

STUDY DEALS WITH THE HAUNTING PAST; ALIENATION AND THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

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Abstract:

This study delves into the intricate interplay of haunting past experiences, the profound sense of alienation, and the relentless pursuit of identity in individuals. Through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing psychology, literature, and sociology, the research endeavors to unravel the complexities surrounding the impact of unresolved historical events on an individual's psyche. The haunting past, often laden with collective traumas, manifests as an elusive specter that shapes individual perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. This study investigates how these haunting echoes traverse through generations, influencing one's sense of self and place in society. By analyzing narratives, both personal and collective, the research aims to shed light on the ways in which individuals grapple with the ghosts of their past and the lasting implications on their identity formation. Alienation emerges as a significant theme, intertwining with the haunting past, as individuals navigate societal structures and interpersonal relationships. The study explores the various dimensions of alienation, examining its psychological, social, and cultural manifestations. Through an exploration of literature, interviews, and case studies, the research seeks to identify common threads and unique expressions of alienation in the context of grappling with a haunting past. Central to this exploration is the quest for identity, a fundamental human endeavor exacerbated by the haunting past and the resultant alienation. The study investigates the adaptive mechanisms individuals employ in their search for identity, including the role of cultural heritage, personal narratives, and communal belonging. Additionally, it analyzes the impact of external influences, such as societal expectations and cultural norms, on the construction of individual identity in the face of a haunting past.

Keywords: Deals, Haunting Past, Alienation

Introduction

During the 19th century, people had a fantasy of a modern society, a society in which everyone would be equal; equality between men and women, black and white people, wealthy and poor people, a society that did not discriminate, a society that was completely founded on science; "logic and reason," a type of "utopia." In the 20th century, our society underwent a great deal of change, including the expansion of human civilization in the areas of economics, intellectualism, and military. In order to accommodate the expansion of industry, the people living in rural areas were pushed to relocate to urban areas, which served as the epicentre of all activity. It is true that William Wordsworth, a well-known Romantic poet who lived in the early 19th century, made an effort to emphasise the rural way of life in his writing, but this was not sufficient. When Charles Darwin published his landmark book, Origin of Species, in which he described how man developed, he proposed a theory of man's evolution. This thesis destroyed the age-old belief in the Bible that all men are progeny of Adam and Eve, as well as the authority of the Roman Church. The new hypothesis that Darwin proposed on the

development of man caused a hierarchical division throughout society. One segment of the population held the belief that the new theory was correct, while another sector of the society adhered to the biblical view of the development of men. The Origin of Species was a significant movement in the direction of contemporary society. Since the beginning of time, man has been eager to discover who he is and why he is here on earth. It was at this point that he started his search for his identity and his position in this cosmos.

As far as the history of American theatre is concerned, Eugene O'Neill has a place that is firmly established. He is a writer who is honest and conscientious, and he is gaining reputation and fame as a serious dramatist as a result of his outstanding social conscience. As a result of his presentation of the fundamental ideas of life via the lens of the American culture, he has prepared the road for an understanding of the problem. As O'Neill's protagonists strive for a higher ideal, whether it be intellectual or moral liberation, spiritual fulfilment, or a combination of the two, they find themselves more and more entangled in relationships that are bound to fail, addiction, and unsanitary conditions. O'Neill was a more refined thinker than is commonly known, and his plays, when viewed in isolation, may appear to be more solipsistic than they actually really are. Not only did he write out of his personal anguish and devastation, but he also rooted his perception of the current failings encountered by the United States of America inside the framework of classical tragedy.

O'NEILL'S TRAGIC VISION

O'Neill is a contemporary tragic artist who possesses a nuanced understanding of dramatic ideals and a profound understanding of the human emotional experience. It is his imagination that possesses a blazing flame that elevates and elevates everything it touches, even the vile and the mean. The assertion made by Masood Ali Khan is that "O'Neill's sense of the dramatic in life and its realisation in the theatre is ever present," and that "certainly nothing can cancel out his innate ability to tell a story." (page number 124). The characters in his plays are shown in connection to the social situation in which they find themselves, and he criticises the entire structure of current American society in one piece after another. This is the reason why his plays are more than just a momentary source of interest. It is not just man as an individual that O'Neill is concerned about; rather, it is man in a social order that is being tormented, hungry, disillusioned, frustrated, and pushed to disaster by the forces of a system that does not care about the general good of society. In O'Neill's plays, man walks across the stage not as a free and detached person, not simply as an individual in connection to a few people who are involved with him in the immediate drama that creates the play, but rather he treats man against a rich backdrop of social forces. This is because O'Neill's plays are characterised by a rich background of social forces. It is the societal meaning that gives his plays a life in the thoughts of the audience after they have left the theatre and scattered the calm of individual reflection. His plays have a life because of they have social implications.

Not only are the majority of O'Neill's plays tragedies, but they are tragedies that get to the very heart of the illness that is prevalent in our society today. The purpose of their efforts is to provide an explanation for human misery and to justify it. Nathan O'Neill said in a letter to George Jean that: "The playwright must dig at the roots of today's sickness as he feels it is the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in." This was in reference to the fact that O'Neill believes that the death of the old God.

DRAMATIZING SUBCONSCIOUS EMOTIONS

A persistent and fervent effort has been made by O'Neill to dramatise the feelings that are buried deep inside the subconscious. His topic is life, and it is sometimes violent, nasty, dirty, spiteful, perplexing, and infuriating;

but, there is beauty as well as love and peace, even if they are only present in sporadic moments. The three tortuous streams that meet in the pool of human misery and tragedy are what God (or nature) has produced for man, what man has made for man, and what man has made for himself. These three streams together make up the pool of human suffering and tragedy. This is a selection of quotes from O'Neill that Raymond Williams includes in his book *Modern Tragedy*:

It is possible that the only thing that is meaningful about man is the tragedy that he presents. I want to leave the theatre with an exultant sensation because I want them to have witnessed someone on stage confronting life, struggling against the everlasting odds, not prevailing, but perhaps inevitably being conquered. This is what I am trying to achieve. To put it simply, the fight is what gives the individual life its significance.

Heart Rending

Beyond the Horizon, The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Desire Under the Elms, Mourning Becomes Electra, and The Great God are some of the works that have been written by O'Neill. The majority of the plays in the Brown series are about males, and they are quite heartbreaking. Strong uniqueness and the influence of forces in the world outside of himself are revealed in his works. These influences sometimes assist shape and sometimes distort the manifestation of his own skills, but they are always present. Even the motion in his plays is negative, working in man's heart to accomplish his annihilation. The life force in his plays is not a part of life; it comes from the negative. The plays demonstrate that the contemporary fate is both inside man and outside him; it paralyses his mind, his conscience, his will, and his emotions, which are his biggest foes.

Beyond the Horizon and Other Plays

Beyond the Horizon is a drama written by him that depicts the mental and physical deterioration of a guy who is unable to exist without creating illusions for himself. Each of the characters in this play is consumed by an obsession with his yearning for something that he will never be able to have since it is somewhere beyond the horizon. The exceptional use of expressionistic method that O'Neill employs is outstanding. Here are two excellent examples: "The Hairy Ape" and "The Emperor Jones." In each of these plays, the principal character is the focal point of attention, while the other characters are not given any character development.

In *The Hairy Ape*, the depiction of the sad and alienated plight of males in the contemporary complicated social order is brought to life via the medium of play. Following one individual's (Yank) bewildered search for identification in order to regain his feeling of belongingness, the drama serves as a symbolic representation of the struggle that modern men face within the context of industrial society. Not only is Yank a symbol of the lower working class, but he is also a figure of the modern man in general. His estrangement from society is a reflection of one of the most significant issues that all men of today are confronted with.

When we see the play "The Emperor Jones," we get a glimpse of the psychological terrors and obsessions that Brutus Jones experiences. There is a crisp and germane examination of the intermarriage between whites and blacks in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. The psychology of the book is adequate, and it is more didactic than O'Neill has ever sought to be in the past. In the name of the Highest God It is a dramatic paean to man's yearning to connect himself with nature, and Brown, O'Neill has attempted to depict man's ambitions in a language that is both lively and poetic. The mood is mystically joyful throughout the entire piece. In this instance, the path of man is depicted twisting through a valley of tragedy, but it prevails.

Tragic Heroes – Neither Kings nor Princes

Neither monarchs nor princes nor powerful military generals are the tragic heroes that O'Neill creates for his stories. It was Aristotle who established that the tragic hero must be a remarkable person in order for the tragic emotions of sorrow and dread to be evoked by the hero's fall from his former glory. All of O'Neill's tragic characters, on the other hand, come from the lowest levels of society. They are all regular people, men and women, who are enduring hardship and being oppressed. The psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, who emphasized the significance of the subconscious in human motivation, have been a significant source of inspiration for O'Neill all throughout his career. He exclusively wrote for the theatre, unencumbered by the traditions of the stage, and he composed his works with the intention of exploring the uncharted realms of the human mind rather than merely entertaining his audience.

Freudian Concept and Mourning Becomes Electra

The plot of Mourning Becomes Electra is based on the Electra Complex, which is a Freudian concept. In O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra, which is a play that is written in three parts and requires a performance that lasts for more than five hours, the familial tragedy that occurs in Aeschylus' Oresteia takes place during the American Civil War. According to O'Neill, the supernatural Furies that stalk Orestes in the original play are replaced with subconscious psychological forces, namely the urges for incestuous relationships that are kept secret. Lavinia, who lives in parallel with Electra, has a love for her father that goes beyond the passion of a kid. As a result of his death, which occurred in the presence of her mother Christine, she begins to assume that he was murdered. Because Christine was having an affair with a distant relative who was similar to her son, she decided to kill her husband by poisoning him. When Orin (Orestes) returns from the war, Lavinia tells him about recent occurrences. Despite the fact that there are indications of an unnatural love for his mother, the two of them kill Christine's boyfriend, and in a fit of grief, she takes her own life. Orin's goal is not to get revenge on his father, whom he does not like, but rather to feel jealously over his mother's infidelity with another man. This is a significant departure from the original situation. The later days of the children's lives are plagued by feelings of remorse and the repressed desire they have for one another. At the very end, the characters are forced to confront the truth about their desires, and Orin ultimately takes his own life out of desperation. O'Neill's attempt to replace Freudian ideas with the impact of fate and the gods looks forced and unnatural to many critics in today's society; nonetheless, few would criticise his grandiose objective of following the example set by the Greeks.

New Gods – Heredity and Environment

O'Neill is of the opinion that genetics and environment are the new gods since they are the ones who determine the fate of humanity. There is a possibility that man cannot alter his history or his genetic makeup; nevertheless, he can surely alter his social environment or at the very least accommodate himself to it, and in this manner, he may save a great deal of anguish and suffering. In his capacity as a social critic, he draws attention to the shortcomings of the existing social system in the hopes of locating a means by which it might be improved. In terms of human existence, O'Neill's perspective is truly astounding. With the exception of the meaning that man imposes on it, human existence does not possess any inherent purpose or order, nor does it have the same harmony as that of nature. It is necessary for him to establish his own principles and regulations, and to impose upon the cosmos any significance and any moral order that he chooses to embrace as a *raison d'être* or as a foundation for an ethical code.

Modern American Drama

When compared to the history of British literature, the history of American literature is not as old. In spite of the fact that it is just two hundred years old, American literature has been able to successfully establish itself as a separate entity in the world of literature. However, it was not as simple as it may appear. She has been subjected to scorn and humiliation by British people who simply thought the authors of the 19th century America to be copy cats or copy masters. This time of American literature is considered to be the beginning of such treatment. The period of American literature that occurred after the year 1850 is believed to be the transition away from the influence of English writers. At the turn of the 20th century, American literature, whether it be poetry, theatre, or fiction, eclipsed the literary works of the English language. Three writers, namely Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), and Arthur Miller (1915-2005), were the most influential in the contemporary American drama that took place between the years 1900 and 1950. Despite the fact that these three great playwrights wrote on a variety of topics pertaining to American lives and culture, the most significant thing to note is that they did not leave the United States to travel to Europe, which is considered to be the most appealing and intriguing destination for modern American authors. These three authors approached the three distinct problems that are prevalent in contemporary American society and adapted their writing to reflect the shifting times.

The plays that Tennessee Williams wrote centred on the declining position of white land-owning families in the early 20th century. Williams was a very famous writer at the time, and he is often regarded as the finest playwright in the history of American theatre. We can only imagine how challenging it must be for the people who were once the heirs of landlords to adjust to their new status as middle-class individuals and their mental condition. His plays, *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *The Street Car Named Desire* (1947), and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), all deal with the effects of industrialization and the abolition of slavery, which had an impact on the once-powerful "Masters." *The Glass Menagerie* was written in 1944, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was written in 1955.

The American Dream was criticised via the works of Arthur Miller, another renowned playwright of the 20th century in the United States of America. Miller's plays concentrated on the middle-class man and criticised the American Dream. Not only was he well-known before to the 1950s, but he rose to fame after that year. Throughout his plays, he depicted the problems and lives of working-class people and wrote about their tragic lives. The majority of his plays are tragedies, most of which are based on Greek tragedy. These tragedies are what we refer to as Modern Tragedy. Some of his most famous and popular plays include *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), and *A View from the Bridge* (1955).

Eugene O'Neill, the first great dramatist of the 20th century in the United States, wrote about the shifting society and times, as well as the position of a modern man in contemporary society. In addition to this, he is well-known for his plays that were the first in the American Drama genre and were given poetic titles. In addition to that, he is well-known for his expressionistic plays. *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), *The Iceman Cometh* (1939), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), *Anna Christie* (1921), *Emperor Jones* (1920), and *The Hairy Ape* (1922) are only few of the plays that he has written that are centred around the concepts of human life and identity.

POST I WORLD WAR AND POST II WAR AMERICAN DRAMA

It is rather intriguing to note that the two most influential American dramatists, Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller, came into being in the aftermath of the world wars. During times of war, a sensitive artist may experience

situations that cause their mind to become dislocated. Eugene O'Neill's dramatic endeavours from the 1920s and Arthur Miller's from the 1940s are essentially responses to a particular sensation of dislocation or alienation. Both of these works were written during the same time period. World wars offer a setting for the drama of alienation, despite the fact that the alienation that is conveyed by the playwrights arises in the socio-familial order in the developing industrialism of the country and is not immediately traceable to the wars themselves. They would have been lacking in a specific historical context if it weren't for the global wars, but the atmosphere gives the dramatic endeavours of O' Neill and Miller a particular historical perspective.

The fundamental dramatic impetus in O' Neill and Miller originates from the fact that the natural and social environment is always shifting, which results in estrangement on the level of the human self and society. Miller begins his dramatic career by investigating the rising absence of link between the private and public worlds, whereas O' Neill begins his career by investigating the dilemma of human unrelatedness in a world that is changing at a rapid pace. In all cases, the most significant dramatic obsession is the reduction of the amount of area occupied by humans inside the social canvas. The only difference between their worlds of shrinking human space is that early O' Neill heroes experience the estrangement with the world as something that happens suddenly with a catastrophic effect, whereas Miller's heroes, throughout the entire story, have to learn to deal with the ever-failing interactional dynamics between the individual and society. For both of these playwrights, the social matrix of the 1920s and that of the 1940s present dissimilarities in terms of the dramatic ethos and the jobs that they must do. Over the course of several decades, both O' Neill and Miller were able to significantly expand their dramatic vision. Miller was active from the 1940s through the 1960s, whereas O' Neill was active from the 1920s through the 1950s. A comparison of their early and late plays, as well as those that cross in the forties, reveals instances of dramatic convergence as well as divergence in their respective works.

DRAMA OF SOCIAL REALITY

In O'Neill's early sea plays and big plays such as *The Hairy Ape* (1922) and *The Emperor Jones* (1922) as well as Miller's first substantial play, *AN My Sons* (1947), the dramatic universe is subjected to the strain of the social realities of the times. This is an essential Chatterati concept. "O' Neill delivers strong pictures of the dismal position of the underdog in the new industrial order, including the hapless industrial worker, the sailor, and the farmer. In addition, there is the predicament of the African-American and the state of complete and utter racial inequity. Miller demonstrates the self-degrading immorality that existed in the corporate world during his time period. In this time period, faulty engines were provided to combat planes for the sole purpose of making a profit, which resulted in the deaths of numerous pilots who were participating in the war.

In the beginning of his work as a dramatist, O'Neill had the idea that theatre was life itself, which he also referred to as "the substance and interpretation of life." He would portray "life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character." It is necessary to approach dramatic art from the standpoint of life and dramatic character from the point of view of the people in their natural state. Miller had a similar desire for dramatic art to develop from the lives of the people. He considered "the present, always the present, to which the dramatic form must apply.... and forms do die when they lose their capacity to open up the present" to be critical. Both O' Neill and Miller are driven to pursue dramatic jobs by their concern for the people in their immediate environment, including their lives, the challenges they face, and the worries they have. Over the course of their respective dramatic careers, each of these playwrights have developed a deeper grasp of current human lives, both mentally and situationally, as they have progressed through their careers. O' Neill continues to use his theatrical imagination,

which is at the centre of a situation that is universalizing. Miller is similarly interested in universalizing situations; but, according to Miller, the universal is highly socio-economic or socio-familial in nature.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA

The societal concerns of O' Neill and Miller take on a psychological component as they progress into the 1930s and 1950s, respectively. Miller finds himself confronted with the challenge of moral choice for man as the essential condition of freedom, while Neill is forced to come to terms with the enormous complexity that exists inside human nature. Instead of locating the human issue in the adversarial position that man has in society, both come to the realisation that the human predicament lies inside the conflictual complexity of human desires. A shift in emphasis has occurred in the United States of America since the 1930s as a result of the widespread adoption of the insights of contemporary psychoanalysis, which are based on Sigmund Freud's theories regarding human nature. The primary drive in Miller's writing of *The Crucible* (1953) was not "social but the interior psychological question" at the root of all human motivation. O' Neill sought to produce a modern psychological play based on Greek legend in *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1932) and Miller's writing of *The Crucible* (1953) had this basic urge. Puritan moral hypocrisy and the inability to resolve mental difficulties are the two main points of contention in both of the plays that take place in a new England setting. These two points of contention have come to be seen as defining characteristics of American views towards private and public affairs. Within the context of the play, O' Neill's objective is to demonstrate that human nature, according to the standards of contemporary psychology, is just as deterministic as the Greek concept of fate. O' Neill attempts to grasp the underlying realism of human nature by analysing the apparent lack of realism in the surface activity, which he refers to as a framework of "unreal realism." The fundamental Oedipus and Electra, as Sigmund Freud referred to them, is the only governing force behind the continuous cycle of human interactions that are shown in his play. There are complexities inherent in human nature. The characters in the play are a theatrical representation of Freudian beliefs and ideals. In contrast to Orin, who is his mother's son, Lovelina is her father's daughter. Both their libidinal and puritanical frenzy, which contributes to the killings of Erza Mannon and Adam Brant, as well as her own suicide, is incited by their mother, Christiane, who is a puritanical yet sensual individual. The death of the parents causes Orin and Lovelina to develop a potentially harmful incestuous relationship, which ultimately results in Orin's death by suicide and Lovelina's mental anguish. Even though the characters have always been aware of what is wrong with them, they feel as though they are caught in a psychological state that is oppressive.

Miller, who takes a different approach to societal issues, investigates the same false reality associated with the characters. The witchcraft trial that took place in Salem in the seventeenth century and is shown in the play is a revealing remark on the obsessive McCarthyism that was prevalent in the 1950s and was responsible for the conviction of numerous communist intellectuals in the United States. With a witchcraft that does not exist in the play, as was the case with the witchcraft event that occurred in Salem in the 17th century, the trial of the accused for practicing witchcraft dramatises the specific motivation of every character, either in defence of the accused or in testifying against the accused. As a result of the fact that the protagonist, John Proctor, values his job as a minister, adores his life, and, above all else, is concerned about his social respectability, his incapacity to safeguard the law and the innocent victims of it has a justifiable basis in terms of his emotional and social self. A favourite of T.E. Porter

According to the regulations, this emotional component in the case is not a great cry from the norm. It defies logic and reasoning altogether, but it is quite real. As soon as the dread of witchcraft has spread across the town,

it becomes the medium through which fear, avarice, sexual repressions, and irresponsibility may be transformed into "evidence." The law has the potential to assist in the creation of a scapegoat on which the community's hidden transgressions might be inflicted.

Both the much-loved American law in *The Crucible* and the much-avowed Puritanism in *Mourning Becomes Electra* invert the principles of individuality, which are most highly regarded in the United States.

CONCLUSION

The leaves represent the children, while the elderly tree represents the parents. In the same way as the old tree does not forget to pass on its impulses to the young leaves, parents do not forget to pass on their own naturally occurring attributes to their children. These parents have shaped their boys in accordance with the atmosphere that they have established for them. In a similar vein, the inside scene represents our genetic makeup, while the exterior landscape represents our surroundings. At the conclusion of the play, the characters come to terms with the fact that they have failed in life as a result of the degrading effect of these two distinct forces. Despite the fact that they are mothers, O'Neill's women are still defrauded. After the birth of her kid, Abbie is filled with a great deal of joy. The unfortunate misunderstanding that occurs between Eben and her, however, brings about the destruction of her happiness very quickly. Nina, the protagonist of *Strange Interlude*, is similarly first pleased by her pregnancy; nevertheless, she is taken aback when she learns the truth about her husband's family history of mental illness. Later on, she is compelled to terminate her pregnancy. In a similar manner, Mary's life in *Long Day's Journey into Night* is completely shattered with the passing of her second son. Even the birth of her third son does not bring her a great deal of happiness because it leads to her being addicted to morphine after the delivery. In most cases, it is fairly normal for a woman to give birth to a kid. Psychologists and feminists are of the opinion that a woman's needs are addressed by her pursuit of a husband and by her ability to raise children. Even this most fundamental demand appears to be an illusion for the ladies in O'Neill's portrayal.

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