

INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE WORKS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

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Abstract. *This article delves into Eugene O'Neill's use of intertextuality in his plays, examining how he weaves together themes from mythology, literature, religion, and psychoanalysis. It explores key works by O'Neill, including Long Day's Journey into Night (1956), The Iceman Cometh (1930), and The Mourning Becomes Electra (1921), analyzing the central themes of suffering, fate, family secrets, and psychological trauma. Through intertextual references to classical mythology, Shakespearean tragedies, and Freudian psychology, O'Neill creates deeply layered works that engage with universal human experiences. The article highlights how O'Neill's exploration of these themes contributes to his dramatic legacy and provides insights into the psychological depth of his characters.*

Key words: *Intertextuality, Mythology, Literature, Psychoanalysis, Long Day's Journey into Night, The Iceman Comet, The Mourning Becomes Electra, Family trauma, Suffering, Fate.*

ИНТЕРТЕКСТУАЛЬНОСТЬ В ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯХ ЮДЖИНА О'НИЛА

Аннотация. *В этой статье подробно рассматривается использование Юджином О'Нилом интертекстуальности в его пьесах, рассматривается, как он сплетает воедино темы из мифологии, литературы, религии и психоанализа. В ней рассматриваются ключевые работы О'Нила, включая «Долгий день уходит в ночь» (1956), «Продавец льда грядет» (1930) и «Траур становится Электрой» (1921), анализируются центральные темы страдания, судьбы, семейных тайн и психологической травмы. С помощью интертекстуальных ссылок на классическую мифологию, трагедии Шекспира и фрейдистскую психологию О'Нил создает глубоко многослойные произведения, которые затрагивают общечеловеческий опыт. В статье подчеркивается, как исследование О'Нилом этих тем вносит вклад в его драматическое наследие и позволяет глубже понять психологическую глубину его персонажей.*

Ключевые слова: *Интертекстуальность, Мифология, Литература, Психоанализ, Долгий день уходит в ночь, Комета-ледяной человек, Траур становится Электрой, Семейная травма, Страдание, Судьба.*

Intertextuality in the Works of Eugene O'Neill. Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953) was a prominent playwright whose works delve deeply into issues of human existence, internal conflict, and despair. One of the key aspects of his work is the use of intertextuality—his interactions with various literary, mythological, and philosophical traditions. O'Neill draws upon motifs from world literature, mythology, religion, and psychoanalysis, creating multilayered plays rich with symbolic references.

This article analyzes several of O'Neill's works from the perspective of intertextuality, examining their content, main themes, and key references. It also provides quotes from the plays to support the conclusions about the role of intertextuality in his work.

Analysis of Selected Works by O'Neill. To explore Eugene O'Neill's works more deeply and understand their importance in the context of his dramatic legacy, we will focus on three major plays: *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), *The Iceman Cometh* (1930), and *The Mourning Becomes Electra* (1921). These works provide valuable insight into O'Neill's creative genius, his approaches to dramaturgy, and his exploration of psychoanalysis.

1. *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956). *Long Day's Journey into Night* is one of O'Neill's most famous and significant plays, written during the later period of his career. It is a family tragedy centered around the complex relationships within the Tyrone family. The main characters are an aging alcoholic, his wife, and their two sons, each of whom struggles with the consequences of the family's past.

1.1. Key Themes of the Play. *Long Day's Journey into Night* addresses crucial themes such as suffering, guilt, death, and redemption. O'Neill shows how the family's past strongly influences their present. The central idea of the play is the weight of inherited trauma and the impossibility of escaping it, which ultimately proves fatal for the characters.

- Alcoholism and the Destruction of Personality: The father, James Tyrone, suffers from alcoholism, which destroys his personality and relationships with his family. His life becomes a repetitive cycle of mistakes, leading to various tragedies. He feels guilty for failing to provide for his family and for not saving his wife and children from their destructive paths.

- Family Secrets and Lies: Each family member hides dark secrets. The mother, Mary, conceals her morphine addiction, while the sons live in a world of illusions, trying to escape fear and pain. Lies and self-deception serve as protective reactions to a reality that is unbearable for each of them.

- Fatalism and the Inevitability of Fate: O'Neill explores fate as an inexorable force that leads the characters toward their tragic ends. The Tyrone family, like Sisyphus, is doomed to repeat their mistakes despite each character's attempt to change something.

1.2. Characters and Their Psychology

- James Tyrone: The central character of the play, James Tyrone is an aging alcoholic whose personal tragedy results from long-term addiction and emotional emptiness. He represents the archetype of the "fallen father," unable to regain love and respect despite his efforts. His struggles with alcoholism and guilt for destroying his family make him a tragic figure.

- Mary Tyrone: James's wife, Mary, suffers from a morphine addiction that she conceals from others. Mary lives in a world of memories, using her addiction as a way to escape the pain of her marriage and reality.

- The Sons, Eddie and James Jr.: Both sons suffer deep emotional wounds due to their relationships with their parents. Eddie, the older son, yearns to break free from the family legacy of pain and fear, while James Jr. struggles with alcoholism, attempting to cope with the inherited issues.

1.3. Intertextual References

- The Myth of Sisyphus: O'Neill structures the play around the myth of Sisyphus, who is condemned to push a boulder up a hill, only for it to roll back down. Despite the characters' attempts to change their fates, they find themselves in the same position. This myth serves as a symbol of the futility of their struggle.

- Shakespearean Motifs: The play also echoes themes from Shakespearean tragedies, such as *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, where characters are tormented by internal conflicts related to guilt, destruction, and death.

1.4. Philosophy and Psychoanalysis

The psychoanalytic theme in the play is evident: the characters cannot free themselves from their unconscious desires and fears. James Tyrone is trapped by his past, with guilt and depression deeply rooted in his subconscious. Similarly, Mary Tyrone avoids reality by creating a "parallel world" through her drug addiction, in which she can experience happiness.

2. The Mourning Becomes Electra (1921)

The Mourning Becomes Electra is one of O'Neill's early plays, written during his creative development. It is a psychological drama focused on the process of mourning and emotional transformation after a loss.

2.1. Key Themes of the Play

The play explores grief, loss, and emotional transformation. The central conflict involves not only the death of a son but also the characters' search for meaning in life following the loss. The plot revolves around this single event, with its consequences affecting the entire family.

- Grief and Loneliness: The son's death becomes the catalyst for the personal transformation of the characters. This tragedy is a complex process that destroys the relational dynamics within the family. O'Neill examines how individual grief permeates collective life.

- Existential Crisis: The play presents a deep philosophical reflection on life and death. O'Neill grapples with fundamental existential questions: What gives life meaning when death disrupts its course so unexpectedly?

2.2. Characters and Their Psychology

The characters of *The Mourning Becomes Electra* are immersed in an existential crisis. Their emotional emptiness and despair permeate the atmosphere of the play. The mother, father, and older sister try to cope with the loss, but a vacuum has formed in their lives that cannot be filled.

2.3. Intertextual References

- Mythological and Biblical References: The death of the son references biblical and mythological stories of sacrifice, where death serves as a necessary part of redemption. This motif can be traced in various cultural texts and myths.

2.4. Philosophy and Psychoanalysis

The psychological aspect of the play can be understood through a Freudian lens, where grief and loss trigger deep unconscious processes that disturb the stability of the characters' personalities and relationships.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, Eugene O'Neill's plays utilize intertextuality to deepen the exploration of universal themes of suffering, family trauma, and psychological conflict. Through references to mythology, literature, and psychoanalysis, O'Neill creates intricate and emotionally charged narratives. His works engage deeply with the human experience, allowing for a rich analysis of the complexity of human nature and relationships. O'Neill's plays continue to stand as important milestones in the development of modern drama.

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