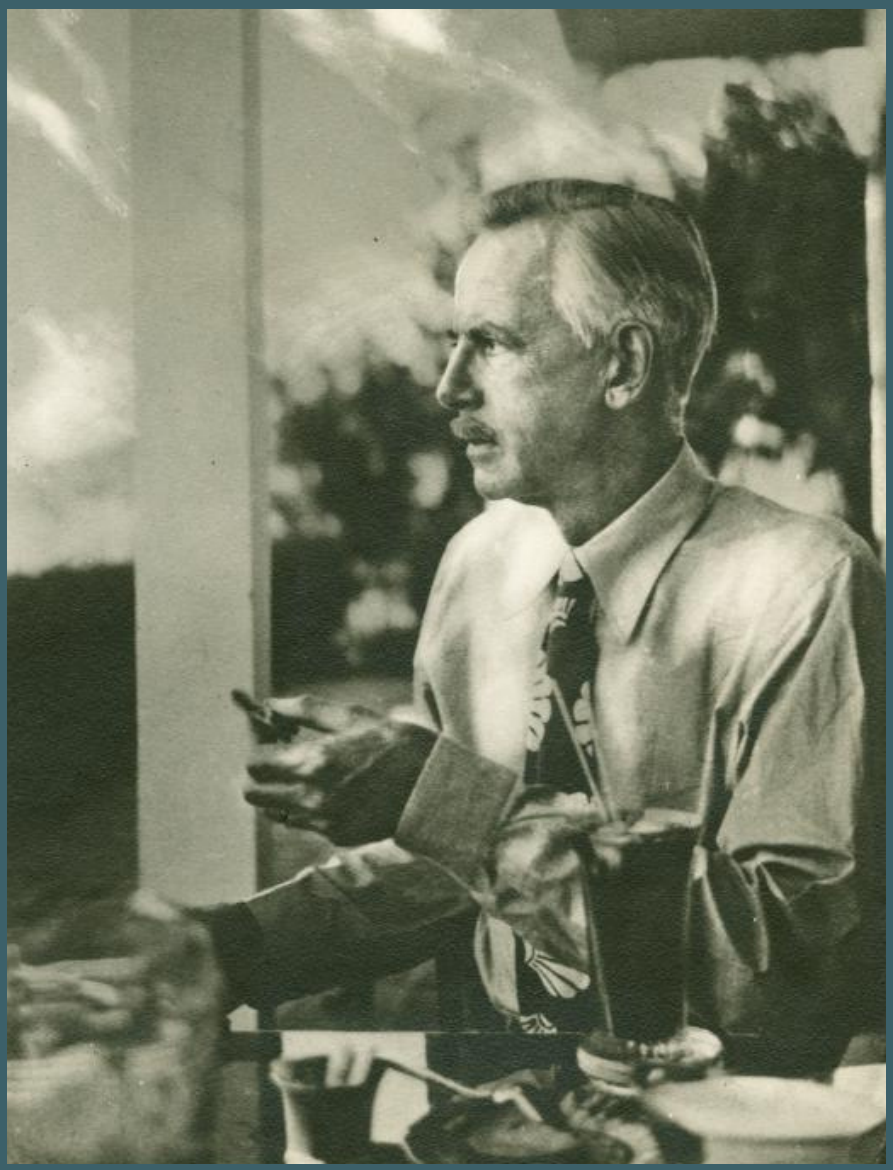
Resource Guide

A Moon for the Misbegotten



September 2022

Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House

Dramaturgical Packet
created by Miami University students

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The Eugene O'Neill Foundation presents:

A Moon for the Misbegotten
By Eugene O'Neill

Old Barn Theatre, Tao House
Eugene O'Neill Festival

September 10 - 25, 2022

CAST LIST

Josie Hogan----------Caitlin Evenson
Jim Tyrone----------Ryan Hayes
Phil Hogan----------Michael Sally
Mike Hogan----------Danny Georgiev
T. Stedman Harder----------Danny Georgiev

Directed by Eric Frashier Hayes

Figure 1. Pictured left to right: Eugene, Jamie and James O'Neill on the porch of Monte Cristo Cottage, c. 1900. Public domain.

The Real-Life Tragedy Behind O'Neill's Writing
By Ashley Campbell

While it may be argued that the author is dead in literature, that is certainly not the case with Eugene O'Neill's raw, autobiographical portrayals of his family in *A Moon For the Misbegotten* and its predecessor, *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* In particular, *Long Day's Journey* (*LDJ*) is a remarkably autobiographical play that follows the Tyrone family, which is a thinly veiled portrayal of the turmoil within O'Neill's own household.

O'Neill's father, James, and brother, Jamie, both retain their names as the Tyrones in *Long Day's Journey*. However, the figures representing his mother and O'Neill himself—Mary and Edmund Tyrone—have had their names changed within the play. As heartbreaking as *Long Day's Journey* is—following the Tyrones' struggles with their own addictions—perhaps the most tragic figure, Jamie, is left in a terrible position with a bleak future ahead of him, as O'Neill concludes the play by severely damaging the bond between these brothers, thus insinuating there was a break in his bond with his older brother in real life.

In *LDJ*, Jamie admits to trying to ruin Edmund and his future as a writer, stating that he "Never wanted you to succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama's baby, Papa's pet!" (O'Neill 820). While the play is sympathetic to Mary (a representation of O'Neill's mother, Ella), Jamie is left ostracized by his brother, Edmund, as their final interaction in the play consists of Edmund smacking Jamie for making fun of their mother.

To remedy this, O'Neill wrote *Moon* as a sort of epilogue to *Long Day's Journey*, particularly as an elegy for Jamie—or Jim, as he's known as in *Moon*. His dead brother is the ghost that the playwright can't seem to shake. Jamie O'Neill's death came swiftly after the death of his mother, Ella O'Neill, after which he "drank himself into an alcoholic psychosis" and continued drinking until he "suffered a fatal stroke" (Black 551). After Jamie's tragic death, O'Neill wrote to a correspondent, stating "after [their] mother's death in 1922 [Jamie] gave up all hold on life and simply wanted to die as soon as possible" (Hinden 435).

This hopelessness is reflected in Jim Tyrone of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*—following his character 11 years after the events of *Long Day's Journey*—as he pours his heart out to Josie Hogan. As Michael Hinden clarifies: "[t]hrough Josie, O'Neill at last confronts the man his brother was, together with his own need for his brother to be someone more able to love and be loved than life ever let Jamie be" (435). That is the true tragedy of the O'Neills: "not the lack of love but the lack of communication of their love" (Bowen xi). *Moon* is O'Neill's attempt to remedy that lack of communication, even after his brother's death.

Ultimately, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is a play about love and reconciliation for a brother O'Neill lost to the calamity of their lives, a bare-faced admittance of the discord and fractures within his family. Josie's final words strike to the core, as she wishes that Jim may "rest forever in forgiveness and in peace" (946), much in the same way that O'Neill wished the same for his older brother. It is a beautiful love letter to his brother and a wonderful way to conclude O'Neill's oeuvre, one of his most honest and haunting works, born from the tragedy of the O'Neills.

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Irish Immigration, Whiteness and Eugene O'Neill
By Rylee Jung

Eugene O'Neill was a loyal keeper of his Irish heritage and often infused this devotion to Ireland in his plays. O'Neill himself stated: "The one thing that explains me more than anything about me is the fact that I'm Irish" (qtd. in Dowling 91). O'Neill scholar Frank Ardolino argues many of the Irish motifs in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* are there to "exact a measure of literary revenge for the insults Irish immigrants to America suffered from the Protestant establishment" (Ardolino 64). Irish immigration to America dates back as early as colonial times but the Irish Potato Famine in 1845 sparked the "second wave" of this immigration. Irish immigration and assimilation into American society was difficult, and Irish Americans offered suffered discrimination as they were perceived to occupy a social category that was not dissimilar to African Americans at the time. Nini Rodgers, in her book *Ireland, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery: 1612 – 1865,* notes: "nowadays we ordinarily do not classify…Irish as [a] distinct race," although historically they were (Rodgers 24).

Cedric J. Robinson, in his chapter "Ventriloquizing Blackness: Eugene O'Neill and Irish-American Race Performance," explains that whiteness was a term used "as a synonym for Englishness…[and therefore] whiteness excluded the Irish" (Robinson 51). Throughout history, Irish Americans have experienced an upward mobility toward whiteness that distanced them from a discriminated past.

Discrimination against Irish people began long before they left Ireland. Robinson also discusses how the Irish were considered "a subject people" and that "English colonial rule in Ireland had compelled a host of gestures of segregation, including the prohibition of marriages between Englishmen and Irish women in the fourteenth century" (Ibid). In fact, the Irish were seen by the British as

"surplus or redundant population, as 'pauper hordes' that threatened not only to overwhelm Irish relief institutions but even swamp Britain itself,"

writes Irish scholar David Lloyd (5).

British discrimination against the Irish, along with the famine, could have prompted Irish immigration to America, the supposed land of opportunity and freedom for oppressed peoples. However, even in "the New World, the 'native' Irish (i.e. Catholics) increasingly dispossessed of land, became the largest single source of indentured servants in the West Indies. Some were voluntary immigrants, but many were involuntary…On many islands, their English masters subjected Irish indentured servants to 'slave-like' conditions" (Robinson 53). Irish enslavement in the West Indies establishes the connection between the Irish and Black diasporas.

As mentioned, the second wave of Irish immigration in the 1840s due to the Potato Famine was met with hostility in America. The Irish were ill-prepared for the industrialized society of the United States. The arriving Irish had little money left after their voyage to America and were forced to stay in poor housing conditions where disease flourished within their communities. Americans later blamed the Irish immigrants for outbreaks of illness. Due to their lower-class status,

Irish immigrants had to take dangerous, low paying, and service-based jobs that most Americans refused, which only reinforced their likeness to African American workers.

This resemblance between African Americans and Irish immigrants intensified and Irishness itself was racialized just as Blackness was. In his book *The Colors of Zion*, George Bornstein includes a turn-of-the-20th-century drawing that features an "Irish Iberian," an "Anglo-Teutonic," and a "Negro." In this image, the features of the "Irish Iberian" more closely resemble the figure of the "Negro" rather than the "Anglo-Teutonic." Bornstein comments upon the emergence of "racialist science that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" which mapped "the degree of African or Negroid blood in the population as one moved westward first London and then Dublin" which made "the popular conception of Black, Irish, or Jewish races as lower" (Bornstein 10 - 12).

To further demonstrate the connection between Irish, African, and Jewish oppression, Bornstein features another image in his book: a comic titled "Let the Klu Klux Do It," which depicts the KKK marching at events that are captioned as "Emancipation Day" in one scene and "St. Patrick's Day" in another. These images document the parallel discrimination of Irish immigrants and African Americans in popular culture at this time: both groups were seen as outsiders, takers of jobs, and needing to be dealt with by violence.

The stories of African Americans and Irish Americans diverge when the Irish began to inch toward whiteness. The Irish crossed the racial line through a series of calculated and nuanced historical shifts which causes scholars to ask whether "such a crossing of the ethnic/racial line would have been possible if the Irish were not already to some degree regarded as white." Lloyd argues this crossing "suggests the exploitation of a latent whiteness rather than a process of 'becoming white'" (4). Though many believed the Irish had a "weak ethical desire" and should have stood in solidarity with other oppressed peoples rather than cross over to whiteness themselves, Irish Americans have a rich history of using their new white status to bring representation of other groups – such as African Americans – into white spaces (3). O'Neill has done this in numerous plays, using his knowledge of Irish and African American suffering to bridge the racial gap.

Robinson argues that while some of O'Neill's plays suffered from problematic representation of Black people, they had a great "impact on Black participation and representation in the American theater" (49). Though *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is not one of O'Neill's plays that features African American representation, Irish identity, suffering, and revenge play a key role. Since Irishness and Blackness are so closely woven together, those coming from many identities can appreciate O'Neill's commitment to telling the story of his oppressed people and avenging them through his literature.

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Anti-Irish sentiments were common in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in U.S. culture, which sometimes portrayed the Irish as ape-like.

Addiction in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century
By Emily Sanford

Our nation has continually suffered at the hands of addiction and dates to times way before our generation, even preceding Eugene O'Neill's. Yet, addiction continues to be one of the most prevalent causes of death in Americans of a variety of ages, with opioids being responsible for over two-thirds of drug overdose deaths each year (Mattson, et al).

While O'Neill himself battled with alcoholism, his mother, Ella O'Neill, was plagued with a morphine addiction that resulted from a doctor's prescription to deal with the pain while recovering from delivering Eugene, the eleven-pound newborn.

O'Neill portrays his mother's painful recovery from giving birth with Ella's account in *Long Day's Journey Into Night:* "I was so healthy before Edmund was born. You remember, James. There wasn't a nerve in my body ... But bearing Edmund was the last straw. I was so sick afterwards" (O'Neill 765).

— Ad published in American Druggist and Pharmaceutical Record, volume 36, number 6, March 25, 1900.

This relationship with substance abuse is reflected in many of O'Neill's works but is especially visible in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, where there is an entire house battling addiction.

Jessica Lange points this out in her *Foreword* to the Yale edition of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, writing: "Mary's addiction has been singled out in the family as the greatest transgression. But there are four addicts living in that house. The men are alcoholics. Morphine is less acceptable, less social, more mysterious, and therefore more isolating. It sets Mary apart, separating her even more from the rest of them" (Lange viii).

> Regardless of what substance was abused (morphine, alcohol, and heroin), addiction struggles across O'Neill's family bore immense pain for different generations, while simultaneously giving the playwright content for countless plots throughout his career.

In the early 1890s, around the same time that O'Neill was born (1888), the sales of opiates were occurring in an unregulated and unmonitored medical marketplace across the United States. As a result of this, doctors prescribed their patients opiates–more specifically, morphine–to ease both physical and mental discomforts. The patients, most commonly members of the middle class, were now succumbing to iatrogenic addiction, directly caused by the course of medical treatment, or, in other words, a doctor's prescription.

One poignant scene that demonstrates this historical phenomenon of prescribing opiates is Edmund's confrontation with his mother, Ella, pleading for her to give up using the morphine: "Mama! Please listen! I want to ask you something! You–You're only just started. You can still stop. You've got the will power! We'll all help you. I'll do anything! Won't you, Mama?" (O'Neill 769).

Even though too many doctors' prescriptions were leading to this new kind of addiction, they were surely not the only ones to blame for the epidemic. Dependence on substances was occurring with both drugs and alcohol, medically or recreationally introduced. Both Jamie, the eldest O'Neill son, and James, the O'Neill patriarch, suffered from alcoholism, just as the playwright did throughout the entirety of his life.

However, being the sole morphine abuser in the family, Mary's addiction sets the tone of the play, as

everyone in the Tyrone family tiptoes around her when they can tell she is using, yet ironically drink themselves to blackouts with no shame.

The plots of both *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* prove the levels of complexity that come along with substance abuse, as the family gets torn apart as they succumb to the collateral damage of their mother's addiction while also dealing with their own individual alcoholism. It sends the Tyrone family into a never-ending vicious cycle where Mary uses to make herself feel better, while the men in the family drink to forget that she uses, leaving everyone involved worse off as they all slip into the abyss of their addictions.

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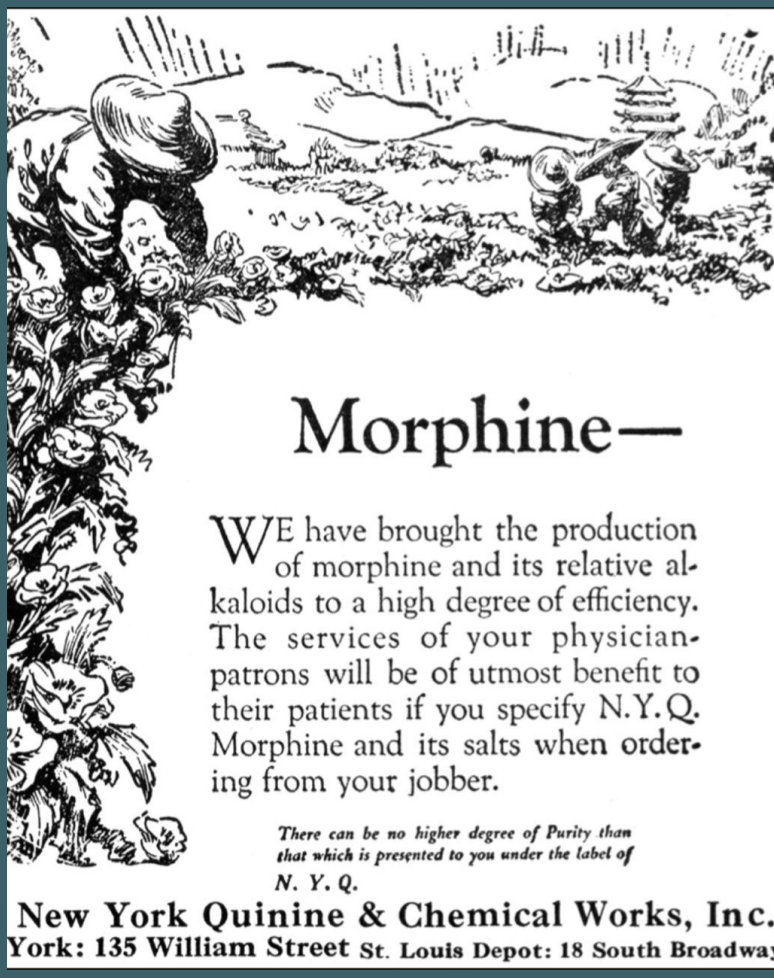
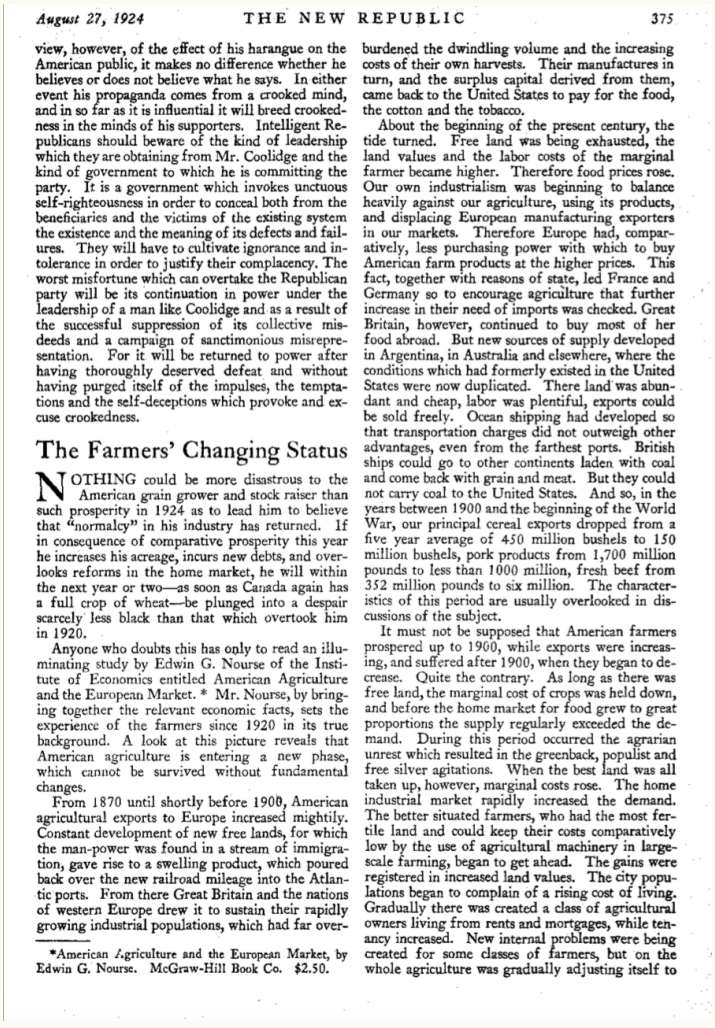


Farming and Gender in the Progressive Era
By Sydney Arend

The early Progressive Era saw an increase of women leaving the domestic sphere to take on traditionally male roles in the workforce. The American family farm during the Progressive Era was one of the first places where the distinction between male and female responsibilities lessened, and largely due to necessity, the work that was typically divided based on gender "was often blurred on the family farm" (Kleinschmidt 113). However, this blurring of work roles did not often result in men aiding in women's domestic responsibilities, but instead, in women assuming both domestic roles and farm labor. This historical context is useful in understanding the labor that Josie Tyrone performs in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.

The only female character in *Moon*, Josie Hogan's appearance has faced debate, because as characterized by O'Neill, she defies normative notions of femininity. O'Neill describes Josie as "so oversize for a woman that she is almost a freak- five feet eleven in her stockings and weighs around one hundred and eighty" (857). This description of Josie as possessing masculine traits underscores the physically demanding labor needed to assist her father with farm work, especially due to her three brothers abandoning the farm and leaving it in the care of Josie and her father.

Phil Hogan, the patriarch of the play, is a brash Irishman and head of the farm who forces his family members into servile work for the sake of keeping the failing farm operating. His character is based upon Irishman John Dolan, a pig farmer, who is described as a short, stocky man who "loved to



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view, however, of the effect of his harangue on the American public, it makes no difference whether he believes or does not believe what he says. In either event his propaganda comes from a crooked mind, and in so far as it is influential it will breed crookedness in the minds of his supporters. Intelligent Republicans should beware of the kind of leadership which they are obtaining from Mr. Coolidge and the kind of government to which he is committing the party. It is a government which invokes unctuous self-righteousness in order to conceal both from the beneficiaries and the victims of the existing system the existence and the meaning of its defects and failures. They will have to cultivate ignorance and intolerance in order to justify their complacency. The worst misfortune which can overtake the Republican party will be its continuation in power under the leadership of a man like Coolidge and as a result of the successful suppression of its collective misdeeds and a campaign of sanctimonious misrepresentation. For it will be returned to power after having thoroughly deserved defeat and without having purged itself of the impulses, the temptations and the self-deceptions which provoke and excuse crookedness.

The Farmers' Changing Status

NOTHING could be more disastrous to the American grain grower and stock raiser than such prosperity in 1924 as to lead him to believe that "normalcy" in his industry has returned. If in consequence of comparative prosperity this year he increases his acreage, incurs new debts, and overlooks reforms in the home market, he will within the next year or two—as soon as Canada again has a full crop of wheat—be plunged into a despair scarcely less black than that which overtook him in 1920.

Anyone who doubts this has only to read an illuminating study by Edwin G. Nourse of the Institute of Economics entitled American Agriculture and the European Market. * Mr. Nourse, by bringing together the relevant economic facts, sets the experience of the farmers since 1920 in its true background. A look at this picture reveals that American agriculture is entering a new phase, which cannot be survived without fundamental changes.

From 1870 until shortly before 1900, American agricultural exports to Europe increased mightily. Constant development of new free lands, for which the man-power was found in a stream of immigration, gave rise to a swelling product, which poured back over the new railroad mileage into the Atlantic ports. From there Great Britain and the nations of western Europe drew it to sustain their rapidly growing industrial populations, which had far overburdened the dwindling volume and the increasing costs of their own harvests. Their manufactures in turn, and the surplus capital derived from them, came back to the United States to pay for the food, the cotton and the tobacco.

About the beginning of the present century, the tide turned. Free land was being exhausted, the land values and the labor costs of the marginal farmer became higher. Therefore food prices rose. Our own industrialism was beginning to balance heavily against our agriculture, using its products, and displacing European manufacturing exporters in our markets. Therefore Europe had, comparatively, less purchasing power with which to buy American farm products at the higher prices. This fact, together with reasons of state, led France and Germany so to encourage agriculture that further increase in their need of imports was checked. Great Britain, however, continued to buy most of her food abroad. But new sources of supply developed in Argentina, in Australia and elsewhere, where the conditions which had formerly existed in the United States were now duplicated. There land was abundant and cheap, labor was plentiful, exports could be sold freely. Ocean shipping had developed so that transportation charges did not outweigh other advantages, even from the farthest ports. British ships could go to other continents laden with coal and come back with grain and meat. But they could not carry coal to the United States. And so, in the years between 1900 and the beginning of the World War, our principal cereal exports dropped from a five year average of 450 million bushels to 150 million bushels, pork products from 1,700 million pounds to less than 1000 million, fresh beef from 352 million pounds to six million. The characteristics of this period are usually overlooked in discussions of the subject.

It must not be supposed that American farmers prospered up to 1900, while exports were increasing, and suffered after 1900, when they began to decrease. Quite the contrary. As long as there was free land, the marginal cost of crops was held down, and before the home market for food grew to great proportions the supply regularly exceeded the demand. During this period occurred the agrarian unrest which resulted in the greenback, populist and free silver agitations. When the best land was all taken up, however, marginal costs rose. The home industrial market rapidly increased the demand. The better situated farmers, who had the most fertile land and could keep their costs comparatively low by the use of agricultural machinery in large-scale farming, began to get ahead. The gains were registered in increased land values. The city populations began to complain of a rising cost of living. Gradually there was created a class of agricultural owners living from rents and mortgages, while tenancy increased. New internal problems were being created for some classes of farmers, but on the whole agriculture was gradually adjusting itself to

*American Agriculture and the European Market, by Edwin G. Nourse. McGraw-Hill Book Co. $2.50.

Fig. 1: Farming Editorial in *The New Republic*, 1924.

drink, [was] very intelligent, very interesting, very likable" (Smith & Eaton 166).

When Josie and her father have an altercation because she resists both his demands to assist on the farm and his beatings, she reacts by lifting a club to defend herself. Phil responds to her, saying, "I never yet laid hands on a woman-not when I was sober-but if it wasn't for that club … If you ain't the damnedest daughter in Connecticut, who is?" (O'Neill 863). While Hogan demonstrates the idea that women should submit to the authority of the head of the family, he is also in awe of Josie's physical prowess.

A Moon for the Misbegotten also portrays how industrialization impacted the American agricultural work environment, seen especially in the interactions between Phil Hogan and Stedman Harder. In a dispute about Hogan's swine dying after treading onto Harder's land, Hogan tells Harder that he never went to his farm to confront him about this issue because he "couldn't bring [himself] to set foot on land bought with Standard Oil money that was stolen from the poor it ground in the dust beneath its dirty heel" (887).

As technology increased throughout American culture, there was also a shift towards using technology on the farm. This is demonstrated in a 1924 editorial in the *New Republic* (see fig.1), which states that "the better situated farmers, who had the most fertile land and could keep their costs comparatively low by the use of agricultural machinery in large scale farming, began to get ahead" (Editorial 375).

Old farm machinery on the grounds of Tao House. Photo by Katie N. Johnson

Due to this, there became a divide between those who were moving towards industrialized farming practices, and those who wanted to maintain traditional ways of farming were often bought out or left behind.

Located in Connecticut, Phil Hogan's farm is impacted by the move towards industrialization, although he tries to resist this. Hogan's farm is modest and does not generate high amounts of revenue, which serves as a counterpoint to industrialized farming practices utilized by the wealthy Stedman Harder. Hogan's landlord, James Tyrone, makes a knock at the industrialized state of farming, stating that Harder is "a leading aristocrat in our Land of the Free and Get-Rich-Quick, whose boots are licked by one and all" (O'Neill 880). Tyrone's assessment of Harder is both characteristic of the response family farmers had towards industrialization as well as a critique of the larger issues of capitalism and monopolization.

Although the family farm is not the focal point of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, it is the vessel that allows tensions within the plot to develop. Much of the conflicts in this play are triggered based on farming disputes, including the pigs escaping Stedman's farm and Hogan's desire to use the relationship between Josie and James in a vengeful manner. The industrial and gendered tensions around farming during the Progressive Era assist in building up *Moon*, and the arguments between Phil Hogan, his family, and other farmers.

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Destitute tenant farmer's family, Ozark Mountains. Source: New York Public Library.

Temperance and Suffrage Within O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

By Ryan Rosu

In the 1920s, American society experienced monumental social change wrought by the passing of the 18th and 19th Amendments. The former established the federal prohibition of alcohol, a goal long sought by the women's temperance movements, while the latter gave women the right to vote, signifying the completion of the suffragist movement's primary goal. Although both movements "asserted women's right to be active in the public sphere" and acknowledged the importance of the other, they often disagreed about the proper approach to accomplish their goals (Blocker 471).

The women in the temperance movement were also far more conservative, holding a worldview that Elizabeth Cady Stanton privately called "a desecration of womanhood" (qtd. in Blocker 467). Nevertheless, as the passing of these two amendments shows, both groups held a significant amount of power in the 1920s; thus, two contrasting views of women's role in American society were created. In *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, set in 1923, this duality is embodied by the character of Josie.

The Women's Temperance Movement in the U.S., alternatively known as the Women's Temperance Crusade, has its roots in the late 18th century, more than one hundred years prior to the start of Prohibition. During this time, the religious revival sweeping the nation led to a renewed desire for Christian values, one of which was sobriety; simultaneously, women were experiencing the effects of alcohol on their families firsthand, and, as result, came to view it as "an evil to be scourged from society" (Knight 203). This led to the formation of religious societies devoted to the eradication of alcohol-drinking which, implicitly, "taught their women members to combine and to operate outside their houses" and that "it was good to do so" (Sinclair 88).

Although these pushes for temperance fizzled out during the years leading up to the Civil War and remained dormant in its fallout, the cause became reinvigorated as a temperance "Crusade" in the 1870s, when women nationwide began to pray in front of saloons until they shut down, while others even took to actively destroying bottles and barrels containing alcohol. It was also during this decade that the Women's Christian Temperance Movement was founded. In the following decades, the movement continued to grow stronger, eventually joining forces with the male-dominated Anti-Saloon League; through their collective efforts, the 18th Amendment was proposed in 1917, and it took effect in January of 1920 (Knight 202 -203).

The suffragist movement had a much later start, comparatively, with its formal start being the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848; a consequent convention was held annually for the next twenty years, its major victory being the 1869 enfranchisement of women in Wyoming (Antell 205). In the years between 1870 and 1910, few political advancements were made for women, but the movement continued to grow, and the following decade saw women's right to vote written into numerous state constitutions, with even more allowing women the right to vote for President; in 1919, after a first attempt had failed to pass the Senate, the 19th Amendment was passed, and it came into effect in August 1920 (232).

Despite both movements being led by women, there was much disagreement about ideology and practice. For one thing, the Crusaders were unpopular among urban women, the primary base for suffrage, who "feared that the rural women were trying to impose their provincial morality on them" (Knight 202).

Similarly, many suffragists felt that the Crusaders' practice of praying outside saloons was a "degrading approach" that was the "result of women having been taught that their influence was indirect"; without the vote, they were being denied their full agency, even in the fight for Prohibition. (202).

However, this disagreement was a result of the Crusaders' far more conservative views of women, not just differing techniques.

Thus, even though both groups believed in some level of women's independence, they had very different goals in mind for what the future should be; this meant that, in the 1920s, after each movement had achieved its primary goal, the nation was left with two competing ideas of what a woman should be.

Both of these ideas -the chaste mother and the independent woman- are manifest in the depiction of Josie in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. On one hand, Josie has no interest in marriage, made clear when she says, "I wouldn't marry the best man on earth and be tied down to him alone" (O'Neill, *Moon*, 860).

In another deviation from the Crusaders' conservative worldview, she indulges in frequent drinking with her father. At the same time, however, Josie is not bound to these ideas. When it comes to Jamie Tyrone, she is willing to consider marriage, and says, "if I was his wife, I'd cure him to drinking himself to death, if I had to kill him" (871). In these contrasting bits of dialogue, Josie shows that the two views of women are not mutually exclusive. In her, the independent woman becomes the norm, since no woman should be denied her basic rights; however, for the man she loves, Josie is able to step into the more traditional role. In her ability to do both, Josie becomes a "female Atlas strong enough to take the world on her shoulders," collapsing these competing views of women into one whole (Cahill 20).

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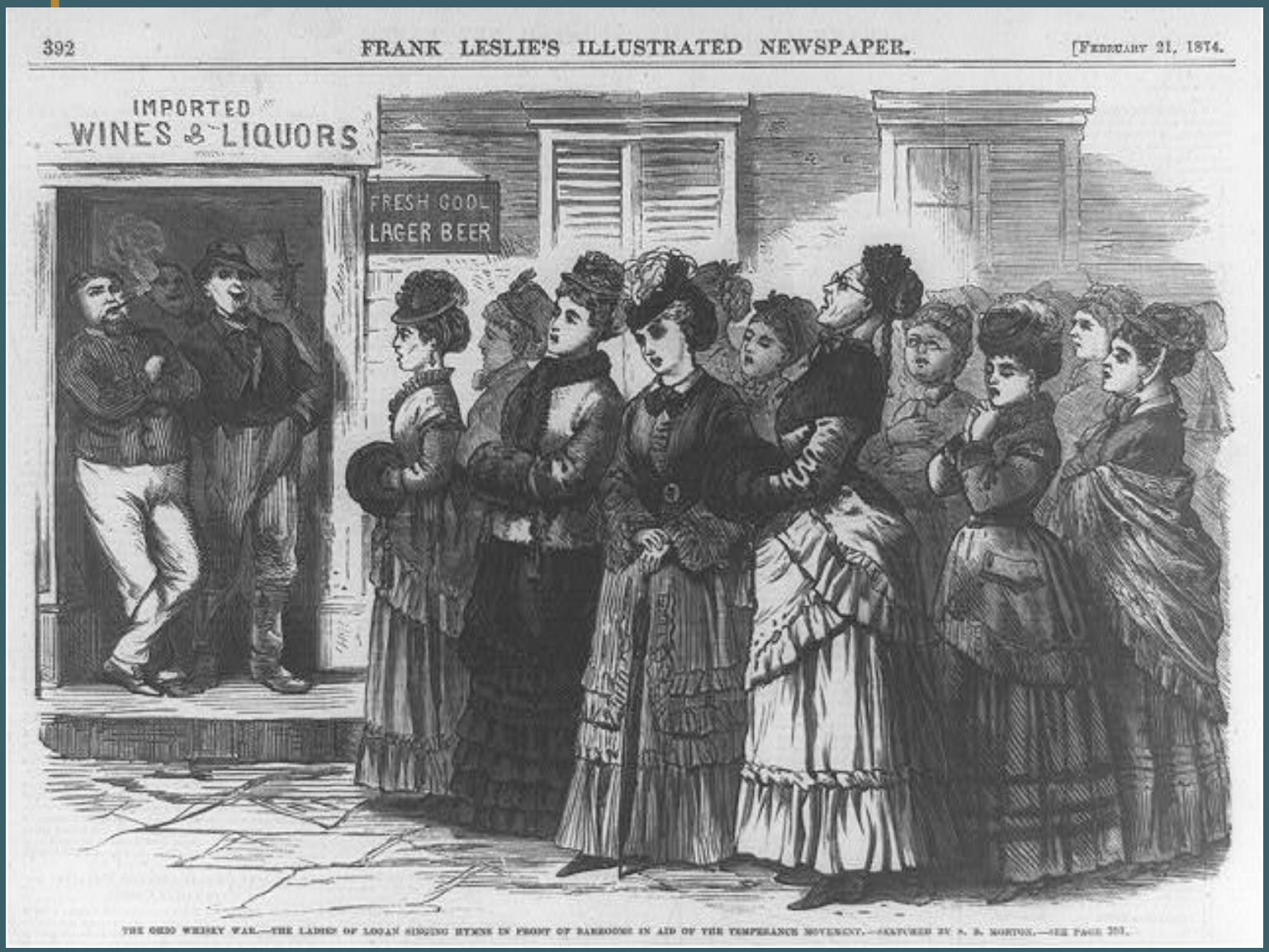

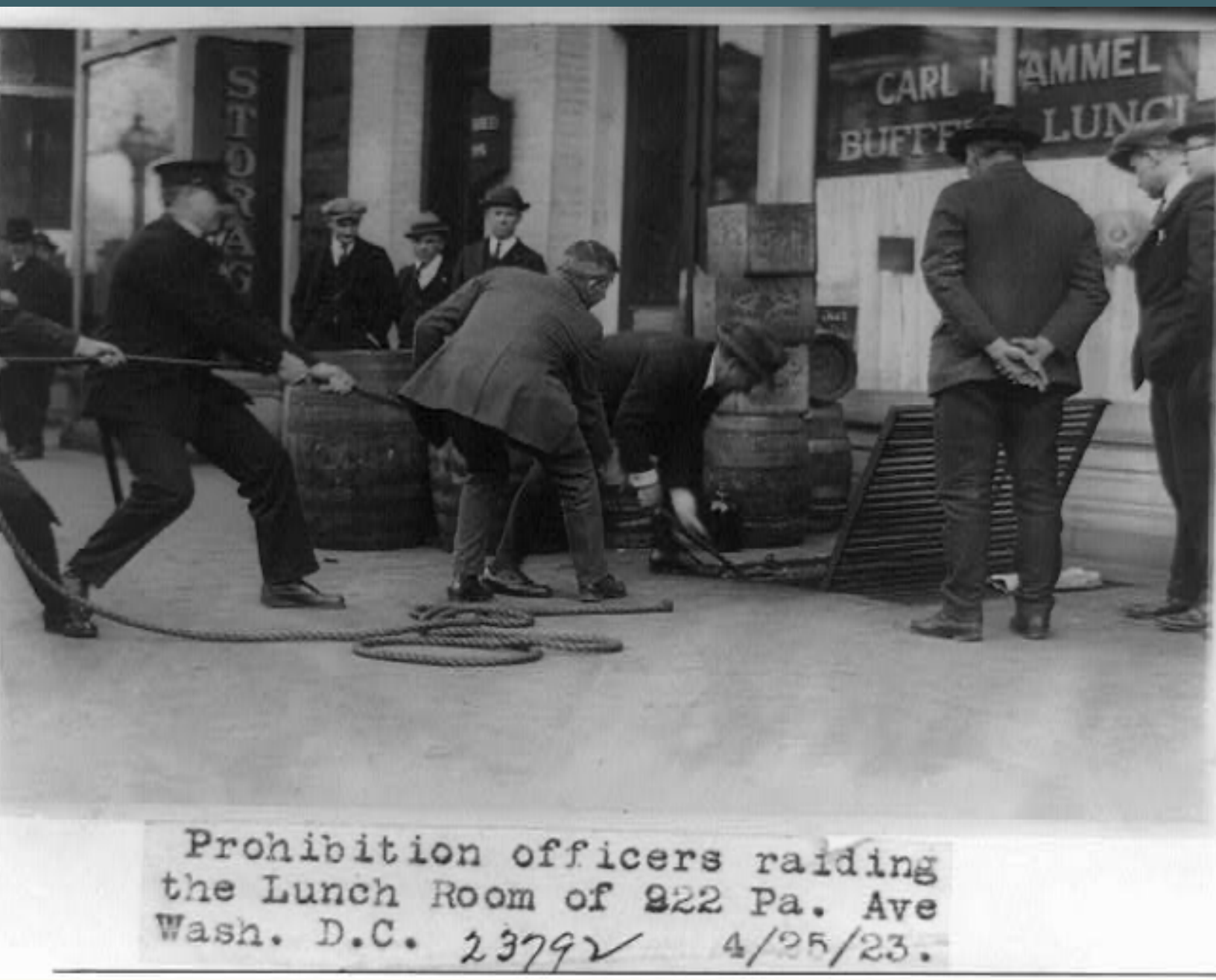

Prohibition raid in 1923.
Source: Library of Congress.

Artistic Director of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Eric Fraisher Hayes

A Peek Backstage at Tao House: the Pre-Production of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

By Claudia Zaunz

A steep road leads up to Tao House, O'Neill's "final home and harbor," above the San Ramon Valley in the Las Trampas hills with a clear view of Mount Diablo. The long driveway and the simple white stone wall hide Tao House, which in Chinese, as interpreted by the O'Neills, means ´the right way of life´."

It is here where O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten* was written, and it is here where it will be staged in September.

"I often think about how he literally looked out of his study window where he wrote, and he saw the barn as he is writing the play about the barn," said Eric Fraisher Hayes, artistic director of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation (EONF) and director of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.

"The play is rooted in living at Tao House," he added.

As guests approach the residence (now a National Historic Site run by the National Parks Service), they can observe the light turned on in the playwright's study, signaling that a play is on in the Old Barn Theater. As theatergoers stroll the grounds, Hayes hopes to connect them to the space by playing up O'Neill's aura, creating a site-specific experience for audiences.

After two years of streaming digital productions during the pandemic, the Eugene O'Neill Foundation (EONF) is ready to create new momentum, presenting *A Moon for the Misbegotten* at their annual celebration of theatre held in the San Francisco Bay Area.

It may seem as if fate brought Hayes to this project. He grew up in Danville, California, where O'Neill's residence is located, and had little interest in O'Neill before completing a Master of Fine Arts in Acting at DePaul University's theater school in Chicago. Eventually, he too found his way up the hill and joined the foundation in 2008.

When Hayes returned home from Chicago, he sought to understand O'Neill's progression as an artist, reading all of the plays with the spirit of a theater actor, director, and producer, he said.

During his tenure, "the Eugene O'Neill Festival has expanded from a single weekend to an entire month, and the EONF has become the leading producer of O'Neill's plays in the U.S." *A Moon for the Misbegotten* will be the 29th O'Neill play that Hayes directs.

"I saw everything through these questions: Can you play this? Is this a story you can actually put on stage and make real?"

Hayes' acting background proves helpful when it comes to giving directions for actors. In his process, he reads the entirety of the text, and tries to absorb the spirit and the points O'Neill is trying to make.

When it comes to O'Neill's extensive stage directions, Hayes does not shy back from aggressively editing the play. He believes that O'Neill is good at setting up dramatic situations, as he had a lot of insight toward people.

"But I don't think he's the best when it comes to trusting what an actor can give to a performance," Hayes said. "I have no problem with editing his play because I just think his blightspot is he wasn't an actor himself and he doesn't really understand what an actor can do for a role."

Old silos in the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness Park adjacent to Tao House. Photo by Katie N. Johnson

Actor Ryan Hayes (not related to the director) will return to Tao House in the fall production of *Moon*. He played Jamie in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in 2019 at the Eugene O'Neill Festival in Danville and also in New Ross, Ireland (see figure 1).

"I feel like in a *Long Day's Journey* [*Into Night*], we have a very different Jamie," Ryan said. "I see a person here [in *Moon*] who has matured a lot in a decade."

A major difference between Jamie and Jim is the way O'Neill approaches language. In his preparation for portraying Jim Tyrone in *Moon*, the 48-year-old Ryan wonders where all of Jamie's bravado went.

"Did Eugene O'Neill want to make him more complex for this role, change him up a little bit, or did he literally see his brother become a different person?," he wondered.

As the actor is reading O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten,* he predicts that "trying to find that emotional shift inside [himself] as an actor" will be challenging.

Jim is a man with "a deep well of sorrow that he is suppressing," Ryan said. He is striving to find the balance between "staying true to the dramatic world that [O'Neill] had created" while also sounding natural and modern.

"What I try to do is to actually find that feeling inside myself even if I'm not thinking of what [Jim] is thinking about," he said.

Fig. 1 Ryan Hayes (R) in EONF's production of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in 2019.

Ryan appreciates the precise directions from Eric Hayes and likes to be challenged at rehearsal, as well as experiment different ways to perform scenes.

"Working with Eric is like working with somebody who speaks a similar language, who's trained in a way to get to the heart of the matter and I trust Eric a lot," he said.

Five months out from staging the performance at the festival, director Eric Hayes is considering which actors would be a good fit for his production.

"Casting is like a puzzle. If you cast one role with a certain actor it sometimes informs and changes the calculations for the other actors," he explained.

Having worked with Ryan before and knowing that he can trust the actor makes it easier for Hayes. He can build around someone he already knows.

Both director Hayes and actor Ryan Hayes agree that casting the character of Josie will be challenging because of O'Neill's physical description of her.

The stage directions describe her as 28-year-old, "so oversize for a woman that she is almost a freak [...]. She is more powerful than any but an exceptionally strong man, able to do the manual labor of two ordinary men. But there is no mannish quality about her. She is all woman" (O'Neill, *Moon*, 857).

Hayes is looking for an actor that looks intimidating, but also has a deep well of feeling.

"I think, ultimately you have to choose somebody who embodies the spirit of the character and you can't necessarily get a giant person to play the role," he added.

Not before too long, the casting puzzle will be solved, rehearsals will start, and the audience's anticipation will rise as all are ready to return to Tao House in person, to see another of O'Neill's masterpieces: *A Moon for the Misbegotten.*

Below, old farm machinery on the grounds of Tao House. Photo by Katie N. Johnson

Josie:
Everything is far away and doesn't matter--except the moon and its dreams, and I'm part of the dreams--and you are, too. (Act III, 917)

The Moon and the Misbegotten
By Brooke Elsner

A Moon for the Misbegotten was one of Eugene O'Neill's most sincere and significant references to his own brother, Jamie, who is known as Jim Tyrone in the play. This was O'Neill's final work and he wrote it as an elegy for his brother, who died in 1923 as a result of his fateful alcoholism. O'Neill struggled with writing this play because he had to forgive his brother for his intense alcohol addiction and at the same time redeem Jamie for his actions after the death of their mother. *Moon* features two main characters, Josie Hogan and James Tyrone, who each separately embody the play's title: "moon" and "misbegotten." In O'Neill's final finished play, the question of these embodiments falls on Josie and Tyrone, who contemplates his intense and fatal struggles, which he eventually relays to Josie throughout their night under the moon.

Tyrone is the misbegotten character in this story, like many of O'Neill's male figures. Tyrone is a lost soul who struggles with his alcohol addiction, which puts him in badly conceived situations that burden his mind. He suppresses many of his feelings and secrets, which he tries to forget with alcohol "for he was never able to overcome his feelings of insecurity" (Bowen 69). Revealing his past to Josie in the moonlight is like a cleansing of his soul. He is able to receive Josie's nurturing nature and allow himself to relinquish control and be vulnerable when he confides in her about the death of his mother and his alcoholism. Through this exchange, we realize how misbegotten Tyrone really is, as he considers himself "a rotten louse" (O'Neill 923) who is haunted by his regrets. The relationship between Tyrone and his mother bears an uncanny resemblance to O'Neill's real-life brother, Jamie, and his attachments to

O'Neill's mother, Mary Quinlan O'Neill, 187-?. Eugene O'Neill Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

their mother. O'Neill's biographer Croswell Bowen wrote of Jamie as "inordinately attached to his mother," which O'Neill demonstrated in *Moon*, by portraying the life-altering death of their mother as a tragic moment for Tyrone. (Bowen 139).

Josie and Tyrone's illuminating night together is caused by their curiosity and intense feelings for each other. During their night together, Josie reveals her vulnerabilities about her sexuality and Tyrone dwells on his haunting memories of his mother's death that he escapes through his alcoholism. Josie is a caregiver who tends to her father and works the farm, but she presents herself as a promiscuous woman who disregards her virginity for the sake of her pride and frustration with her present sexuality. For example, Josie remarks:

"*My* modesty? Be God, I didn't know I had any left"

Later, Josie confesses "I am a virgin" to Tyrone (910, 924). Given that O'Neill has a history of writing female characters who are mostly in control of their sexual identity and liberation, Josie claiming she is a whore and not a virgin is no exception; he is providing her with her agency over her narrative. Josie crafts this facade, observes Gilda Pacheco, because "[s]he sees herself as totally unattractive, [and] she wants to make believe that many men have made love to her to improve her self-image" (Pacheco 60). In order to present herself as a strong figure, Josie denies her virginity throughout the play, until that tender moment under the moon when she reveals that she is a virgin in act three. Kathleen Ordean notes that

"[l]ike the moon, a virgin in our times suggests not power, but inexperience. Yet at one time this word described moon-goddesses and other vital female figures. It meant not 'sexually chaste' but rather 'true to one's own nature' and 'under no one's control.' Its roots group it with the word virile - meaning strong and vigorous" (Odeon 78).

In reality, Josie remains a strong, independent woman, and her association with the moon facilitates Tyrone to be vulnerable around her.

Josie develops maternal feelings towards Tyrone when he begins to confront how he drank himself into oblivion and caroused with a prostitute while accompanying his mother's coffin back home for burial. Acknowledging his own abhorrent behavior, Tyrone exclaims: "Christ, I ought to suffer" (O'Neill 929). As portrayed in heart-breaking scenes in *Moon*, "Eugene

went into even greater detail about Jamie and the death of his mother" than in *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* Tyrone's ability to confess this traumatic moment to Josie is facilitated by her maternalism, thus reaffirming her prior burdens of caring for other people.

At the end of Act three, Josie tells Tyrone "Do what you came for, my darling. It isn't drunken laughter in a speakeasy you want to hear at all, but the sound of yourself crying your heart's repentance against her breast. She hears. I feel her in the moonlight, her soul wrapped in it like a silver mantle, and I know she understands and forgives me, too, and her blessings lie on me" (O'Neill 933). In this scene, Josie transforms under the gravitational tug of the moon, which emphasizes her role as mother, wife, and caretaker for Tyrone.

Tyrone is on the receiving end of Josie's extensions of the moon's presence and she resembles "a good woman like 'a mirror' possessing power, identity, and autonomy to enlarge O'Neill's male characters called 'the misbegotten'." (Chae 302). Tyrone's tale of his "devotion to his mother that was perhaps unnatural" (Bowen 101) and Josie's embodying of a mother and caretaker role leads Tyrone into a state of "*calm with the drained, exhausted peace of death*" (O'Neill 933).

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The hills outside Tao House in California. Photo: Katie N. Johnson

Irish Myths in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*
By Rylee Jung

A Moon for the Misbegotten is a play characterized by Irishness. Eugene O'Neill tells the story of his family and their Irish identity in several of his plays, culminating in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and what is often considered its fifth act, *Moon.* O'Neill scholar Frank Ardolino, in his essay "Irish Myths and Legends in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*," outlines the Irish history and legends that are woven throughout both seminal O'Neillian texts. Ardolino demonstrates the connection between *Moon* and these Irish legends, but only gives a brief overview of them. This essay will dive into the fuller narratives of the following Irish legends: the folklore name of Ireland *Muicinis* (which means Pig Island), what Ardolino calls "the Irish trickster hero Manannan mac Lir," and tales of "swineherds who achieve a royal status," in order to highlight their relevance in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Ardolino 66).

The name *Muinicnis* was originally used in Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn*, "a history of the kingdom of Ireland" that was completed in 1634 ("Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn*"). The tale follows the "Milesians" who are "the people who drove the race of gods, the Tuatha De Danann, below ground," and who were "the ancestors of the Celtic population of Ireland" and said to possess "an ancient right to the island when they came" ("Milesians"). The land was called *Muicinis* because when the Milesian people "first attempted to land upon the northern coast of Leinster" they were spotted by the Tuatha de Danaus who were "alarmed at the number of the ships" ("How the Milesians Came to Ireland"). In order to hide the island from the Milesians, the Tuatha de Danaus used magic to create a cloud over the entire island so the Milesians became confused "and thought they saw nothing but the resemblance of a hog; and for this reason the island was called Muicinis." Ardolino points out that *Moon* character Phil Hogan also resembles a hog. Ardolino states that Hogan is described in "porcine terms" and quotes the play "*He has a thick neck, lumpy, sloping shoulders, a barrel-like trunk, stumpy legs... His face is fat with a snub nose, ... big mouth, and little blue eyes with bleached lashes and eyebrows that remind one of a white pig's*" (Ardolino 66; O'Neill 862).

Phil Hogan's hog-like appearance in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* sets up an extended motif of pigs and Ireland that will continue throughout the play. O'Neill's attention to this detail is extraordinary, as he weaves Irish folklore even into the appearance of his characters. Hogan also has the recurring issue of his pigs taking a "nice little stroll" over to millionaire neighbor Harder's ice pond (O'Neill 881). These "little strolls" cause an altercation with Harder that Ardolino claims links Hogan to another figure of Irish folklore that is associated with pigs: Manannan Mac Lir (Ardolino 66).

Manannan Mac Lir is one of the more commonly found Irish myths. Many dictionaries of folklore cite his presence and his complete story can be found in the tales of "*Imram Brann*" and "*Compert Mongan*" ("Celtic Tradition"). The most salient of his characteristics across these texts is his status as a sea deity. Scholar David B. Spaan summarizes Manannan Mac Lir's multitude of stories as "the most popular of the Tuatha De Dannan" and a figure who "moves mysteriously in and out of the realm of both gods and men" (Spaan 193). He concludes that Manannan Mac Lir becomes "the closest thing in Irish literature to a 'father-god,'" as he "contributes to the defense of both gods and chosen heroes" and "while by his pigs, beer, kine, and sheep, he is the nurturer of the gods." Mac Lir's pigs that Spaan mentions is where the connection between this legendary character and *Moon* is made. Mac Lir owned mythical pigs who "renewed themselves overnight after having been eaten." It is this nourishment he gives to the gods that establishes Mac Lir as the "father-god." I quite agree with Ardolino's assertion that "Hogan's occupation as a swineherd, his trickiness, and his royal pretensions make him a parallel to Manannan." Hogan again embodies the Irish identity O'Neill expresses in *Moon*.

The story of an Irish swineherd who becomes a king that Ardolino calls "a famous Munster tale" is also known as "the saga of Conall Corc" (66). The story follows Corc who is famous for being "the founder of the kingdom of Cashel and the Éoganacht dynasty" and is told in "two poems attributed to Torna Éices" (Dillion 61). There are two swineherds in the tale: Duirdrui is the "swineherd of the king of Éile" and Cuirian is the "swineherd of the king of Musgraige" (Ibid.). The two have a dream and see Corc "and hear the blessing given him by an angel" (Ibid). Duirdriu tells his vision to his king and after Corc is "proclaimed king" he "bestows seven *cumals* upon Duiridriu" (Ibid., 62). A *cumal* was a "female slave" (Rodgers 62). The poem ends with "the duties and privileges of the descendants of Duirdriu" (Dillion 62). Ardolino connects Hogan to the royal swineherd legends due to his being a swineherd himself, but I also believe there is another connection to be made in the list of duties that are bestowed upon Duirdriu.

Manannan, sculpted by Eric Austwick

In O'Neill's play, Hogan seems to represent a modified version of the Duirdriu figure, as he is a swineherd but the role of the cumals and descendants have been combined in *Moon*. The play opens with one of Hogan's sons – Mike – desperately trying to run away from the farm life and the expectations of his father to constantly work. Mike curses his father and his habit of lurking to

"catch me if I t[ake] a minute's rest, the way he always does" (O'Neill 858). Hogan's daughter, Josie, aids in Mike's escape and states that she has done the same for her two older brothers. We see here Hogan's children – his descendants – working through the expectations their father has bestowed upon them because of his rule over the farm. Josie's character, though technically one of Hogan's descendants as well, actually best fits the role of the cumal as she, a female, bears the burden of the slave-like work her brothers escape. Though *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is often considered the "fifth act" to *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, it is also O'Neill's tribute to Ireland as he casts the entire Hogan family in his modern day version of Irish myths and legends.

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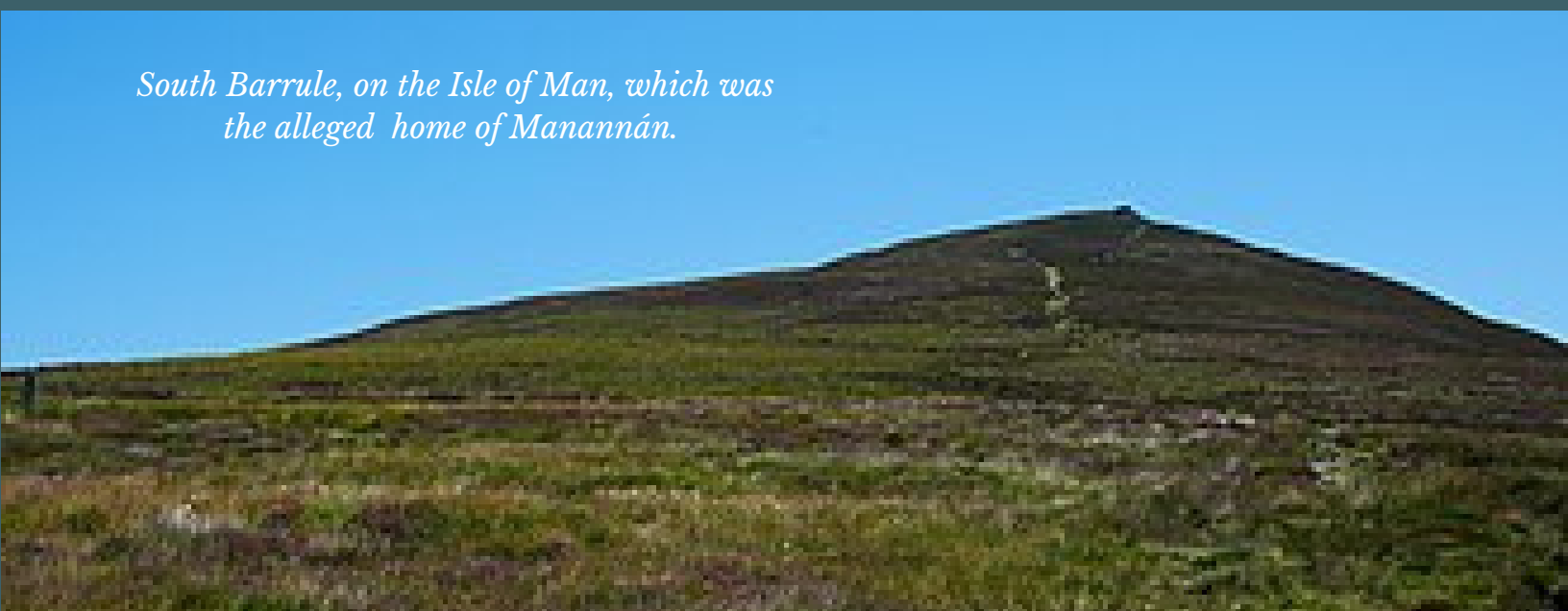

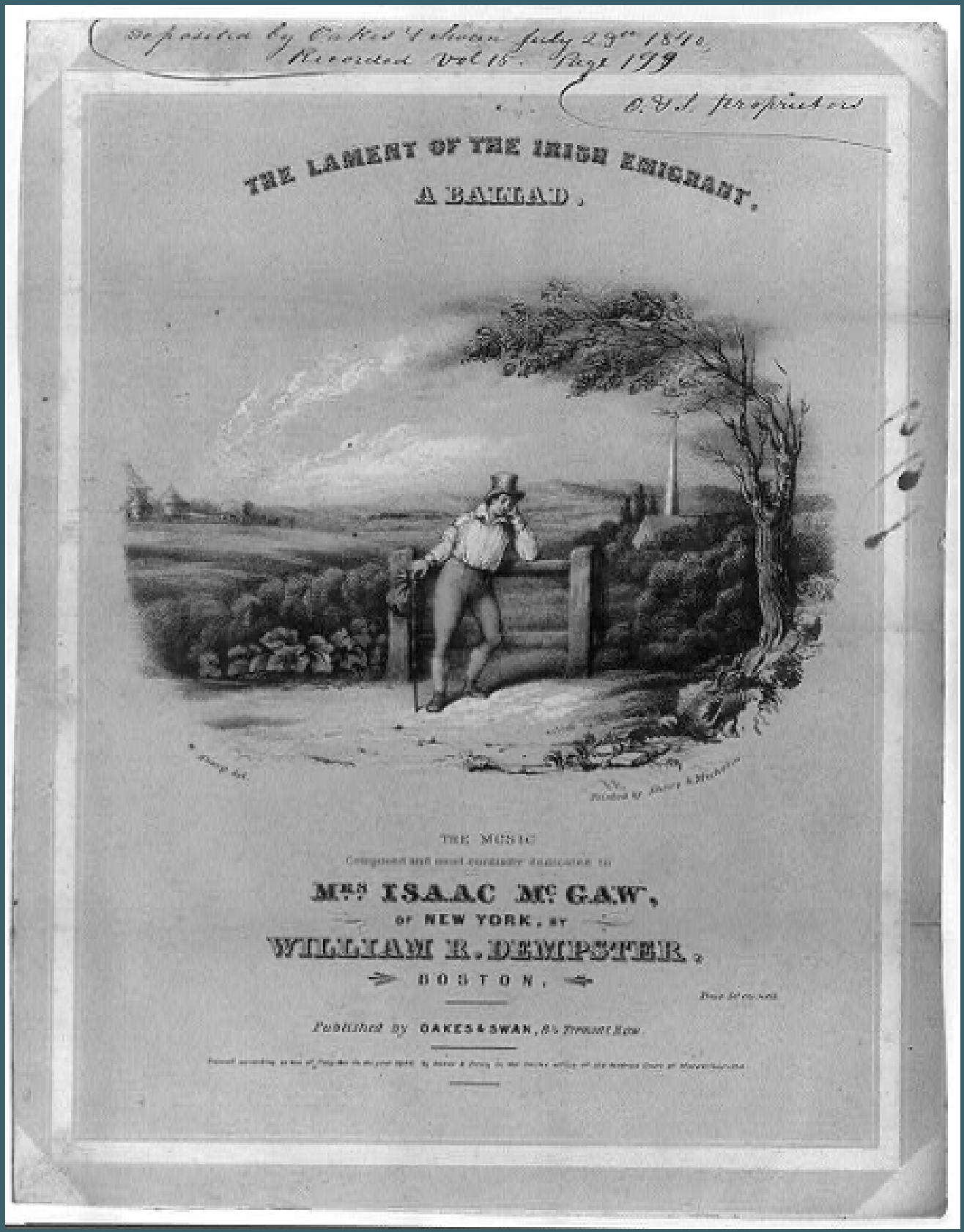

"The Lament of the Irish Emigrant," a ballad from 1840. Source: Library of Congress.

Significance of the *Pieta* in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

By Grace Foor

In his review of *A Moon for the Misbegotten* for the *New Republic*, Eric Bentley wrote that in many of O'Neill's plays, "drinking and Whoring are presented as the principal human pursuits, while above … there hover the ideas of virginity and motherhood, associated in every case with Catholicism and Ireland" (Bentley 17). This idea certainly applies to O'Neill's final work, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, as both Josie Hogan and Jim Tyrone's lives are compared to the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. Their final pose in the play, described in the stage directions as "a big sorrowful woman hugging a haggard-faced middle-aged drunkard against her breast, as if he were a sick child," evokes the image of Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1498), and casts the downtrodden characters of Josie and Jim Tyrone in a more redeeming light (O'Neill 935).

The image of the "Pietà," "in which Mary holds on her lap the body of the dead Christ, has been one of the most popular Christian images since its appearance in the west at the beginning of the fourteenth century" (Ziegler 28). Perhaps the most famous depiction is Michelangelo's *Pietà*, commissioned by Cardinal Jean Belheres de Lagrulas in 1498 (see fig. 1). This image has a clear parallel with the way in which Josie and Jim are often staged in productions.

Looking first at Josie as a Virgin Mary figure, the *Pietà* certainly makes sense in light of Josie's somewhat confusing status as a virgin, which shifts throughout the play. While O'Neill has written hooker-with-a-heart-of-gold characters many times in plays like "*Anna Christie* and *The Web*, Josie "is a virgin who seems a whore until the truth comes out" (Bentley 18). In the beginning of *Moon*, Josie tells Jim Tyrone "don't be miscalling me a virgin. You'll ruin my reputation, if you spread that lie about me" (O'Neill 877). However, prompted by Jim's revelation that he cares about her "brazen-trollop act", she changes her tune and confesses that "I am a virgin." This is certainly reminiscent of the biblical mystery of how Mary the Mother of Christ bore a child as a virgin.

You'll ruin my reputation, if you spread that lie about me." However, prompted by Jim's revelation that he cares about her "brazen-trollop act," she changes her tune and confesses that "I am a virgin" (924). This is certainly reminiscent of the biblical mystery of how Mary the Mother of Christ bore a child as a virgin. Josie holds Jim in her lap maternally, much like the figures in the *Pietà* (see fig. 2), and wakes up still a virgin despite both of their reputations as as sexually aberrant. Furthermore, when her father, Phil Hogan, finds Josie holding Tyrone when he returns home, Josie explains that she is "a virgin, who bears a dead child in the night, and the dawn finds her still a virgin" (936).

Figure 1: Michelangelo's *Pietà*.

Fig. 2: Colleen Dewhurst as Josie and Jason Robards as Tyrone in the 1973 revival of *A Moon for the Misbegotten.*

One thing, however, that complicates Josie's status as a Virgin Mary figure is the existence of Jim Tyrone's madonna-whore complex, evidenced by his frequent shifts in attitude toward Josie. According to O'Neill scholar Yuji Omori, Jim's "excessive separation of the spiritual from the bodily, as well as the contempt for sex [...], ultimately means degrading the mystical life giving source of the mother" (Omori 127). Jim frequently falls victim to the idea of separating Josie's body from her spirit, as he at times asks her quit talking about "rough stuff", but at other times is overcome with a "sneering cynical lust" (O'Neill 910, 925).

As Omori states, "a few moments after he categorizes Josie as a virginal girl, Jim switches abruptly and labels her a whore" (Omori 120). While Jim may respect Josie as a mother figure, he cannot view this role as separate from his sexual desires for her. This complicates the image of *Pietà*, as Jim cannot justify his position merely as Josie's lover or as her son, given his madonna-whore complex.

Perhaps one of the points of greatest significance when discussing parallels between Michelangelo's *Pietà* and *Moon* is that Mary is not just holding her son; she is holding her son's dead body. Likewise, Jim is, in a sense, already dead as Josie holds him, as if she has borne a "dead child" (O'Neill 936).

Omori writes that Jim has contracted a "cultural illness" which has "already advanced onto its incurable, terminal stage" (Omori 122). Since Jim has already been so corrupted by his experiences with hookers and booze, he is unable to be saved by Josie's embrace. This mirrors how Christ is already dead as Mary holds him in the *Pietà*.

Overall, the image of the *Pietà* is not only been ingrained into O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten* through the staging of Josie and Jim Tyrone's embrace, but also by their symbolic relationship as mother and son, their mutual seeking of absolution, and the eventual realization that it is too late to reach absolution.

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Josie's Role as Lover and Mother
by Sydney Arend

O'Neill's plays are full of women who rival normative notions of femaleness of their time. Spanning from the voiceless women who are referenced, but never appear on stage (Nellie from *Abortion* and Evelyn from *The Iceman Cometh*), to outspoken prostitutes (Anna from "*Anna Christie")*, O'Neill's canon contains many women who invoke either anger or pity from the audience. In addition to these interesting female roles, Josie Hogan is another fascinating character who outwardly rebels against traditional gender roles, while actually fulfilling many normative expectations for women. It is in the complexity of Josie's gender that makes her such a fascinating and likable character.

Josie Hogan, the only female character in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, is one of O'Neill's most positively portrayed, and perhaps most likable, women in his canon (Mambrol). Josie is an unusual character because she is masculine in appearance and decidedly non-feminine in her interactions with her father and brother. The desirable woman of the 1920s was seen as someone with a "soft and harmonious feminine [body]" which is a stark contrast from Josie's strong, wide build (Solan 54). Furthermore, Josie is also firm in her relationship with men in her life, often refusing to submit to their tyrannical authority. In one instance, in Act I when Jim Tyrone is not listening to her, Josie "puts her hands under his arms and lifts him to his feet easily" (O'Neill 883). Both Josie's presence and physicality give her an assertive role that resist traditional notions of femaleness.

In addition to depicting non-normative gender roles, *Moon* also portrays non-traditional views of sexuality. During the 1920s in the U.S., sex was culturally conceived as gratifying to men, but not necessarily intended for women's desire. Sex manuals that were released for couples "aimed their instruction at the male reader, that is, the husband" (Neuhaus 453). If a woman was going to be desirable, she was seen more as the object of fulfillment for men's pleasure rather than as an individual with agency over her own sexual desire. Josie differs from these cultural norms. O'Neill's portrayal of Josie's complex sexuality (claiming to be sexually active while actually being a virgin) works against common ideals of femininity present at the time of the play's publication. Her disposition towards her sexuality is the antithesis of how women were expected to behave at this time. At the start of *Moon*, Josie's brother, Mike, calls her a whore, telling her that she "ought to marry and have a home of [her] own away from this shanty and stop [her] shameless ways with men … though it'd be hard to find a decent man who'd have [her] now" (O'Neill 860). Mike's perception of Josie's supposedly deviant sexuality demonstrates the expectations

for women at the forefront of family life in America during the 1920s. However, O'Neill pushes back against this ideal, as Mike is perhaps the most unlikable character in this play.

The final expectation for women during this time was that they would possess a maternal nature. In her article, Dolores Hayden analyzes marriage advice that was presented in "sex manuals" as well as in *The American Woman's Home*, a popular publication for women in the early 20th century, which stated that the most important duty of a woman was to become "an emotional support for her husband and an inspiring mother for her children" (Hayden 87). Women were expected to be submissive over everything else, and a woman was not to care for herself, but rather serve the men around her.

Although many of Josie's characteristics are nonconforming to the gender norms of this time period, she does have a maternal presence, and this is especially seen in her relationship with Jim Tyrone. By writing Josie with complexity, O'Neill may have been satisfying his own desire to understand the "dichotomy between strong mother and fragile mother" which his own mother possessed (Cahill 7). Josie eventually becomes a source of comfort for Jim, essentially replacing his mother and offering emotional support amidst his pain. During Josie and Jim's conversation in act three, their relationship becomes less sexual and Josie offers "the comforting omnipotence that a child sees in its parent" (Mambrol).

This change in disposition is seen when Jim attempts to initiate romantic touch with Josie, and "unconsciously she tries to pull her hand away," to which Jim becomes upset. Josie ultimately provides him physical affection in a less romantic way, cradling his head within her arms (O'Neill 921).

It is at this moment she begins to demonstrate that her affection for Jim has moved from being purely sexual, to being both maternal and sexual. Ultimately, Josie is one of the most likable and complex characters in O'Neill's canon, and this is partially due to her multifaceted femininity. Josie has a subtle femininity and kindness about her that makes her easier to empathize with than some of O'Neill's more brash female characters. However, I think that it is this, coupled with her complex personality, that leads to a character that subtly but successfully deconstructs the roles placed on women during the Progressive Era.

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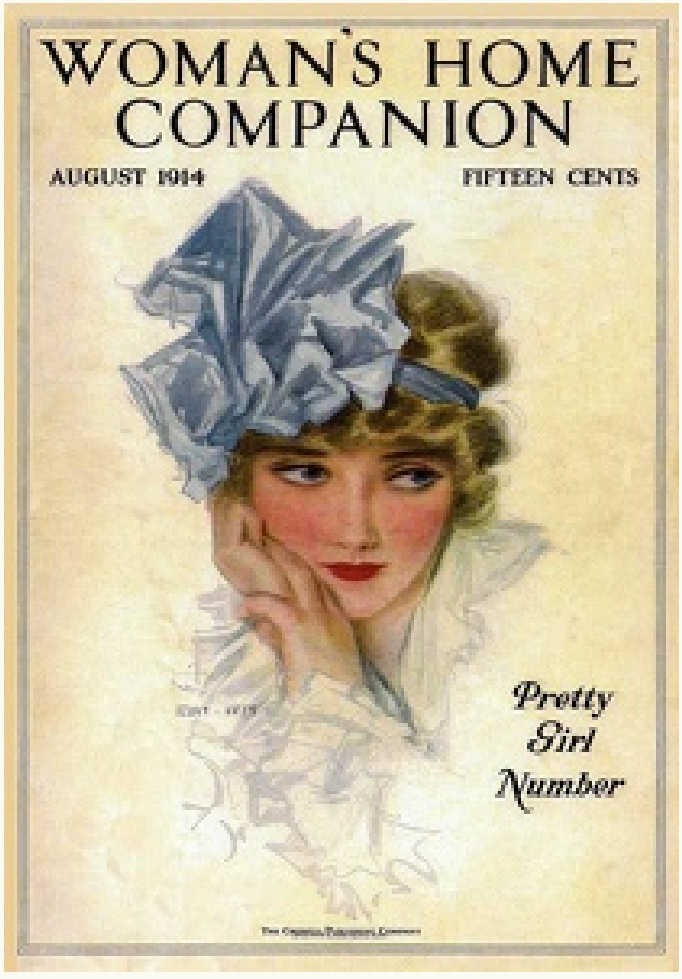

Josie:
Do what you came for, my darling. It isn't drunken laughter in a speakeasy you want to hear at all, but the sound of yourself crying your heart's repentance against her breast. She hears. I feel her in the moonlight, her soul wrapped in it like a silver mantle, and I know she understands and forgives me, too, and her blessings lie on me. (Act IV, 933).

Moon's Oedipus Complex
By Grace Foor

It may seem odd to the inexperienced O'Neill viewer when Jim Tyrone says to his potential lover, Josie Hogan, "That's right. Mother me, Josie, I love it" (O'Neill 891). However, it was not uncommon at all for O'Neill to write about mothers who have supposed sexual desires for their sons, or vice versa. Implications of incest exist in many major O'Neill plays, notably *Desire Under the Elms* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. To put it a bit more eloquently, O'Neill scholar Rupendra Guha Majumdar states in his essay "Laying Ella's Ghost: Sublimation of Incestuous Love in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*" that "from the early phases of his playwriting career Eugene O'Neill's treatment of the subject of adult love is expressed on the dual planes of the maternal and the sensually romantic, but at times the distinction between the two dissolves in a mode of Oedipal transgression" (Majumdar 42).

Freud defined the Oedipus complex as a phenomenon in which a child is "in love with one parent and hating the other", and defines that this phenomenon is "among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses" developed in early childhood (Freud 102). This theory is based on the ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, written by Sophocles, which describes the story of how the hero Oedipus fulfills the tragic prophecy of accidentally killing his biological father and marrying his biological mother. According to Freud, these impulses in adults most often lead to feelings of "repulsion, [...] horror and self-punishment" (103-104).

The symptoms of the Oedipus complex are seen, according to O'Neill scholar Yuji Omori, in Jim Tyrone's "strong rebellion against his father and strong attachment for his mother" (Omori 102). Jim's guilt over his mother's addiction and subsequent passing are seen throughout the play, especially when he states that he is so broken over his mother's death "because she was all I had, all I cared about." (O'Neill 929). Jim's desire to find a substitute for the deceased mother figure in his life leads him first to the prostitute that he refers to as "that blonde pig," then to Josie Hogan (925).

There are several reasons, according to the ideas behind the Oedipus complex, that Jim does not find the blonde prostitute to be an adequate replacement for his mother. According to Majumdar, Jim fails to compensate for the mother figure in his life through the prostitute because he "attempts to consummate the mother-son relationship through another female love-object, though without acknowledging the mother spirit" (42). When Jim talks about his encounter with the prostitute while on the train that is carrying his mother's corpse home for burial, he states that he does so

in order to attain "revenge" for her abandoning him. Rather than trying to mourn his mother's absence, he tries to attain revenge for it. Yet, rather than assuaging his anger, his encounter with the prostitute serves only to increase his anger, sadness, and disgust with himself.

Jim's encounter with Josie, on the other hand, has much more potential to relieve Jim's self hatred surrounding his Oedipus complex. During his encounter with Josie, Jim is able to open up about his feelings of anger about his mother's addiction and subsequent passing, and his "guilt [...] for having done nothing about it." As Majumdar states, he is "acknowledging the mother spirit," and thus is able to find some alleviation about his guilt over her passing (44). Josie sums this up when she says to Jim: "It isn't drunken laughter in a speakeasy you want to hear at all, but the sound of yourself crying your heart's repentance against her breast" (O'Neill 933). While prostitutes and booze could not be enough to heal Jim's loss of a mother, a surrogate of his mother's embrace may be. As Omori states, "the realization of Jim and Josie as a union in love has been expected also as a 'mother-son' union for Jim to escape from the Oedipal mentality" (122). Josie and Jim's dual relationship as love interests and as mother and son serves as a compromise between the desire and the disgust that both exist as part of the Oedipus complex, which, at least for a short time, allows Jim to escape from the complex which plights him.

In short, Jim is a textbook case of what Sigmund Freud defined as the Oedipus complex, in that he longs for and desires his mother while simultaneously hating his father. However, the way in which he deals with his Oedipus complex is counterproductive, as encounters with prostitutes only seem to increase his disgust for his subconscious desires for his mother. His embrace with Josie Hogan, on the other hand, helps to soothe his grief regarding his mother's passing since she is willing to take on a more maternal role by holding him as a mother would. Josie's dual role as Jim's romantic interest and mother figure alleviates his shame and disgust for himself caused by his Oedipus complex.

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About This Project
By Katie N. Johnson

Too often, the brilliant projects that students write find an audience of one: their professor. That was something I wanted to change.

I wanted to provide students from my upper-level seminar on Eugene O'Neill with a real-life audience for their research, and I also wanted them to connect with the inspirational space of Tao House. The Eugene O'Neill Foundation's production of *A Moon for the Misbegotten,* directed by Eric Fraisher Hayes, seemed like a perfect opportunity for them to write something that mattered.

What you see before you is the hard work of students crafting dramaturgical materials. My students wanted you to know the contexts surrounding the historical moment in which O'Neill wrote this heartbreaking play: from 19th and early 20th-century anti-Irish immigration sentiments, to the century-long history of opioid addiction, to the necessity of redemption.

What could be more timely for our cultural moment? In working intensely with O'Neill's plays, these students have come to know him, with all his faults and radical breakthroughs. They have researched, written, revised--and revised again--to bring you this resource guide.

I hope you enjoy their work. Their research and writing sheds light on O'Neill's masterpiece, written at Tao House–and now staged at Tao House–the sacred site where O'Neill charted the future of American theatre.

Dr. Katie Johnson, Professor of English, Miami University