



Fall 2022

O'Neill Society News

The official newsletter of the Eugene O'Neill International Society

Contents

- President's Remarks.....1
- Boston Conference Memories2-3
- O'Neill Medallion Awards Banquet....4
- William Davies King's New Play.....5
- New Books by Society Members.....6
- O'Neill library collections/events.....7
- EON Review call for submissions.....7
- New Ross Festival in Ireland.....8-9
- EON Society Member News.....10
- Susan Glaspell Society at Boston.....10
- An O'Neill "Superfan".....10
- Polly Heinkel new website Admin.....11
- Bloom reviews Brietzske's book.....11
- EON 134th Birthday Bash12
- EON Society membership info.....12
- Susan Rand Brown and Jay Critchley plays premiere in Boston.....13
- Upcoming Conferences/Panels.....14
- *The Mayor Jones* film premiere.....14

Officers of the Eugene O'Neill Society

President: Katie N. Johnson
Miami University

Vice President: Herman D. Farrell III
University of Kentucky

Secretary/Treasurer: Robert Richter
Connecticut College

International Secretary - Asia
Shiyan Xu
Nanjing Normal University, China

International Secretary - Europe
Thierry Dubost
Universite de Caen Normandie

Governing Board Chair
J. Chris Westgate
California State University, Fullerton



Katie Johnson, President,
Eugene O'Neill Society
(2021-2023)

This year has been an amazing one for the O'Neill Society. We finally gathered for the first time in five years for one of the best International O'Neill Society conferences of all time. During the 2022 conference, we dug once again into the O'Neill archive, asking questions about his relevance for the 21st century. We approached issues such as the arc of American tragedy, of belonging to an increasingly-fractured world; of a cinematic O'Neill; of teaching O'Neill; of publishing O'Neill. We discussed O'Neill as

President's Remarks

a set designer and the significance of his stage directions. We mapped philosophical lines of flight with O'Neill by thinkers such as Schopenhauer and Deleuze. We learned about the rich history of O'Neill scholarship and theatrical productions in China. Questions were raised about sex and senescence. There were stunning investigations regarding the performance of gender and marriage in O'Neill, the legacy of colonialism and racism, and the rich intertextuality throughout O'Neill's body of work. We heard the first-ever reading of Susan Glaspell's *Free Laughter*, and a staged reading of O'Neill's 1914 play, *Abortion*. Papers explored anarchists, "patriots," good wives, bad wives, tragic heroes, hounds of heaven, emperors, hounds of hell, ash-can painters, and hookers-with-hearts of gold. And who could forget

Thierry's evocation of Mayo-naise?

We discussed the role of rage, the power of the pen, and the role of silence. We visited Gene's grave. We made art together. We sang sea shanties (not always together). And we laughed together. We drove all over the entire grid of Boston for three hours, with the spectacular bus tour courtesy of Steve Bloom and his talented "Cask and Flask" narrators: Beth, Zander, and Alex. All in all, it was wicked AWHSUME. A hearty thanks go to Steve Bloom and Beth Wynstra, Conference Chairs; and Herman Farrell, Conference Coordinator, for all their hard work.

Even as the Boston conference lingers pleasantly in my mind, I have just returned from the Eugene O'Neill International Theatre Festival in New Ross, Ireland.

(continued on p11 . . .)



Thierry DuBost and Katie Johnson at plaque honoring James O'Neill in Wexford Co, Ireland



Eric Fraisher Hayes and Katie Johnson in Ireland for New Ross Festival

Boston Conference: It Had Been Such a Long Time



By Andrew Lee

(Hopefully some readers will catch the clever allusion in this article title to the 1976 hit song by the rock group Boston!) The 11th Eugene O'Neill Society international conference in Boston this summer was a welcome reunion for scholars, practitioners, and—most of all—friends who had been separated for much too long due to the pandemic. From the elegance of the historical Omni Parker Hotel to the delightful evening of conviviality at the Eugene O'Neill pub, the conference was memorable and invaluable both socially and intellectually.

The conference began with attendees enjoying Eric Fraisher Hayes' witty rendition of "51 Plays in 51 Minutes" spanning the entire O'Neill canon, with the impressive talents of two actors (Caitlin Evenson and John Tessmer) who also did "double duty" by performing in William Davies King's premiere of *Into Night: A Day at Tao House*. It's always exciting to see a world premiere of

a new play, and *Into Night* did not disappoint (see full review elsewhere in this *Newsletter*). Following the play, a contingent of O'Neillians found ourselves late at night on the Green Line train heading back to our hotel. Initially, we had the train to ourselves, but shortly the train was flooded with seemingly thousands of Red Sox and Yankees fans who had just left Fenway Park following the game (the Yankees won, as Herman Farrell will remind us—so it was a veritable pressure cooker of simmering angst, but thankfully no fisticuffs broke out). Thus pressed together and thrown into the breach, Society members became acquainted in ways they never would have imagined. Chris Westgate, Alex Pettit and I engaged in nervous banter to distract ourselves, while Thierry Dubost seemed to float regally above the chaos.

Earlier that day during the bus tour of Boston, we were, regretfully, unable to enter Kilachand Hall (formerly the Shelton Hotel) and ascend to the fourth floor where O'Neill

spent his final days. But remembering Gene's penchant for privacy, it may have been just as well. We did, however, gather at O'Neill's grave in Forest Hills cemetery to pay our respects, an unforgettable and poignant moment.

Our conference enjoyed the camaraderie of friends and colleagues from the Susan Glaspell Society, with panels of Glaspell scholars and an excellent reading of her play *Free Laughter*.

The Society expresses its sincerest appreciation to conference planners Beth Wynstra and Steve Bloom, and to President Katie Johnson and Vice President Herman Farrell III, as well as everyone who served as a panel moderator or reader, and thanks to those who directed or acted in the memorable staged readings throughout the conference. Society officers have already begun discussing where and when to hold our next conference, so start clearing your calendars for summer 2025 and saving your nickels. We really want to see you there!



Society President
Katie Johnson



Steve Bloom and Beth
Wynstra



Society Vice President
Herman Farrell III

Boston Conference Memories



Society members at O'Neill's grave



L to R: Bennet Schaber, Katie Johnson, Adel Bahroun, and Dave King



L to R: Alex Pettit, Bess Rowen, and Zander Brietzke



L to R: Bess Rowen, Ryder Thornton, Beth Wynstra, and Valerie Barnes



Eric Fraisher Hayes, "51 Plays in 51 Minutes"



L to R: Michael Morrison, Shuying Chen, Katya Vrtis, Zay Dale, and Patrick Chura



Rob Richter and Chris Westgate



L to R: Herman Farrell III, Steve Bloom, Katie Johnson, and Beth Wynstra



Shiyán (Helen) Xu and John Tessmer



Zander Brietzke and Andrew Lee

O'Neill Medallion Banquet at Omni Parker House

by Andrew Lee

The O'Neill Medallion Awards banquet was held on the evening of July 8, 2022 in a ballroom at the Omni Parker Hotel. The pre-banquet reception allowed O'Neillians and guests to mingle and renew old friendships, as well as make new ones. The esteemed Medallion winners included three members of the O'Neill Society's "inner circle" who have led the Society in a variety of invaluable roles over many years: Zander Brietzke, the late Kurt Eisen, and Thierry Dubost. Kurt's award was received by his wife, Rita Barnes, and his daughter Anna.

In addition, the Medallion honor was also presented to the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, represented by artistic director Eric Fraisher Hayes and Foundation president Florence McAuley. Ciaran O'Reilly and Charlotte Moore, representing the Irish Repertory Theatre, accepted

the Medallion award honoring the Irish Rep's excellent productions of O'Neill's work over many years.

Award-winning actor John Douglas Thompson also was honored with the Medallion. Thompson received acclaim for his roles as Brutus Jones and Joe Mott, as well as numerous film and television roles.

The morning following the awards banquet, attendees enjoyed hearing from a roundtable of some of the Medallion award recipients: John Douglas Thompson, Ciaran O'Reilly and Charlotte Moore. The roundtable was moderated by Sheila Hickey Garvey, and this lively discussion was insightful and delightfully candid. Thompson—who in his Medallion acceptance speech had thanked O'Neill's friend Joe Smith and actor Charles Gilpin—shared a recollection of meeting entertainer

and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte one night at the theatre where Thompson had just performed as Brutus Jones. Ciaran O'Reilly revealed that one of the secrets to successfully producing *The Emperor Jones* was (wait for it!) spandex, the perfect material for recreating the ominous dark forest which closes in after Jones enters its haunting depths. (Short video clips from this roundtable are posted on the EON Society Facebook and Instagram pages, if you scroll back to postings from July 2022).

We offer hearty congratulations to all of the Medallion Award recipients, and our sincere gratitude for all their excellent work in helping to promote and celebrate the work of Eugene O'Neill!



Medallion Award recipients, L to R: Zander Brietzke, Thierry Dubost, John Douglas Thompson, Eric Fraisher Hayes, Francis McAuley, Anna Eisen, Rita Barnes, Ciaran O'Reilly, and Charlotte Moore.



Roundtable, L to R: Ciaran O'Reilly, Charlotte Moore, John Douglas Thompson, and Sheila Hickey Garvey



Collage of Medallion Award recipients



Omni Parker House banquet room

Journeying Into the Night with the O'Neills and William Davies King

by Eric Fraisher Hayes

The journey of William Davies King's play *Into Night* to the Eugene O'Neill International Conference in Boston started for me in the fall of 2021. Dave King had written a book about the O'Neills at Tao House, and his creative desires inspired him to write a play on the subject. The challenge of putting the content of a book into the two hours' traffic of the stage was a hefty one. The roads of his knowledge are long, and we had to find their dramatic intersection.

For me, identifying the core of the story and setting the dramatic rules that would allow the play's swirl of dialogue between the "real" 1940 at Tao House and the fictional (and autobiographical) 1912 of New London was critical. My NorthStar became the idea that we were creating the metaphysical origin story of the play *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. From the beginning of the play, the character of Eugene O'Neill would have access to

both the "real" and fictional worlds as both naturally lived in his imagination. Justifying Carlotta talking to James and Mary Tyrone required more work. Ultimately, we landed on the idea that once Eugene invited Carlotta into the world of writing the play by asking her to come up with a description of a dress for the play, her imagination was allowed to join Eugene's, and she now lived with the same "ghosts" as he did.

We engaged a group of actors to help us work the play onto its feet in a series of workshops in the December, March and June prior to the conference. You have to "play" the play to learn what works. It was a great benefit to our process that the actors who played James, Mary and Cathleen in our 2019 Tao House production of *LDJIN* were interested in participating. They had lived with their characters for years and were invaluable in lending insight into how their characters functioned in a new context. In between workshops, Dave and I had an ongoing dialogue as to what

was working and what wasn't; there were many rewrites. I was guided by the basic question, "How does it serve the drama?"

Upon arriving in Boston for our first rehearsal, we continued to have new material to work in. The actors were great sports and rolled with the new lines and choreography. We told them that the conference crowd would understand the play comprehensively, and we were not disappointed. We found our people. As we move forward, we still have work to do. Chiefly, how to either abridge or activate the last act of the play. We know where the journey of this work begins, and we know the desired destination, but there are still a few more bumps in the road to smooth out.

The Cast of *Into Night: A Day At Tao House* (pictured below) included Caitlin Evenson as Cathleen, Titian Lish as Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, John Tessmer as Eugene O'Neill, Carole Swann as Mary Tyrone, and Kevin Cops as James Tyrone).



Staged reading of Dave King's play *Into Night: A Day at Tao House*



Carlotta Monterey onstage with the Gene and the Tyrones



Playwright Dave King (far left) with the cast of *Into Night*



A Director's Panel preceded the production of *Into Night*: (L to R) Beth Wynstra, Derron Wood, Eric Fraisher Hayes, Scott Edmiston, and Ronan Noone

Recent and Upcoming Books by EON Society members

Katie Johnson's *Racing the Great White Way: Black Performance, Eugene O'Neill, and the Transformation of Broadway* challenges the widely accepted idea that Broadway was the white-hot creative engine of U.S. theatre during the early twentieth century. Johnson reveals a far more complex system of exchanges between the Broadway establishment and a vibrant Black theatre scene in New York and beyond. Productions of O'Neill's plays make ideal case studies not only because O'Neill is one of the most celebrated American playwrights, or because his plays foreground issues of racial and ethnic tensions, but also because his work stimulated extraordinary, and underappreciated, traffic between Broadway and Harlem—between white and Black America. O'Neill's plays radically changed American theatre as they were performed by actors of color, moved to alternate venues, and altered through performance choices and dramaturgical pairings.

Beth Wynstra's *Vows, Veils, and Masks: The Performance of Marriage in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill*. This book offers a fresh analytical approach to the plays of Eugene O'Neill with its attention to the engagements, weddings, and marriages so crucial to the tragic action in O'Neill's works. Specifically, the book examines the culturally-sanctioned traditions and gender roles that underscored

marital life in the early 20th century and that still haunt and define love and partnership in the modern age. Analyzing and weaving in advice columns, advertisements, theatrical reviews, and even the lived experiences of the actors who brought O'Neill's wife characters to life, Wynstra points to new ways of seeing and empathizing with those who are betrothed and new possibilities for reading marriage in literary and dramatic works. Wynstra's study invites more inclusive and nuanced ways of thinking about the choices married characters must make and the roles they play.

Jeffery Kennedy's *Staging America The Artistic Legacy of the Provincetown Players*. This book gives readers the unabridged story in a meticulously researched and comprehensive narrative that sheds new light on the history of the Provincetown Players. This study draws on new material that modifies, refutes, and enhances many aspects of previous studies. At the center of the study is an extensive account of the career of George Cram Cook, the Players' leader and artistic conscience, as well as one of the most significant facilitators of modernist writing in early twentieth-century American literature and theatre. Kennedy has paid particular attention to the many legends connected to the group (such as the "discovery" of Eugene O'Neill), and also adds to

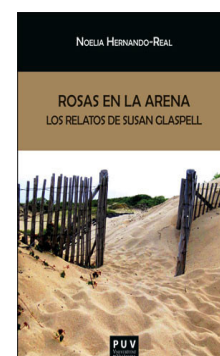
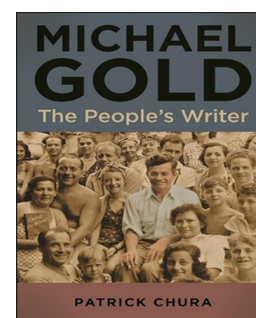
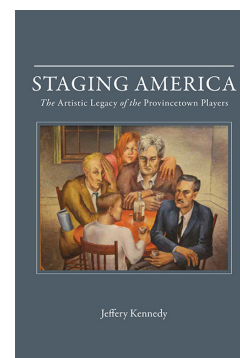
the biographical record of the Players' forty-seven playwrights, including Susan Glaspell, Neith Boyce, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Floyd Dell, Rita Wellman, Mike Gold, Djuna Barnes, and John Reed. Kennedy highlights the revolutionary nature of those living in bohemian Greenwich Village who were at the heart of the Players. To order call 1-800-621-2736 (Mention promo code EOC22 to receive this discount. Expires 12/31/22)

Patrick Chura, Michael Gold: The People's Writer (winner of the 2022 Paul Cowan Non-Fiction Award from the Peace Corps Worldwide organization) This authoritative biography traces Gold's story from his impoverished youth, through the period of his fame during the "red decade" of the 1930s, and into the McCarthy era, when he was blacklisted and forced to work menial jobs to support his family.

Noelia Hernando-Real's *Rosas en la arena: The Stories of Susan Glaspell* is the first lengthy introduction of Susan Glaspell and her fiction to Spanish readership. The first part of the book places Glaspell's short fiction within its context and places the author as a remarkable contributor to U.S. short story tradition. The second part of the book includes the translation into Spanish of eight of her more than seventy short stories, exemplifies Glaspell's numerous stylistic and thematic choices.



Beth Wynstra

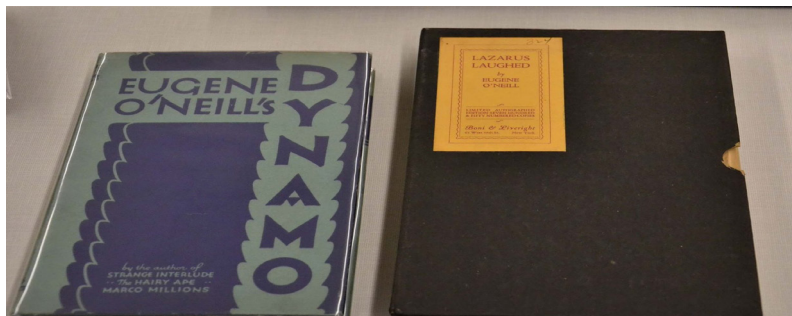


Hammerman/O'Neill collection to be Unveiled at Washington U next October 2023

Next October 5-7, 2023, Washington University in St. Louis will unveil to the public the Harley Hammerman collection of materials on Eugene O'Neill's life and work. Joel Minor is the curator for this unique collection, and he and Dirk Killen, Associate Dean in the College of Arts & Sciences, are excited about hosting O'Neillians for this event. This O'Neill Symposium will lead off a three-day conference under the auspices of the American Conference of Irish Studies, and will include papers and panels devoted to O'Neill on each of the three days, in

addition to the Opening Day events and celebration. Many of us are familiar with the name of Dr. Harley Hammerman and his invaluable contributions over the years to O'Neill scholarship, including his creation of the www.eoneill.com website which houses scholarly articles, full texts of O'Neill plays, audio recordings, and bibliographies. This website along with the Harley Hammerman Collection on Eugene O'Neill is now owned and administered by Washington University Libraries. Though O'Neill had no personal connection to St. Louis, the city was home to famous

writers such as T.S. Eliot and Tennessee Williams, and visitors can enjoy tours related to these authors. Our friends at the Tennessee Williams Festival are currently discussing the possibility of producing O'Neill's *Anna Christie* during this same week in October 2023, as part of their "Friends of Tennessee Williams" series—cross your fingers! Further details on this event will appear in the spring 2023 issue of this *Newsletter*. Here is a link to the contents of the Hammerman/O'Neill collection: <https://aspace.wustl.edu/repositories/6/resources/459>



Washington University Libraries' Harley Hammerman Collection of Eugene O'Neill is the second-largest O'Neill collection at an institution; Yale University's Eugene O'Neill Collection is the largest.



Dirk Killen



Joel Minor

Louis Sheaffer Collection at Connecticut College

At this summer's Boston conference, we were privileged to have Ben Panciera with us—Ben serves as Director of Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College (New London, CT), where one will find the Louis Sheaffer collection of materials related to Eugene O'Neill's life and work. "The success of Sheaffer's biography derives in large part from the extensive research he carried out over some twenty years, and the detailed picture of O'Neill that emerged. The voluminous documentary evidence comprising the Collection fills over 40

archive boxes. A unique and notable feature of the Collection is the author's typewritten notes from the hundreds of interviews he conducted with individuals who knew O'Neill personally, or knew his relatives, friends or associates." Many O'Neill society members doubtless already knew of or have done research with the Sheaffer collection, but in the interest of informing newer (and let's be honest, often younger) Society members and O'Neillians, click [HERE](#) for the link to a comprehensive description of the collection and its contents.



Ben Panciera, Director of Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College

Eugene O'Neill Review Call for Submissions

Editor Alex Pettit invites submissions for the *The Eugene O'Neill Review*. Studies might focus on theatrical or literary history, biography, critical interpretation, or pedagogy. We also welcome comparatist work and work on O'Neill's colleagues in the Provincetown Players and elsewhere. Diverse methods and perspectives are encouraged. Most submissions fall into the 6000-10,000 word range. We endeavor to inform contributors of our initial decision within five weeks of our receipt of their work. The EOR's acceptance rate for unsolicited essays is 34.9%. This makes us more selective than most single-author journals. This should mean that acceptances register well with discerning hiring and promotion committees. Please submit your work through Penn State UP's portal: www.editorialmanager.com/eor. Direct queries to Alex Pettit, editor, at eoreditor@unt.edu. For inquiries regarding performance and book reviews, contact, respectively, Bess Rowen (bess.rowen@gmail.com) and Zander Brietzke (zbrietzke@gmail.com)

Eugene O’Neill Festival Held in New Ross, Ireland

By Thierry Dubost

On October 13th, 2022, after Sean Reidy’s opening remarks, the mayor of New Ross, Michael Sheehan, and the mayor of Danville, California, Newell Arnerich, officially opened the fourth Eugene O’Neill International Festival of Theatre (one festival, two countries). Both officials highlighted the importance of cultural bonds between their two cities and insisted that friendship would not only be beneficial at individual levels, but would also lead to future collaborations between their two cities. Dr. Richard Hayes then connected the location of the festival (New Ross, Co. Wexford, Ireland) with O’Neill’s origins in Ireland to explain that the organizers’ hope was to “show in the form this festival takes that the arts are not limited by national, territorial boundaries.” He also explained that since the beginning of the festival the organizers have been committed to “celebrating the O’Neill not usually available to Irish theatre-goers.” Sean Reidy and Dan McGovern were praised for their vision and their leadership of the festival which continues to thrive.

On Saturday afternoon, a panel was organized with Professor Katie

Johnson (President of the Eugene O’Neill Society), Professor Thierry Dubost (International Secretary of the O’Neill Society for Europe) and Professor Richard Hayes to provide some insights into the plays that were to be performed at St. Michael’s Theatre on that evening, namely *Recklessness* (1913) and *Shell Shock* (1918). Richard first framed the discussion by talking about O’Neill as Irish-American, and his influence on modern theatre. Katie elaborated on “the ebbs and flows of Eugene O’Neill in Ireland”, and then all three panelists fielded questions from the audience. Having this panel in Ireland proved especially rewarding because of the views expressed by the local attendants, who knew interesting aspects of O’Neill’s life and Irish theatre. The most striking may have been phrased by an O’Neill family member who did not leave for the United States when Eugene’s grandparents did. She said that a vital feature of Irish culture was the fear of losing land: land that one owns or rents. Pointing to this vital aspect of Irish culture may help better understand both James O’Neill in *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* and Phil Hogan in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.

The New Ross Festival gave its

attendants the opportunity to see three of O’Neill’s early plays: *Welded* (1924), *Recklessness*, and *Shell Shock*. This, in itself, was a treat since these plays are hardly ever produced, for reasons which will become clear in the short performance reviews below. The common point between these dramatic works—and this would not be true for all the early plays—is that, unlike Susan Glaspell, O’Neill had not really benefited from his short career as a journalist. In terms of editing, he still had a lot to learn. The plays are rather short ones, but they would have been strengthened by a more generous use of the red pencil.

This Eugene O’Neill Foundation production of *Welded* was directed by Eric Fraisher Hayes. In this early work, one could argue that O’Neill staged himself as an artist, a demanding playwright whose life expectations prove quite destructive for his partnership with his wife. As should be done, especially with the early works, Hayes gave a personal touch to his directing, using some of O’Neill’s idea about lighting, particularly to show how people play roles with each other.

(continued on next page . . .)



Adriane Deane and Terrance Smith in *Welded*



Willem Long and Michael Power in *Shell Shock*



L to R: Thierry Dubost, Katie Johnson, and Richard Hayes

(continued from previous page 8)

An African American actor played the part of Michael Cape, again exploring new ways of staging this early play. Adrian Deane (Eleanor Cape), Bonnie Dechant (the prostitute) and Craig Eychner (John) often turned the three-act play into a series of credible scenes. O'Neill's naiveté, which really shows at the end of the play, gives it an involuntary final comic touch. On the whole, the production team deserves thanks for staging and performing a dramatic work which is probably one of O'Neill's most flawed early writing attempts.

A New Ross Drama Workshop production of *Recklessness*, directed by Margaret Rossiter, was performed on Saturday 15th at St. Michael's Theatre. The scene is set in 1913 and for this production, both costumes and setting aimed to express this moment in time, so that the audience could immediately perceive the disconnect with their contemporary environment. An impossible love story between Arthur Baldwin's wife Mildred (played by Nancy Rochford Flynn) and her chauffeur (Edward Hayden) could be a source of comedy, but O'Neill opted for a different perspective. He turned the play into a tragedy, showing how Baldwin (Peter Madden) after

being informed by the maid (Sinead Croakin) of his wife's betrayal, found ways to avenge himself. O'Neill chose to have two men (Derek Furness and Derek O'Keefe) bring the chauffeur's corpse on stage, a shocking sight for Mary (Kitty Warren), but an even more disturbing one for Mildred who subsequently shoots herself in her bedroom. The play can be viewed as a clumsy attempt to bring tragedy onto American stages, and both *Miss Julie* and *Hedda Gabler* come to mind when one sees the play. At that stage in his career however, O'Neill was neither Strindberg nor Ibsen. Still, the New Ross Drama Workshop group deserves thanks for staging the play, and they were praised for doing so by the audience.

Shell Shock was deemed topical by some audience members because of the current situation in Ukraine, and while it would be hard to disagree with this view, one could also analyze this reaction from a different angle. Eric Fraisher Hayes opted for a U.S./Irish production, meaning that one male actor was Irish (Michael Power) and the two others were American (Terrance Smith-Roylston and Willem Long-Jack). Sarah Walsh (Dutch/Irish) played the part of the waitress. Viewed from an Irish/American perspective, the play proved interesting because

at least one spectator expressed his puzzlement at having actors of two nationalities perform together, not per se, but because he thought that although people knew that some Irish soldiers had been involved in WWI, it did not quite register in most people's minds. One can easily understand this if one bears in mind the importance of the 1916 Easter Rising, which changed the perspectives of many Irish people on the conflict, a point which was raised by some spectators before and after the performance. Again, Hayes used lighting to reinforce the impression of a character being in a world of his own, looking back in time to describe what took place in battle. He also staged a choreography that brought to mind both the battlefield, as well as, at other times, the indifference of people to the fate of a soldier who has been discharged because of shell shock. Willem Long was convincing when performing a dialogue which almost became a monologue as he became immersed in his own story. O'Neill's conclusion is unsatisfactory, but the play remains worthy of interest, because of the depth of O'Neill's involvement in the staging of a conflict as early as 1918, unlike European writers who would only gradually address the exceptional brutality of this war many years later.



Rehearsal for *Recklessness*



New Ross Festival flyer



St. Michael's Theatre, New Ross Ireland



Terrance Smith and Michael Power in *Shell Shock*

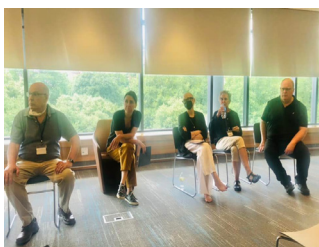
EON Member News

Rupendra Guha-Majumdar's recent publications include "The Return of Silent Tongue: Sam Shepard's Feminist, Gothic Western" in *Ostrava Journal of English Philology* (2021), as well as "Thoreau, Prometheus and the Universal Discourse of 'Civil Disobedience'" in *The Concord Saunterer* (April 2022). He also published *Coda*, his fifth volume of poetry in English (2022).

Bess Rowen has published two short essays (on Moisés Kaufman and Leigh Silverman) in the edited volume *50 Key Figures in Queer US Theatre*, published by Routledge and co-edited by Jimmy Noriega and Jordan Schildcrout. She also wrote the new critical introduction and notes for the upcoming *Bloomsbury Student Edition of A Streetcar Named Desire* (2023).

Susan Glaspell Society brings *Free Laughter* to Boston Conference

O'Neillians were treated to a staged reading of *Free Laughter* by our friends in the Susan Glaspell Society during the Boston conference in July. Participants included Stuart Hecht, J. Ellen Gainor, Drew Eisenhauer, and Jeffery Kennedy. This never-before-performed play was relevant and timely, and the following morning a panel of Glaspell scholars presented a lively and memorable roundtable discussion.



Susan Glaspell Society members perform *Free Laughter*



Glaspell Society scholars panel

The Man from Texas: O'Neill fan Merle Walker

by Dan McGovern

Merle Walker flies in from Texas for each of our Tao House O'Neill productions. Merle, unlike some of us, does not tug at his seatmates' sleeves telling them this is his nth production of the play they are about to see. Instead, Merle just sits there quietly, appreciatively, and flies home the next day. I chanced to meet Merle several years ago when I was chatting up members of the audience, asking them where they were from and whether they had been to one of our productions before. I got to know him better at the O'Neill festival in New Ross, Ireland. Recently, I arranged to interview Merle about how he became so devoted to O'Neill and to Tao House.

Merle Walker was born in Athens, Texas, which calls itself "the Black-Eyed Pea Capital of the World." He is a retired psychologist who received his undergraduate degree from Tulane and his PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Retired now and again living in Athens, Merle practiced psychology in both institutional settings and in private practice in several southern states. One of his most memorable assignments was as the clinical director of a program for "aggressive adolescents," which was created in response to a class-action lawsuit claiming that such children

had not been receiving appropriate treatment.

Merle's introduction to O'Neill was reading *Long Day's Journey Into Night* for a sociology class in college. While in London in 1976, Merle first saw O'Neill on the stage, a Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Iceman Cometh*. He remembers the young Patrick Stewart playing Larry Slade with a plummy accent—"Richard Burton playing Shakespeare." Overwhelmed by the experience, Merle turned to Travis Bogard as his guide to the O'Neill plays he began to seek out. Merle has seen many of the iconic O'Neill productions so treasured by Society members. Texas is home, but the two poles of Merle's world are NYC and Tao House. Merle's other favorite playwright is Tennessee Williams. In fact, Merle was leaving the day after our interview for the Williams festival in Provincetown. In explaining why Tao House means so much to him, Merle drew a contrast between Williams and O'Neill—that Williams' later plays are compared unfavorably with his earlier work, whereas O'Neill's greatest plays were his last. Merle attributes that to the refuge Carlotta created for O'Neill at Tao House. In appreciation for the interview I arranged for Brenda Murphy to send Merle an autographed copy of her fine novel *Becoming Carlotta*.



O'Neill "superfan" Merle Walker

(cont'd from p.1 . . . President's Remarks)

To visit the homeland of O'Neill's lineage felt like an important pilgrimage to a place that would capture my heart. Thierry Dubost and I visited the O'Neill homestead with our gracious host Alice O'Neill McLoughlin and Sean Reidy (co-organizer of the Festival). Along a road on what is now a dairy farm, the remains of the homestead poke out of the hedgerow as a humble reminder of the enduring strength of rocks, family, and land. Purty!" as the Cabot men in



Alice O'Neill McLoughlin at O'Neill family grave

Desire Under the Elms would characterize their farm.

Next, we journeyed a short distance to the O'Neill family gravesite where Edmund, Gene's grandfather, is buried—the one who left his family in America to travel back to Ireland, only to die of poisoning. After Alice read a blessing at the family grave, I marveled at how this bit of Ireland produced America's greatest playwright of his era and how he, in turn, had brought us back to this



Katie Johnson and Alice O'Neill McLoughlin at the O'Neill family burial grounds in Ireland

stunning bit of land.

If you can, travel to New Ross for next year's festival. You will encounter not only world-class theatre (from the Eugene O'Neill Foundation in Danville and from New Ross), an evening of Irish music, tours of neighboring castles and heritage sites, but also the kindest people from New Ross. And perhaps then, O'Neill's statement will ring true—what explained him the most, but has been rarely explored, is that he is an Irishman.



L to R: Alice O'Neill McLoughlin, Katie Johnson, Thierry Dubost, and Sean Reidy at O'Neill family homestead

Welcome Polly Heinkel as EON Society Website Administrator

Polly Heinkel has recently taken over the duties of administrator for the Eugene O'Neill Society's official website, following Jeffery Kennedy in this role. The Society wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Jeff for his expertise and gracious service to the Society over many years. Polly served as the

Communications Coordinator of the Howe Center for Writing Excellence at Miami (Ohio) University. She is a 2012 graduate of the Miami University theatre department where she received her master's degree. As a theatre producer/director in London, Polly honed her skills in social media and marketing. She is

the co-founder and managing director of the recently incorporated Root3d Theatre Collective in Oxford, Ohio. During our recent Boston conference, Polly directed O'Neill's play *Abortion*, featuring Hannah Ehteshami, John Tessmer, and our own Society president Katie Johnson.



Polly L. Heinkel



L to R: Polly Heinkel, Hannah Ehteshami, Katie Johnson, and John Tessmer

Steve Bloom's review of Zander Brietzke's book *Magnum Opus* appears in *Modern Drama* journal

The publisher of *Modern Drama* has provided 25 free "tokens" (downloads) for Steve Bloom's review of Zander Brietzke's book, *Magnum Opus: The Cycle Plays of Eugene O'Neill*. Click [HERE](#) for a link to download the article. Thanks, Steve, for sharing this with us!



Steven Bloom

EON Society On Instagram and Twitter

In addition to the Society's Facebook page, the Eugene O'Neill Society also has a presence on Instagram and Twitter. The Instagram page is listed as "eugeneoneillsociety," and the Twitter page is Eugene O'Neill International Society (@EONSociety). Send items for posting to alee@leeuniversity.edu



VIRTUAL BUSINESS MEETING: April 14, 2023

Topic: O'Neill Society Business Meeting 2023
Time: Apr 14, 2023 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://miamioh.zoom.us/j/8068064635>
Meeting ID: 806 806 4635

Renew Your EON Membership Today

RENEW NOW BY CLICKING [HERE](#) or by visiting our Website:
www.eugeneoneillsociety.org

Society Membership is from January 1 through December 31 of the year for which you are paying.

Members receive for the year their dues are paid:

- 1) All editions of *The Eugene O'Neill Review* published that year
- 2) Bi-annual *Society Newsletter*
- 3) Call for Paper information for conferences and the *Review* as sponsored by the Society
- 4) Voting privileges for Society elections
- 5) A JSTOR account that allows access to all back issues of the *Review*

There are different categories of membership that you can choose to join or renew:

New Member: \$25 (for each of the first two years of membership)

Regular Member: \$45

Student Member: \$15 (for students up to the graduate university student level)

Emeritus Member: \$45

Two-in-One Household: \$60

Sustaining Member: \$75 (gives you Regular Membership, but allows you to give more to the Society for its continuing work)

Lifetime Membership: \$750 (a one-time charge for lifetime membership)

Sand Fiddler Marketing and Flock Theater Help Celebrate O'Neill's Birthday

By Richard Selden

After a hiatus of several years, the celebration of Eugene O'Neill's birthday in New London, Connecticut — where he spent the summers of his youth and set *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* — was revived last year by Flock Theatre and Sand Fiddler Marketing. On Saturday, Oct. 15, 2022, some 40 people attended a morning session of presentations by O'Neill scholars Robert Richter, Steven Bloom and Beth Wynstra and an afternoon session of readings by Flock Theatre actors at the Thames Club, to which James O'Neill belonged. Cake was served and books were sold at Title IX: A Bookstore, a block farther up State Street. The highlight of this year's celebration was to be Flock's centennial production of *The Hairy Ape*. With the help of New London Mayor Michael Passero, the black-box theater at the BP Learned Mission was secured for rehearsals and eight performances. Unfortunately, Covid intervened. Only the first performance, on Thursday, Oct. 13, had taken place when Derron Wood, Flock founder and executive artistic director, then several actors tested positive. The remaining

performances were cancelled. Though Flock had hoped to present the show on Oct. 27 to 30, the company announced "with great sadness" that it was unable to do so. Updates are being posted at flocktheatre.org

Another setback was the loss of the Saturday, Oct. 15th event's opening speaker, Robert Dowling, who had to bow out for (non-Covid) reasons. As a substitute for Dowling's talk, Richard Selden read the pages dealing with *The Hairy Ape* from Dowling's book *Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts*. The other two morning speakers at the Thames Club were Anne Fletcher, on "The Curious Design Collaboration for *The Hairy Ape*," and Bess Rowen, on "O'Neill's Stage Directions for American Expressionism." Fletcher said, "It is surprising indeed that these two unlikely collaborators [Robert Edmond Jones and Cleon Throckmorton] would together produce a setting as appropriate and distinct as that for *The Hairy Ape*. Jones fused originality and artistry with the thematic concerns of the play; Throckmorton cleverly addressed challenges in execution, hence, a successful collaboration, one the artist, the other the problem-solver." Rowen observed, "Because *The Hairy Ape* lives in the liminal space between 'an O'Neill play' and 'an

American expressionist play,' focusing on the stage directions becomes even more crucial . . . Ignore the expressionist framework in favor of a more naturalistic treatment of the characters, and you lose the larger themes of society's dehumanization . . . ; likewise, eschew the O'Neillian interest in Yank as an individual and you lose the hairy ape in *The Hairy Ape*."

The Covid cases also threw a wrench into the afternoon session, readings by cast members of on the theme of "I Belong," meant to be moderated by Wood and Bloom. Two actors who had tested negative, Alex Molina (Yank) and Eric Michaelian (Long), read speeches; Richter, who played Paddy in an earlier Flock production, sat in to read Paddy's speech; and Bloom shared moderator duties with Victor Chiburis, Flock's associate artistic director. The cake-and-books portion and the concluding happy hour went off as planned. It is hoped that the expanded event envisioned for O'Neill's 134th birthday will be successfully realized in 2023 when New London celebrates his 135th. As Rowen commented, "Theatre people thrive in the moments when something goes wrong and we find a way to ensure the show goes on."



Audience at Thames Club for Gene's birthday



Steve Bloom, Rob Richter, and Eric Michaelian



Anne Fletcher and Bess Rowen

Playwrights Susan Rand Brown and Jay Critchley Premiere Work at Boston Conference

by Susan Rand Brown and Jay Critchley

Jay Critchley and I have been “literary buddies” since connecting in Provincetown eons ago. We share interests in Provincetown’s theater history and the legacy of the Outer Cape’s arts colony (Jay is also a writer, conceptual artist and theatrical impresario). We were inspired to create original plays for the Boston conference, linking to O’Neill’s *Bound East for Cardiff*. The result was Critchley’s *Bound East for Easter Rebellion* and my *On the Back Shore*, presented ensemble style as staged readings. As a graduate student at the University of Connecticut, my Ph.D. dissertation *Mothers and Sons* spanned the revelatory arc of O’Neill’s oeuvre, beginning with *Fog* (1914).

Fog stayed with me when, a decade ago, I participated in Critchley’s multi-artist event *Ten Days That Shook the World*, an homage to Jack Reed. Collaborating with a professional cast, I produced *Fog* within shouting distance of the Peaked Hill Coast Guard station where O’Neill and Agnes Bolton lived for almost a decade. This two-character play had never before been presented in Provincetown.

Participating in *Fog* as brought to life on the sands of the Outer Cape, was the catalyst for an early draft of what became *On the Back Shore* during a workshop with Paula Vogel. The twenty-minute reverie, set on the dunes of Peaked Hill, depicted an imagined conversation between O’Neill and Marsden Hartley, both in Provincetown in 1916. “Gene” is still finding his poetic voice; he had abandoned a wife and child, experienced a voyage on the “tramp steamer”

American Line, twice attempted suicide, and at that time was longing for the unpredictable Louise Bryant.

Painter/sojourner “Marsden” was that summer lamenting the death of the German soldier with whom he was in love. Marsden speaks of a mother who died when he was young, and the white carnations he associates with her memory; “Gene” confesses his mother’s drug addiction, and hints at maternal abandonment. He also speaks of the play he is writing, and its characters Yank and Driscoll, longing to settle together, far from the sea.

There are photographs of O’Neill and Hartley from 1916, sitting on a beach with others during “that great Provincetown summer.” It was the year O’Neill arrived with that semi-apocryphal trunk of plays awaiting an audience the Provincetown Players provided; there’s no evidence Hartley participated in theatrical productions (he was busy painting). These unknowns created a blank canvas to imagine an intimate friendship that likely never occurred.

Jay and I engaged director Margaret Van Sant (who previously produced *Anna Christie* in Provincetown), actors/vocalists Go Mahan and Phoebe Otis, and musical director/pianist Louis Falcone (for *On the Back Shore*, Falcone set a Marsden Hartley poem to music). Having the attention of appreciative, knowledgeable O’Neillians made for an unforgettable experience.

Jay Critchley writes, “As a longtime Provincetown resident, I have immersed myself in the geography and culture of this spiral spit of sand. The town is a geological misfit, and its storied history reflects this. Its entire land mass is a

sand dune, unlike the rest of Cape Cod that is glacial. O’Neill spent many years writing and cavorting in the dunes at an abandoned Coast Guard Station before it fell into the sea. The organization I founded, the Provincetown Community Compact, manages two dune shack residencies, and I, too, have had the opportunity to write and create in this isolated landscape.

I am one of nine children of an Irish American Catholic family who sang barbershop music and sentimental Irish American songs. *Bound East for Easter Rebellion* includes several of these popular sunlit songs of denial with my rewritten lyrics that express the gravity of Irish history and the intimate, entrapped forlorn characters on the *S. S. Glencairn*—Yank and Driscoll.

In 1916, radical winds were blowing across the Atlantic between Provincetown and Dublin. This experimental one-act play is a staged reading, with musical numbers, a Centennial mash-up between first generation, Pulitzer/Nobel Laureate playwright Eugene O’Neill and leader/poet of the Irish Easter Rebellion, Padraig Pearse. It is adapted from O’Neill’s 1916 Provincetown debut play, *Bound East for Cardiff*. O’Neill is played by Go Mahan and Pearse by Phoebe Otis, directed by Margaret Van Sant, with musical direction by Louis Falcone. Musical numbers, with creative lyrics, include: Cape Cod Bay (formerly Galway Bay); ‘Too Ra Loo Ra Loo Ra!- It’s an Irish lullaby’; and ‘It’s the Same Old Shillelagh.’ In the maudlin song, ‘Cape Cod Bay/Galway Bay,’ O’Neill sings of the beauty of his American homeland while Padraig sings of the Irish Troubles.”



Susan Rand Brown, Margaret Van Sant, Jay Critchley, Go Mahan, Phoebe Otis, and Louis Falcone



Jay Critchley, Susan Rand Brown, & Herman Farrell III

Recent and Upcoming Conference Sessions

by David Palmer

The major recent O'Neill gathering was the Society's "Longing and Belonging: The 11th International Conference on Eugene O'Neill," which took place in Boston from July 6-9. This is the Society's triannual conference, which originally had been scheduled for 2020 but was delayed two years because of the COVID pandemic. The previous triannual conference was in Galway, Ireland, in 2017.

In addition to this, the 6th International Conference on American Theatre and Drama was held in Madrid from May 31-June 3 last spring. The O'Neill Society was a financial sponsor of this conference, and the Society held a session there titled "Eugene O'Neill: Theatre as Social Critique." Three papers were presented: Katie Johnson's, "Diasporic Performatives in Habib Benglia's 1950 *L'Empereur Jones*"; Ryder Thornton's, "'Tawdry Disharmony': The Destruction of Nature and the Death of Individualism in *The Hairy Ape*"; and David Palmer's, "Eugene O'Neill: Anarchism, Modernism, and Tragedy."

The [Modern Language Association's annual convention](#) runs from January 5-8, 2023, in San Francisco. Unlike most author societies, the Eugene O'Neill Society has a special status in the MLA: we are an Allied Organization, which means we are guaranteed a session in the convention each year, and it is important that we continue to organize annual sessions so that we can maintain this status. This January we will host a roundtable discussion,

"The Duality of Eugene O'Neill on Race" (Session #559, Saturday, January 7, 3:30-4:45). Here is the description from the convention's program: "How should we view O'Neill's depiction of race in the context of African American Theatre and discussions of racism? O'Neill was the first American playwright with access to Broadway to write complex Black characters. While his plays are performed by some Black artists today, his reliance on primitivism continues to provoke debate. This roundtable examines O'Neill's legacy in light of vital current conversations regarding diversity and equity in American theatre." Although some sessions at the MLA convention will be conducted online, the O'Neill Society session is in-person. The four panelists are [Brandi Wilkins Catanese](#) from Berkeley, [Douglas Jones](#) from Duke, [Shannon Steen](#) from Berkeley, and [Harvey Young](#) from Boston University. David Palmer will chair. We are grateful to [Harry Elam](#) from Occidental College for his help in organizing this session.

The [45th Annual Comparative Drama Conference](#) will be held in Orlando from March 30-April 1 next spring. This is the last of the five-year sponsorship for the CDC from Rollins College; the conference will move to a new location for the next five years. We thank Bill Boles, the conference's administrator at Rollins, for his enthusiasm, encouragement, patient diligence, and flexibility in making the CDC such a worthwhile and welcoming venue for O'Neill scholarship over the years. The O'Neill Society is offering a three-paper panel in 2023. Jeff Kennedy

will speak on "O'Neill, Glaspell, and Cook in Relationship: Learned, Earned, Spurned, and Burned." Ryder Thornton is presenting "The Wages of Sin: Gender Economics and Philosophy in *Anna Christie*". David Palmer's paper is titled, "Changing Conceptions of the Self and O'Neill's Later Vision of Tragedy."

The [American Literature Association's annual conference](#) is being held once again over Memorial Day weekend. It will be in Boston, May 25-28. The O'Neill Society plans to have at least one session at this conference. The official call for papers will go out in early November. Proposals for presentations on O'Neill will be due to [Bess Rowen](#) in early January. Bess will file the Society's proposal for pre-organized sessions with the conference administrators by their deadline on January 30.

There are other worthwhile conferences at which the O'Neill Society has not organized sessions in the past. You may be interested in attending these on your own and presenting on O'Neill. If you do, please consider developing your presentation into a full paper and submitting it to the *Eugene O'Neill Review*. Alex Pettit cannot promise publication, but he always is interested in reviewing significant new work. Consider presentations at the following conferences as starting points for developing your ideas: [The Association for Theatre in Higher Education](#) and [The American Society for Theatre Research](#).

Vernon Williams's Film *The Mayor Jones* Premieres

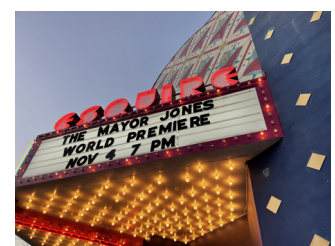
Vernon Williams, a recent Tao House/Bogard Fellow, has written and produced an independent film which premiered on Friday, Nov. 4 at Esquire Theatre near University of Cincinnati's Uptown campus. The film tells the story of Brutus Jones—the mayor of Gladstone who is up for reelection after his first term in office. It begins with a look into the political climate in Gladstone, Ohio, which shows the heated conflict over the construction of a new city-funded prison. The film should be available online sometime in 2023, and the film's trailer may be viewed [HERE](#).



Katie Johnson and Vernon Williams



Cast of *The Mayor Jones*



Esquire Theatre, Cincinnati