James Tyrone, Jr. in A Moon for the Misbegotten at the Players Club, Gramercy Park, NYC

Photos from Productions of O'Neill Plays in 2019



Long Day's Journey into Night - KNOW Theatre Binghamton, NY - Directed by Tim Gleason - Feb 8-24



A Moon for the Misbegotten - Ensemble Theatre Cleveland Heights, OH - Directed by Ian W. Hinz - Mar 14-31



Long Day's Journey into Night - Irish Players of Rochester Rochester, NY - Directed by Jean Gordon Ryon - Apr 5-20



Long Day's Journey into Night - American Stage - St. Petersburg, FL - Directed by Brendon Fox - May 29-June 30



A Moon for the Misbegotten - Jewel Theatre Santa Cruz, CA - Directed by Joy Carlin - Sept 4-29





Long Day's Journey into Night - The Rouge Theatre Tucson, AZ - Directed by Cynthia Meier - Sept 12-29 (pic also on cover)





Long Day's Journey into Night - Ubantu Theater Project Oakland, CA - Directed by Michael Socrates Moran - Oct 4-Nov 3



Long Day's Journey into Night - Oberlin Summer Theatre Festival - Directed by Paul Moser - July 5-27

Upcoming Events for the O'Neill Society 2020

January 1: RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP by going to <u>Society website</u> and choosing "Membership," where you can pay online for another year's membership in the Society.

January 10: Paper submissions for American Literature Asssociation Conference in San Diego due to David Palmer (dpalmer@maritime.edu)

January 11: O'Neill Society Panel at Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference in Seattle, WA (Session 350)

WE HAVE A NEW EMAIL ADDRESS FOR THE SOCIETY!!! Please send all emails you would like to go to the Secretary-Treasurer or to be passed on to the Executive Leadership Team to: theeugeneoneillsociety@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jeff Kennedy

For future newsletter submissions, send to the editor at 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: http://www.eugeneoneillsociety.org/

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

Miranda Gives Opportunity for ePublishing

Emeline Jouve has informed us that she is in charge of the Theatre section for an ejournal titled *Miranda*. Ariel/Theatre has "non-academic" papers (that are formal scholarly essays): reviews of plays/exhibitions, interviews of artists/scholars, reports, or any other forms to invent. She reports they have had contributions around Susan Glaspell and would love to get papers on

O'Neill. There are two issues each year and the next issue will be in April 2020 with papers due by March 25 (Fall issue is in November and papers expected by Oct 10). You are welcome to reach out to Emeline at emeline.jouve@gmail.com, and you can view the journal at https://journals.openedition.org/miranda/7735

Eugene O'Neill Review Enters Fifth Decade

by Alex Pettit, edtor, *Eugene O'Neill Review*

Probably Eugene O'Neill Review 40.1 is already perched atop your Must-Read Stack, ready to welcome you into Decade Five of that journal's storied life. Or is using the new issue to celebrate the Big Four-Oh #FakeNews, because twelve of the EOR's years were actually the EO Newsletter's years? I'll punt. But we all like pretending that numbers don't lie, and who needs an excuse to celebrate, anyhow? So open it up and join the festivities!

And this issue does feel like a celebration. What are we celebrating? Globalism and diversity, for starters. Contributors hail from China, Japan, Ireland, and the US. Performance reviews cover productions from Canada, Japan, Ireland, and, yup, that place that Texans call "the YOU-nited States." The new editorial board comprises colleagues in Spain, France, China, and Ireland as well as the US of A, this time meaning (let's pretend) "[us], [a]gain." And what an "us" this issue and its sponsoring society—you, our readers—make. . . .

We're also celebrating the generosity of two colleagues—Zander Brietzke and Ryder Thornton—who have signed on as book- and performance-review editors, respectively.

As always, we're celebrating first-rate scholarship and lively prose. And—drumroll!—pop a cork for the first publication of two "photoplays" that O'Neill dashed off in 1926, sharply in contradiction to his aloof attitude toward Hollywood.

Thought you knew everything about Chinese adaptations of *Desire Under the Elms*?(!) Think again—or read Shouhua Qi's fascinating essay on that subject. Ever wonder why Sara Melody's

magnificence is harder to grasp than to sense? Zander Brietzke explains all. Want more on stage directions, following Bess Rowan's fine piece in 39.2? Director Eric Fraisher Hayes discusses his creation of a "third voice" for his controversial Hughie. And since we're pondering O'Neill's own (abortive) work for film, what better occasion for Dan McGovern's smart overview of O'Neill filmed, televisioned, videoed, and livestreamed? Lily-gilding: a 1921 newspaper piece on O'Neill and Joseph Conrad, introduced by John G. Peters, "the leading American Conradian," says the New Yorker.

The photoplays and the Conradiana initiate the EOR's "Lost & Found" feature, a formalization of our commitment to "publish[ing] little-known or rediscovered documents, with appropriate contextualizing" Two more features will debut in 40.2. "Used Books" will reappraise published classics and obscurities of O'Neill studies. In "Practitioners' Colloquia," theatre workers will discuss their recent engagements with O'Neill's work. Did someone suggest more essays on pedagogy? That, too, looms

I intend to honor, cherish, and promote the EOR's commitments to verve and miscellaneity—and excellence. Previous editors Frederick Wilkins, Zander Brietzke, William Davies King, and Kurt Eisen have paved that road smoothly and well. I know I'll enjoy the drive. And unlike "that ugly monkey, Smythe," I'll keep both hands firmly on the wheel.

Perhaps you could drop me a line after you've read volume 40. What's working? What's not? The EOR is the Society's journal, so if what we print isn't ringing your bell, we've got a problem. I'm standing by at EOReditor@gmail.com. Thanks.