The Master and His Double: Eugene O'Neill and Sam Shepard

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The very notion of linking Eugene O'Neill and Sam Shepard will seem ludicrous to some. Aside from the fact that Shepard may yet become as dominant a figure in the contemporary American theatre as O'Neill was in his day, there might seem no reason at all to suggest a comparison between the haunted father of American drama, with his belief in a fundamentally tragic vision of man derived at least in part from such European masters as Freud, Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Strindberg; and Shepard, the apparently self-engendered cowboy of the American stage, part movie star and part jazz musician, whose early works owe more to the '60s drug culture, rock music and the "transformation" techniques developed at Joseph Chaikin's experimental and highly influential Open Theatre in New York than to any concern with literary tradition, whether American or European. After all, it was Shepard himself who declared: "I don't want to be a playwright, I want to be a rock and roll star. . . . I got into writing plays because I had nothing else to do"[1] and that "Writing is neat because you do it on a very physical level. Just like rock and roll."[2]

But there has been a gradual change in the way Shepard has approached the craft of writing. And this change is particularly evident in his family plays beginning with *Curse of the Starving Class* (1978), *Buried Child* (1979), *True West* (1980), *Fool for Love* (1982), and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985). This shift in Shepard's attitude toward his writing is, paradoxically, revealed in a comment he made in *Rolling Stone* magazine regarding a proposed musical collaboration with Bob Dylan:

> He's [Dylan's] a lot of fun to work with, because he's so off the wall sometimes. We'd come up with a line, and I'd think that we were

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> heading down one trail over here, and then suddenly he'd just throw in this other line, and we'd wind up following it off in some different direction. *Sometimes it's frustrating to do that when you're trying to make a wholeness out of something. . . .*[3] (italics mine)

The new Shepard is indeed "trying to make a wholeness out of something" and this explains the greater control, power, and perhaps even the apparent realism of these plays. One cause of the changes in Shepard's later style may be the fact that he has allowed himself to read and think more self-consciously about drama. As he said,

> . . . when I was living in New York City . . . I avoided reading out of arrogance, really. But when I went to England in the early Seventies, I suddenly found myself having a kind of dry spell. It was difficult for me to write, so I started to read. And I read most of the Greek guys--Aeschylus, Sophocles . . . I studied up on those guys, and I'm glad I did. I was just amazed by the simplicity of the ancient Greek plays, for instance--they were dead simple. Nothing complex or tricky . . . which surprised the hell out of me, because I'd assumed they were beyond me. But now I began to comprehend what they were talking about, and they turned out to be accessible.[4]

What the Greeks offered Shepard, I believe, was in part the same thing they offered Eugene O'Neill in works like *Desire Under the Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*--a confirmation of his own view of a world in which human destiny is shaped to a considerable extent by forces outside ourselves: As Shepard put it in a note to the British version of the science fiction-like fantasy *The Unseen Hand*; "Everybody's caught up in a fractured world they can't even see. What's happening to them is unfathomable but they have a suspicion. Something unseen is working on them. Using them. They have no power all the time they believe they're controlling the situation."[5] For O'Neill, the "unseen hand" is the past which is the present and future too. As Mary Tyrone says in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, we "all try to lie out of that but life won't let us."[6]

For both O'Neill and Shepard since 1978, the "unseen hand" which "squeezes down and forces our minds to contract"[7] is exerted by the family, and it is no accident that the greatest plays of both dramatists have been family plays which have been largely autobiographical in nature: Travis Bogard, in his study of O'Neill, *Contour in Time,* argues that "O'Neill used the stage as his mirror, and the sum of his work comprises an autobiography,"[8] while in her examination of the playwright, Virginia Floyd asserts that "O'Neill had one tale to tell in his work: his own tortured, convoluted life story. His relationship to his mother, father, brother, wives, children and friends is dramatized in endless variations in the canon."[9] Thus, it should not surprise us that Louis Sheaffer

terms the autobiographical masterpiece *Long Day's Journey into Night* the play with the longest gestation period of any of his works; it was *the* play he, unconsciously, was aching to write when he first turned playwright in 1912.[10] What *Long Day's Journey*, a play "of old sorrow, written in tears and blood"[11] meant to its creator may be guessed at from his wife Carlotta's account of the work's genesis:

> This night he told me he was going to write a play about his family. It was the thing that haunted him. He was *bedeviled* into writing it. . . . He had to get it out of his system, he had to forgive whatever it was that caused this tragedy between himself and his mother and father. . . . When he started *Long Day's Journey into Night* it was a most strange experience to watch a man being tortured everyday by his own writing.[12]

Arguably, many of the playwright's early works, from his first full-length play, the crudely autobiographical *Bread and Butter* through *Beyond the Horizon, All God's Chillun Got Wings, Desire Under the Elms, The Great God Brown,* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* can be seen in retrospect as works of apprenticeship for the profound exploration of the relationship between himself and his parents found in *Long Day's Journey into Night.*

At the heart of both playwrights' obsession with the family is the relation between father and son, although it must be quickly added that for O'Neill the relation between mother and son is at least as significant. The plays of O'Neill and Shepard are filled with images of father figures who are both respected and despised. One of O'Neill's earliest works, the one-act "Ile" (1917) offers a precursor to Ephraim Cabot of *Desire Under the Elms* in the Ahab-like whaling man Captain Keeney, whose men are on the verge of mutiny and whose wife (strongly reminiscent of Mary Tyrone) is on the verge of losing her sanity as the play opens. "He just walks up and down like he didn't notice nobody," says one of the sailors on the whaling ship, while another calls him a "hard man--as hard a man as ever sailed the seas."[13] Keeney's own words, however, best characterize his monomania: "I don't give a damn 'bout the money, I've got to git the ile!"[14]

By the time he wrote *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill's vision of his father was tempered with the perspective of time and his own father's death. Despite Mary's recriminations concerning Tyrone's drinking, selfishness and parsimony, his confession in the play's harrowing fourth act reveals him as a victim of his own poverty-filled past, rather than as a selfish tyrant:

> Yes, maybe life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake ruined my career as a fine actor. I've never admitted this to anyone before, lad, but tonight I'm so heartsick I feel at the end of everything, and what's

> the use of fake pride and pretence. The God-damned play I bought for a song and made such a great success in--a great money success --it ruined me with its promise of an easy fortune. I didn't want to do anything else, and by the time I woke up to the fact I'd become a slave to the damned thing and did try other plays, it was too late. They had identified me with that one part, and didn't want me in anything else. They were right too, I'd lost the great talent I once had through years of easy repetition, never learning a new part, never really working hard.[15]

If the image of the father in O'Neill tends toward the stern, ambitious patriarch, in Shepard the father is of many types; he may be a figure of elusive mystery, associated with wandering off to the desert as in *True West*, deserting the family as Shepard's father actually did, an image of fading but still vital masculinity suggested in Shepard's poem "Power" depicting a footrace between father and son:

> The power in his legs
> The quickness in mine
> It almost killed him but he won
> And afterwards I heard him puke behind the shed
> That night I went to bed
> And dreamed of power in a train[16]

The image of a father who is a scorned rival is present in one of Shepard's earliest plays, *The Rock Garden* (1964) where an adolescent's tale of his sexual exploits literally knocks his father off his couch. In *The Holy Ghostly* (1970), the figure of Pop is murdered by his son Ice, yet he refuses to remain dead, coming back to haunt the son as well as instruct him on the art of living. As in Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, father and son form a necessary marriage of contraries. After Ice shoots Pop and leaves, the father addresses his own corpse as well as his son in words that suggest that he represents the principle of creative energy itself, fire:

> It's right here boy, in the fire. Ya' take the fire in yer hand, boy, in both hands. And ya' squeeze it to death! Ya squeeze the life out of it. Ya make it bleed! Ya whip it make it dance for ya'. Ya' make it do its own dance. Ya make it scream like a woman with the pain and joy all wrapped up together! Ya send it beyond fear, beyond death, beyond doubt. There's no end to its possibilities.[17]

If Pop in *The Holy Ghostly* is associated with fire and energy, in *Fool for Love* the father is an imaginary presence on stage, who nonetheless has fathered the explosive passion between the lovers. Despite the fact that the

Old Man "exists only in the minds of Eddie and May" he survives their departure and in fact speaks the play's last words, again visually accompanied by a fire which is the lingering symbol of Eddie and May's incestuous relationship. For Shepard in *Fool for Love,* the father-figure is able to bridge the gap between reality and fantasy in a way that his tormented son cannot. Pointing to an imaginary picture on the wall, he asks his son:

> The Old Man: Ya' see that? Take a good look at that. Ya' see it?
> Eddie: (staring at the wall) Yeah.
> The Old Man: Ya' know who that is?
> Eddie: I'm not sure.
> The Old Man: Barbara Mandrell. That's who that is. Barbara Mandrell. You hard a' her?
> Eddie: Sure.
> The Old Man: Well, would you believe me if I told ya' I was married to her?
> Eddie: (pause) No.
> The Old Man: Well, see, not that's the difference right there. That's realism. I am actually married to Barbara Mandrell in my mind.[18]

Finally, as we shall see in *Buried Child,* the patriarch (this time modelled after Shepard's grandfather who lost the family's farm in Illinois) can be a figure of frail but inexorable despotism.

Although the love-hate relations between father and son are certainly vital to several plays of O'Neill, the theme perhaps finds its most violent and effective dramatic expression in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), a play which is constructed on an Oedipal pattern of murdering the father and lusting after the mother. Set within and outside of the Cabot farmhouse in Puritan New England in 1850, the historical setting scarcely conceals the extremely personal nature of a work which combines a mythical underpinning from Greek tragedy (notably the Phaedra and Hippolytus myths) with Freudian symbolism. The sense of a cursed house is immediately suggested in the two enormous elms which hang down over either side of the house "with a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing jealous absorption."[19] These elms and the closed-off parlor with drawn shades are a tangible reminder of the presence of old Ephraim Cabot's wife and son Eben's dead mother, a woman whom Ephraim has slaved to death but who haunts the house like a ghost. This maternal presence is echoed in the elm trees which "brood oppressively over the house . . . like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on its shingles" (2).

Out of his loyalty to his wronged mother, Eben forges a desire to take possession of "her" farm from his father. Unlike his two ox-like brothers who

crave only escape from their father's tyranny in the promised land of California, Eben seeks revenge against the man to whom he is, however, repeatedly compared by his two brothers.

When old Ephraim unexpectedly brings home his third wife, the passionate thirty-five-year-old Abbie, Eben is filled with both hate and repressed sexual desire, a desire which gradually grows stronger until it culminates in a scene in which Abbie, with a "horribly frank mixture of lust and mother love" (36) makes love to Eben in the closed-off parlor associated with the presence of Eben's dead mother.

Despite his apparent triumph in the sexual competition with his father ("I'm the prize rooster o' this roost") Eben is unsuccessful in his power struggle with the father whose death he prayed for in Scene 1 when Eben, flushed with victory, asserts that he will inherit the farm. Cabot turns on him and informs his son that Abbie's baby will in fact take over and that Abbie has in fact engineered Eben's loss of the farm. As a result, a "murderous struggle" ensues between old Cabot, a man of seventy-five, and his twenty-five-year-old son which the father wins. Defeated, Eben curses Abbie and the child--an act which prompts Abbie to smother her baby in its crib as proof of her abiding love for Eben. Eben informs the sheriff of Abbie's crime, but after doing so is filled with a sense of remorse for the death of the "child o' our sin" and is reminded of his deep love for Abbie.

While old Cabot vindictively exclaims, "Ye'd ought t'be both hung on the same limb an' left thar t' swing in the breeze an' rot," as the two lovers are led away to their deaths he is forced to admit his grudging admiration for his son's courage, saying, "Party good-for yew!" At the end of the play, Cabot is left with the farm, but his triumph is hollow. This old, hard man who has made "corn sprout out o' the stones" has in fact become a stone (as Yeats put it in "Easter 1916") "to trouble the living stream"; "Stones. I picked 'em up an' piled 'em into walls. Ye kin read the years o' my life in them walls, every day a hefted stone, climbin' over the hills up and down, fencin' in the fields that was mine, whar' I'd made thin's grow out o' nothin'--like the will o' God, like the servant o' His hand" (31). Despite his preternatural strength, Ephraim Cabot is "gettin' ripe on the bough," an old, lonesome man who is defeated by the forces of nature. At the same time, Abbie and Eben, although physically doomed for their crime, celebrate a transcendent, spiritualized love prefigured in the brilliant expressionistic scene 2 when Eben and Abbie's hot glances seem to melt through the wall separating their rooms while Cabot describes his desire for the farm. Thus, if O'Neill's play seems to describe the tragic consequences of Ephraim Cabot's chill desire to keep the farm, it also confirms the reverse: the power of nature "makin' thin's grow--into somethin' else--till ye're joined with it--. . . like a tree--like them elms." The paradox of Ephraim Cabot is that in developing the farm ("makin' thin's grow") he has cut himself off from all human affection, ironically finding solace not with human beings, but with the cows in the barn:

> Down whar it's restful--when it's warm down t' the barn. I kin talk t' the cows. They know. They know the farm an' me. They'll give me peace. (32)

In *Desire Under the Elms,* frequent images of the characters staring up at the sky muttering "Purty!" are juxtaposed with the stony reality of the Cabot farm. The play opens with Eben glancing upwards at the sky and blurting out "God! Purty!" before his eyes fall and he looks frowningly on the farm which he, like every other character in the play, longs to possess. Eben's final words as he points to the sky as he and Abbie are led away to the gallows ("Sun's a-rizin. Purty, hain't it?") suggest not so much a circular rhythm as final redemption from the cycle of possessive materialism which plagues every character which comes into contact with the Cabot farm. Thus, the play's much-criticized and apparently anti-climactic final words, spoken by the sheriff as he leads the lovers away, presumably to the gallows, are in fact essential to O'Neill's argument. The sheriff's words, "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wished I owned it!" reinforce the image of material possession in a world in which Cabot is fatally entrapped, while the lovers, on the verge of death, have been released from its coils.

Unlike the more mature *Long Day's Journey into Night* which as O'Neill noted to the critic George Jean Nathan, concludes with all four characters "trapped within each other by the past, each guilty and at the same time innocent, scorning, loving, pitying each other, understanding and yet not understanding at all, forgiving but still doomed never to be able to forget,"[20] the expressionistic vision of *Desire Under the Elms* suggests a way out of the materialistic nightmare through the powers of redeeming love. Whereas Abbie's opening words, "It's purty--purty! I can't b'lieve it's r'ally mine" (18) echo the possessiveness of Cabot and his sons who crave the farm, by the end of the play neither she nor Eben are the slightest bit concerned with anything outside their love. Thus the play finally celebrates the lovers' apotheosis, contrasting it with the grim reality of Cabot's remaining behind with his hollow victory.

In *Buried Child,* to my mind his finest play to date, Shepard approaches the expressiveness and intensity of *Long Day's Journey into Night,* but the play is actually thematically and symbolically far closer to *Desire Under the Elms.* Set on a farm in the midwest, the play is filled with verbal and symbolic echoes of O'Neill's drama, even down to the explicit mention of "shapes of dark elm trees" off in the distance.[21] Unlike Ephraim Cabot, who has managed to subdue nature into something "Purty," Old Dodge's farm in *Buried Child* seems to have sprung from an idyllic Norman Rockwell *Saturday Evening Post* cover: "Where's the milkman and the little dog? What's the little dog's name? Spot. Spot and Jane. Dick and Jane and Spot" (83). Despite appearances, Dodge's farm is every bit as blighted as Cabot's. As Shelly, the young girl who is an

outsider to this world says to her boyfriend Vince in Act 2, "I thought it was going to be turkey dinners and apple pie and all that kind stuff" (91). Later we learn that the once prosperous farm has been turned into a sterile wasteland:

> See, we were a well established family once. Well established. All the boys were grown. The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over. Me and Halie here were pointed toward what looked like the middle part of our life. All we had to do was ride it out. Then Halie got pregnant again. Out'a the middle a' nowhere, she got pregnant. We weren't planning on havin' any more boys. We had enough boys already. In fact, we hadn't been sleepin' in the bed for about six years. . . . We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness. (123-124)

In *Desire Under the Elms,* the farm is cursed because of Cabot's cruelty to his first wife, and the maternal presence can only be expiated by Eben and Abbie's incestuous liaison; in *Buried Child* it is the incestuous relation between Dodge's wife Halie and her son that begins the dissolution of the family bonds, but it is Dodge's callous murder of the child that actually destroys the family:

> Dodge: It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to be a part of us. It wanted to pretend that I was its father. She wanted me to believe in it. . . .
> Shelly: So you killed him?
> Dodge: I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of the litter. Just drowned it. (124)

In both plays, the farm is run by a stubborn old patriarch who dominates his sons, crushing the very life out of them. We have already observed the Oedipal conflict in *Desire Under the Elms.* Dodge in *Buried Child,* despite his frail condition, is a tyrannical old man who, like Cabot, seeks absolute control over his three sons. Of his three natural sons, one (Ansel) is dead, a second (Bradley) is an amputee, while the third (Tilden), Dodge's oldest son in his late forties, is described in the stage directions as "profoundly burned out and displaced," having been reduced to a state of complete emotional dependence on his manipulative father:

> Dodge: You're supposed to watch out for me. Get me things when I need them.
> Tilden: What do you need?

Dodge: I don't need anything! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute! (Dodge starts to cough.)
Tilden: I'll be right outside. You can just yell.
Dodge: No! It's too far! You can't go out there! It's too far! You might not ever hear me!
Tilden: Why don't you just take a pill? You want a pill?
Dodge: (Coughs more violently, throws himself back against sofa, clutches his throat . . .) Water! Get me some water! (79)

Instead of possessing Cabot's strength or James Tyrone's vitality, the father-figure in *Buried Child* is cruel and mean-spirited in his domination of his sons; Bradley's missing limb and his repeated attempts to violently clip Dodge's hair off while he sleeps are, in the world of Shepard's plays, clear symbols of castration and emasculation aimed at destroying a hated father-figure. This is also suggested by the various efforts made at burying Dodge's body with corn, coats or roses, forming the visual equivalent of Eben's "Honor thy father! I pray he's died" at the beginning of *Desire Under the Elms.*

In addition to the farm setting and the violent, patricidal struggle between fathers and sons, both *Desire* and *Buried Child* are concerned with the revenge of nature against the forces of human repression, and both use acts of incest as the means by which that conflict is dramatized. In *Desire,* of course, the quasi-incestuous relation is between Eben and Abbie, and in the terms of the play, this seems paradoxically more "natural" than the unnatural marriage of Abbie and old Cabot. Indeed, the child is killed to prove the depth of Abbie's love. In *Buried Child,* the murder is committed by Dodge who proudly says, "my flesh and blood's buried in the back yard" claiming "There's not a living soul behind me. Not a one. Who's holding me in their memory? Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?" (112). The child is variously described as a "secret sin" and a "buried treasure" which, like the unaccountable crops of corn and carrots planted decades ago by Dodge but which are brought up by the rain and into the house by Tilden, is similarly dredged up from the earth at the end of the play when Dodge has died.

It is tempting to see these harvests in the context of fertility and new life after years of suffocating rule by Dodge who, as his name suggests, has refused to come to terms with the family's past. Indeed, Halie's words, the last words spoken at the end of the play, seem to point to such a reading as she casts her eyes over the miraculous harvest:

Good hard rain. Takes everything straight down deep to the roots. The rest takes care of itself. You can't interfere with it. It's all hidden. It's all unseen. You just gotta wait till it pops up out of the ground. Tiny little shoot. Tiny white little shoot. All hairy and fragile. Strong though. Strong enough to break the earth even. It's

> a miracle, Dodge. I've never seen a crop like this in my whole life. Maybe it's the sun. Maybe that's it. Maybe it's the sun. (132)

Although it may be possible to understand this speech in terms of symbolic rebirth and renewal, the implications of the speech are in fact gruesomely ironic.[22] Not only do Shepard's final words "Maybe it's the sun" refer to the bumper crop outside, they punningly refer to the grisly remains of that other "son" who is being carried up the stairs to Halie as the lights fade to black. In addition, the reference to the "son" may also suggest the presence of Vince, Dodge's grandson who has come back to the farm for a visit, but has not been recognized by Dodge: "You're no son of mine. I've had sons in my time and you're not one of 'em." At first, Vince wonders: "Boy! This is amazing. This is truly amazing. . . . Am I in a time warp or something? Have I committed an unpardonable offense?" but he takes Dodge's two dollars to fetch the old man some whiskey and comes back transformed, having "followed my family clear into Iowa" in one of Shepard's characteristic monologues:

> I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I would see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. . . . And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his Grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clear on back to faces I'd never seen before but still recognized. (130)

Having arrived at the farm at the opening of Act 2 as a curious innocent, interested in "my heritage," when Vince returns to the farm he is changed utterly and takes possession of the farm as its true heir. Just as Eben Cabot in *Desire Under the Elms* cries, "It's maw's farm agen! It's my farm! Them's my cows! I'll milk my durn fingers off fur cows o' mind" (14), so Vince announces: "This is my house now, ya' know? All mine. Everything. Except for the power tools and stuff. I'm gonna get all new equipment anyway. New plows, new tractors, everything. All brand new" (131).

Having crashed against the house precisely on Halie's line "What's happened to the men in this family! Where are the men!" (124), Vince actually enters it by cutting a hole through the screen porch and crawling through it in a symbolic act of rebirth, suggesting that Vince has in fact been reborn as another Dodge. Sniffing the scent of roses in triumph, he covers the (dead) Dodge with a blanket and lays down on the sofa staring at the ceiling, his body's position an exact living replica of his grandfather's corpse.

While Vince has indeed discovered his heritage and been returned to the bosom of the family, the final stage image suggests that this "rebirth" is not

renewal but stasis, death-in-life, the cursed patriarch Dodge reborn. Thus, Halie's last words, "Maybe it's the sun," are profoundly ambiguous and point to the legacy of death in past (the buried child) and future (Vince) despite the surface implications of fertility and renewal.

Remarkably, Eben's last words in *Desire Under the Elms* point to an analogous paradox of life and death. As he is being led away together with Abbie, he turns to the sky and exclaims, "Sun's a-rizin'. Purty hain't it?" (58). The obvious similarity to the last words of *Buried Child* can hardly be pure coincidence and point to extraordinary parallels--as well as differences--between the plays. While Halie's references to the new fertility without is ironically undercut by the death (the child, Dodge, Vince) within, Eben's reference to the sunrise reflects on the paradox that, in the face of death, he, the *"son,"* has indeed risen and managed to achieve redemption and spiritual grace.[23]

Despite the important differences in the plays' resolutions--O'Neill's early tragedy concludes with an image of life in the face of death, Shepard's with an image of death-in-life, the plays are astonishingly similar in setting, theme, and symbolism. Finally, both works see the individual as yoked to a family that is cursed, invariably reminding us of Mary Tyrone's words to her husband James when the latter asks her to "forget the past"; "Why? How can I? The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us."

The remarkable parallels which exist between the family plays of O'Neill and Shepard are so strong as to suggest the possibility of direct influence.[25] Although such influence has not been substantiated by Shepard, in an interview he has noted the following which provides us with an explicit suggestion of the affinities between the master and his double:

> Now, the ear of the typical psychological play doesn't have any reverberation anymore. Plays have to go beyond "working out problems"--that's the thing I'm talking about. What makes O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* such a great work, for instance, is that O'Neill moves past his own personal family situation into a much wider dimension. I read that play in high school, and I've always thought that was truly the great American play. It's so overwhelmingly honest--O'Neill just doesn't pull any punches. You can't confront that play without being moved.

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Notes

1. Richard Gilman, Introduction to *Sam Shepard: Seven Plays* (New York: Bantam, 1981) xi.

2. Don Shewey, *Sam Shepard* (New York: Dell, 1985) 81.

3. Jonathan Cott, "The Rolling Stone Interview: Sam Shepard," *Rolling Stone,* 18 December 1986, 200.

4. Cott 170.

5. Sam Shepard, *Action* and *The Unseen Hand* (London: Faber, 1975) 44.

6. Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1974) 87.

7. Shepard, *The Unseen Hand* (London: Faber, 1975) 52.

8. Quoted in Normand Berlin, *Eugene O'Neill* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982) 26.

9. Virginia Floyd, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill: A New Assessment* (New York: Ungar, 1985) xvii.

10. Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (London: Paul Elek, 1973) 506.

11. O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* 7.

12. Sheaffer 505.

13. O'Neill, *Seven Plays of the Sea* (New York: Vintage, 1972) 113.

14. 120.

15. O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* 149-150.

16. Shepard, "Power" in *Hawk Moon* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1981) 70.

17. Shepard, "The Holy Ghostly" in *The Unseen Hand and Other Plays* (New York: Bantam, 1986) 196.

18. Shepard, *Fool for Love* in *Fool for Love and Other Plays* (New York: Bantam, 1984) 22.

19. O'Neill, *Desire Under the Elms* in *Three Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Vintage, 1958) 2. Subsequent references to this edition will be found in parentheses following the quotation.

20. Sheaffer 509.

21. Shepard, *Seven Plays* 63. Subsequent references to this edition will be found in parentheses following the quotation.

22. See Luther S. Luedtke, "From Fission to Fusion: Sam Shepard's Nuclear Families" in Gilbert Debusscher and Henry I. Schvey, *American Drama: New Essays* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1989) 153. Luedtke also notes Shepard's affinities with both T. S. Eliot and O'Neill in his treatment of a family curse, arguing that "Shepard evokes more fertility than either . . . even if the curse is not wholly lifted."

23. In their ironic counterpoint between life and death, between the rising sun and a rising son, both O'Neill and Shepard also echo the final words of Oswald in Ibsen's *Ghosts* in which a father's sins have been visited upon his child.

24. O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* 87.

25. An explicit homage to O'Neill and *Long Day's Journey into Night* is also present in Shepard's poem "Electric Fog" in *Hawk Moon* 83.

Supplement:
Physics and the New Historiography