

摘要

在文学评论界，人们倾向于把尤金·奥尼尔的《榆树下的欲望》这部戏剧看作是一部现实主义的代表作。而本文则试图从另一个角度——自然主义的角度出发，来探讨这部戏剧的丰富内涵。

本文主要内容共分五章。

第一章探讨了这部戏剧的第一个自然主义特点，即：忠实而精确地描写细节。（自然主义与现实主义相似，强调素材细节的忠实性，但是自然主义又是特殊的，极端的现实主义，在材料选择与组织方面与现实主义有所不同。自然主义者认为事实的重要性并非事实本身，而在于其能反映更广的现实，在于能通过个体事实的分析得到科学的规律。在事实材料处理上，自然主义更接近于医生为病人诊断时开的病历，对细节的忠实及刻画方面甚至走向了极端。）

第二章探讨了这部戏剧的第二个自然主义特点，即：科学地描绘下层人物。（自然主义文学作品中的主要人物一般属于下层阶级。下层阶级的人往往是激烈的商业竞争的直接牺牲者，甚至世代逃不出生活的厄运，是环境决定论及生物遗传决定论的典型对象。）

第三章探讨了这部戏剧的第三个自然主义特点，即：语言的污秽性。（自然主义作家所刻画的社会并非“微笑的社会”。自然主义者毫不掩盖，毫不回避丑恶现象的存在，并对这些丑恶现象如实地描绘。自然主义作品中的人物地位卑贱，或漠视道德，公然伤风败俗，或迫于环境，无可奈何地做出与社会规范相悖的行为。自然主义作品用污秽的文学语言充分再现污秽的现实世界。）

第四章探讨了这部戏剧的第四个自然主义特点，即：宿命论的哲学及悲观的人生观。[→]（自然主义文学的哲学出发点就是达尔文的生物宿命论及由此发展起来的社会宿命论。因此，自然主义作品中体现出来的总是人对自己命运的无能为力_←的宿命论的人生观。）

第五章探讨了这部戏剧中的自然主义和现实主义的关系。[→]（首先，〈〈榆树下的欲望〉〉具有鲜明的真实性和典型性。其次，我们从这部戏剧中也可以看到现实主义与自然主义相结合所带来的描写和表现方式异乎寻常的效果。第三，自然主义和现实主义的结合使这部戏剧在思想倾向性，即对善恶美丑的批判与褒扬方面十分隐晦，似有似无。）_←

综上所述，〈〈榆树下的欲望〉〉不失为一部意蕴深厚，内容丰富的文学作品。[→]在这部作品中，奥尼尔继承并发扬了西方现实主义的创作方法，生动地再现了那个时代美国的社会生活，同时深刻地揭露了那个时代美国社会的种种弊端：贫富分化，人情冷漠，下层劳动者的悲惨命运等等。_←（同时，这部作品也融合着奥尼尔浓厚的自然主义思想，他把社会中人与人之间的关系看成是天经地义的生存竞争关系，把人间的冷酷无情看成是自然法则的必然结果。并且，奥尼尔描写了人的孤立无助的状态，这其中尽管有过分悲观的宿命论的观点，但在一定程度上揭示了人们在现代西方社会中的窘况。在〈〈榆树下的欲望〉〉中，现实主义和自然主义两种创作方法相结合，现实主义使自然主义有了能够真正科学地反映社会生活的意义，自然主义给现实主义带来了更加强烈的锐气和锋芒，使它对社会时弊揭露和批判更入木三分；这样，二者互相补充，互相促进，产生了别具一格的艺术效果。本文的创新之处在于它从自然主义这一角度着

手，展示了人的渴望，孤寂和贪欲。另外，本文还探讨了父子关系，母子关系，
夫妻关系，兄弟关系，期望能够弥补在《榆树下的欲望》评论中的遗漏与不
足。

关键词：自然主义 欲望 宿命论，戏剧文学，尤金·奥尼尔，
人生观，榆树下的欲望，

ABSTRACT

In the literary circles, the critics tend to regard the play *Desire Under the Elms* by Eugene O'Neill as the representative of realism. But the thesis tries to inquire into the rich connotation of the play from the naturalistic angle.

This thesis is mainly composed of five chapters.

Chapter One talks about the first naturalistic feature of the play: faithful and accurate portrayal of the details. Naturalism lays stress on the faithfulness of the source materials, which is similar to realism. But naturalism is also special and extreme realism; that is to say, naturalism is to some extent different from realism in choosing and organizing the materials. The naturalistic writers think that the significance of the facts does not lie in the facts themselves, but in the facts' reflecting the broader reality and in obtaining the scientific laws through analyzing the specific fact. In terms of dealing with the factual materials, naturalism is closer to the case history that the doctors record when they diagnose the illness for the patients, and their faithful and accurate portrayal of the details even goes to extremes.

Chapter Two focuses on the second naturalistic feature of the play: scientific description of the characters in the lower orders. In general, the characters in the naturalistic works belong to the lower class. And the people in the lower orders are more often than not the direct victims of the cruel competition. Sometimes even

they cannot escape from the adversity of the life from generation to generation. So to speak, they are the typical characters whose destiny is determined by the environment and the biological heredity and the animality.

Chapter Three inquires into the third naturalistic feature of the play: filthiness of the languages. The society that the naturalistic writers describe is not a "smiling society," for the naturalistic writers do not cover up or dodge the ugly phenomena in a society at all, on the contrary they truthfully depict them. In the naturalistic works, the characters are petty and low in point of the position. They either treat morality with indifference, or openly offend public decency, or have to do some things that are not in keeping with the social standard under the stress of circumstances. As a matter of fact, the naturalistic works faithfully reflect the filthy reality by means of the filthy languages.

Chapter Four deals with the fourth naturalistic feature of the play: fatalism and pessimistic outlook on life. The philosophical starting point of the naturalistic literature is Darwin's biological fatalism and Spencer's social fatalism that derives from it. Therefore, fatalistic outlook on life that man is powerless before his or her fate is always expressed in the naturalistic works.

Chapter Five discusses the relationships between naturalism and realism in the play. Firstly, the play is of authenticity and typification. Secondly, from the play *Desire Under the Elms*, good effect of the combination of realism and naturalism on the description and the means of expression can be found. Thirdly, the union of

realism and naturalism makes the play's thought tendentiousness utterly veiled; that is to say, in the play O'Neill does not energetically eulogize certain characters and certain things, nor does he vigorously criticize them.

To sum up, *Desire Under the Elms* can yet be regarded as a play that has profound implications and rich contents. In the play, O'Neill inherits and carries on the creative method of the western realism and vividly describes the American social life of the day. At the same time, he deeply discloses all kinds of abuses that exist in the American society of the day; for instance, more and more power and wealth are in the hands of few rich people, the feelings between man and man become indifferent, and the lower laborers cannot escape from the tragic fate. Meanwhile, the play also embodies O'Neill's strong naturalistic thought. Clearly, he regards the relationship between man and man as the relationship of struggle for existence that is perfectly justified, and the cruelty and the ruthlessness of man's world as the inevitable result of the natural laws. Besides, O'Neill also describes that the people are lonely and cut off from help. Although this embodies the pessimistic fatalism, yet this to some extent reveals that the people in the modern western society are in a predicament. Therefore, the two creative methods of naturalism and realism are harmoniously united in the play. That is to say, realism offers naturalism a chance of truly and scientifically reflecting the social life; at the same time, naturalism adds stronger dash and abilities to realism and makes its disclose and criticism towards the social evils more penetrating. Thus, the

complement and the promotion of the two creative methods result in the artistic result that has a unique style. The thesis brings forth new ideas in the fact that it lays bare the people's longing, loneliness, and greed from the naturalistic angle. In addition, the thesis also deals with the relationships between father and son, mother and son, husband and wife, and brothers in the hope of being able to make up for the weaknesses in the comments on the play *Desire Under the Elms*.

KEY WORDS: naturalism desire fatalism

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INTRODUCTION

Literary naturalism is a trend of thought in literature and art following European Romantic Movement. Initially it springs up in the nineteenth-century France, afterward it widely prevails in the Occident, inch by inch it engenders determinate momentum, and it exerts a far-reaching influence on the social culture. Later, naturalism spreads from Europe to America and is mixed together with all kinds of the social ideological trends of America, thus forming naturalism that is unique to America.

In the Americans' eyes there is Calvinism¹ that is hard to clear up. Calvinism stands for a view on human existence, and particularly emphasizes the human weakness before the cosmic fatalism. At the same time, in the wake of the gradual feebleness of Calvinistic Transcendentalism under the influence of the Enlightenment Movement, the belief that the absolute God of the Puritans is in the position of guidance is substituted for the rationalism that the universe is controlled by the natural forces. The enlighteners are opposed to the Calvinistic pessimistic attitude, the mysterious God, and the original sin, pointing out the more hopeful prospect and thinking that in the world there is a beneficent God who mixes Himself with the natural forces, which we may measure and understand through the reason. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Enlightenment Movement is optimistic and

upward, but it does not completely remove the traditional and deep-rooted sense of the original sin. Along with the increase of the scientific knowledge, particularly in pace with the development of the geometry and the evolutionary biology, the people feel that they themselves are insignificant and in a miserable situation, and they clearly show this kind of feeling. After the arrival of the debate about Darwinism, the people can no longer maintain the sense of the self-dependence of themselves, nor can they support the deism² that the world is a perfect machine that is created for the people's happiness; for the evolutionary science has testified that a man is only one of many disorderly and unsystematic phenomena, though the human beings have been living on the earth for thousands of years, it is transient compared to the limitless process of the earth development.

Therefore, more and more American writers once more return to the pessimistic spirit. But for in the creed, this kind of pessimistic spirit at least shows no difference from the pessimistic feelings of the elders of the Massachusetts Bay in the result. Although the writers do not believe that everything is determined by the fate, they look on the man as a biochemical phenomenon; that is to say, the man will mechanically and futilely make some physiological reactions to the uncontrollable and strong stimuli. Moreover, although they do not believe in the original sin, they think that the man will ceaselessly stand the meaningless pains because he or she is weak, powerless, and in a hopeless situation before the cosmic forces. In addition, although the writers do not believe the hellish fire that the Calvinists authentically

believe, they describe a more humiliating prospect: there is not the nether world at all, and the man inevitably enters into the chaotic state thoroughly and eternally after his or her death. When the old Calvinists are in great pain, they can at least pray to God that knows everything; whereas the naturalists in despair only can ask for help the natural universe that is cold, indifferent, and willful, and indulges in wanton massacre.

This kind of completely desperate feeling seems just to prevail in the nineteenth-century France and the declining Russia. If there had no previous influence of Calvinism, perhaps the feeling would be hard to be rooted in the young America. Although Calvinism is temporarily weakened because of the material prosperity and the optimistic spirit of the Enlightenment Movement, it still exists in the nation's sub-consciousness. But once the people accept the scientific new God, and after they turn the seemingly benevolent God into an angry God, Calvinism will burst forth and will spare no effort to transform not only in the details but also in the essence.

Compared with European literary naturalism, American literary naturalism is more closely related to the economic changes of the society, maybe because the country is comparatively young, the changes are more rapid and more radical. It is known that the Civil War³ ends up in the Northern victory, whose meaning is not merely in doing away with the slavery. Since from a long-term point of view, the victory means that the industrial capitalism finally overcomes the conventional

agricultural economy. Like Europe, on the one hand, the industrialization brings about great progress in the industry and the material wealth; on the other hand, it gives rise to such serious problems as the conflicts between the labourers and the capitalists, the economic depression, and the strikes that appear in the violent form. So to speak, all these are distinctively reflected in the works of this period when the politics of many cities is universally corruptive, and the power and the wealth are collected in a small number of capitalists who cruelly exploit the workers and heartlessly exclude the small capitalists. So the realities have sobered the Americans up from the illusions under the influence of France in 1870 and Germany that is in a transformative period. But in America, the form is especially particular: the disillusionment is accompanied by such dreams as success, prosperity, and happiness. Moreover, it is these dreams that make many people from the different parts of the world migrate to America. However, the disillusionment of the myth that the agriculture occupies a dominant position in America strongly shocks the Americans who have to accept the cruel reality.

These phenomena exert a strong pessimistic influence on some American writers. In order to avariciously grab the money and the power, a man unbridledly exploits his companions, abandons the Lord to believe in the God of the Wealth, has the greatest esteem for the immoral, indifferent, and ruthless machine, and regards the scientific product as a means of greediness. The people find from the science the theoretical basis for the action of themselves; that is to say, the theme of the

evolutionary theory of the non-Christianity: survival of the fittest. It is thus clear that Darwin's sociology is looked upon as the inevitable course of the things, which is utterly different from the previous thoughts that the Americans have accepted. In terms of the merchants, they think that they can exist so long as they defeat the competitive opponents; in point of the intellectuals, they think that they themselves can be saved provided they luckily avoid the natural forces that perplex the human beings. However, from whatever high plane the problem is treated, the life under the banner of the evolutionary theory is to struggle for survival, which is the same as the Calvinistic belief that life is cruel, ruthless, and hopeless, and the weak and the unlucky can not be aided.

With the passage of the time, the people clearly realize that the heads of the industrial circles are not survivors of the fittest. Under the tremendous shadows of the financial capitalism, the important persons in the markets are gradually without attracting public attention. In many people's eyes, the previous owners have become the servants of the machines that are slow in senses and merciless. According to the naturalists, human beings are not the highest species any more, for the human beings have experienced the height of power and splendour during the process of the evolution, and their positions have been seized by the temptation that the science and the technology are hard to resist.

In addition, some writers who are engaged in collecting and recording the scandals disclose the corruption appearing in the Union, the states, and the

municipalities in such a sensational form that a number of people who have a keen sense and are good at meditation get a clear understanding of the irrefutable rogue nature of the so-called most successful people. As a result, they begin to doubt the permanence and the value of the most basic political ideals of America. Moreover, they read the French history and worry about the future of America. For instance, they may ask the following questions: Does the repeated failure of the experiment of the democracy of Europe suggest that the future of America is like that? Is it only because America is a young country that is constantly developing that the democratic system of America can exist? Does America follow in French footsteps and become a cynical and politically corruptive country after she is mature? Then during the process of studying the problems, they become more heavyhearted.

So it is obvious that the appearance of the American literary naturalism corresponds to the social and economic problems of the country; that is to say, one of the reasons why the literary naturalism appears in America is the moral lacking that is caused because of the frenzied greed for the material wealth and the political powers. Usually the naturalistic works are concerned with the poor people's risking danger in desperation and the capitalists' schemes and intrigues; such as the novels written by Theodore Dreiser⁴, Stephen Crane⁵, and John Steinbeck⁶, in which *The Grapes of Wrath* by Steinbeck describes how the combine harvesters annex the land so that the tenants become homeless and are in utter destitution.

Under such circumstances, Eugene O'Neill, the founder of modern

American drama, creates the play *Desire Under the Elms* which is of distinct naturalistic features. And this thesis is to analyze the naturalistic features of the play from five aspects.

CHAPTER ONE

Faithful and Accurate Portrayal of the Details

The first naturalistic feature of the play is faithful and accurate portrayal of the details. Naturalism lays stress on the faithfulness of the source materials, which is similar to realism. But naturalism is also special and extreme realism; that is to say, naturalism is to some extent different from realism in choosing and organizing the materials. The naturalistic writers think that the significance of the facts does not lie in the facts themselves, but in the facts' being able to reflect the broader reality and in obtaining the scientific laws through analyzing the specific fact. In terms of dealing with the factual materials, naturalism is closer to the case history that the doctors record when they diagnose the illness for the patients, and their faithful and accurate portrayal of the details even goes to extremes. According to Zola, literature should pay much attention to depicting the accurate tableau of the objective and real life, and it should remain absolutely neutral and objective, and it should not submit to the aims of politics and morality; that is to say, there is not exaggeration or emphasis but facts in literature⁷. So to speak, in the play Eugene O'Neill faithfully and accurately portrays such details as the farm, the farmhouse, the walls of stone, the wooden gate and the country road, the elms, and the sky.

The play is set on the Cabot farm in rural New England in 1850. The first wording in Eben's actor's lines, namely the first wording of the whole play,

“Purty”(p.849) refers to the farm, of which Simeon and Peter, Eben’s elder brothers, speak time and again from the start. So to speak, they both love and hate the farm. On the one hand, they long for escaping from the hard work, the binding up, and the hardships of the farm; on the other hand, they yearn for possessing the farm and are possessed by the farm. It is no wonder that the farm is of the mythological significance in the lives of the men of the Cabots. To old Ephraim’s mind, the farm makes his existence meaningful, for he sees the hands of the God testing him in the difficult life and the hard work, which makes him acquire the strength in the life struggle. As for Simeon and Peter, they are closely related to the farm, for they are yoked together like the bulls that cannot speak and they ceaselessly work like the machines, going round and beginning again, being at old Cabot’s beck and call, and only stopping for a breather briefly. With regard to Eben, he feels regret at parting from the farm and the feeling is mysterious. He is more appreciative of the beauty of the earth than the other people, and he is more appreciative of the wonderful natural scenes which are always changing in the four seasons of the year. More importantly, he looks on his mother as the lawful owner of the farm, and he regards himself as the successor of the farm instead of his father. To him, he is always feeling that his late mother’s ghost is protecting him and is always encouraging him to be revenged on Ephraim and to appeal for redress of a wrong for her, whose soul appears in the two elms that surround the farmhouse.

As a matter of fact, the farm is like a cage made of the stones, in which the

two wives of E. Cabot work so hard that they use up all their strength and lose their lives, and Simeon, Peter, and Eben get bogged down and exhaust their own youth. Moreover, the Cabot family is also a cage like the farm, in which a variety of contradictions are gathered and the endless bitterness is hidden. So to speak, the farm—the cage symbolizes the life and social environment of the day, from which the people cannot escape. It is known that Puritanism is the thought of the day that dominates the people, and the Puritans who believe in Calvinism hold the God and the nature created by Him in awe and veneration. According to them, compared with the nature that is boundless and mysterious and of inexhaustible strength, the man is insignificant. Not only cannot the man master the natural forces, but also the man cannot control his or her fate; therefore, the man has to beg the God for the mercy and to be industrious and frugal in order to strive for survival. Of course, the Cabots are not exceptional, either.

The whole story happens in the Cabot farmhouse and its nearby region: The house is in good condition but in need of paint. Its walls are a sickly grayish, the green of the shutters faded. There is a path running from the gate around the right corner of the house to the front door. A narrow porch is on this side. The end wall facing us has two windows in its upper story, two larger ones on the floor below. The two upper are those of the father's bedroom and that of the brothers. On the left, ground floor, is the kitchen—on the right, the parlor, the shades of which are always drawn down. (p.849)

Therefore, the conflict in the play *Desire Under the Elms* is hinted in the description of the outside and the inside of the farmhouse: the social pressure of the external environment exerts an influence on the psychological state of the Cabots that is put under house arrest, and comes into conflicts with this sort of psychological state. Just as their lives, the walls of the farmhouse “are a sickly grayish, the green of the shutters faded.” (p.849)

The parlor in the farmhouse is the place where Eben’s mother’s body is put before burial; moreover, the parlor has not been opened since Eben’s mother died, and the shutter has always been closed. E. O’Neill describes the interior of the parlor like this:

A grim, repressed room like a tomb in which the family has been interred alive. Abbie sits on the edge of the horsehair sofa. She has lighted all the candles and the room is revealed in all its preserved ugliness. (p.863)

The careful design of the parlor is of its peculiar symbolic meaning. Eben’s mother has been overworking all her life until her death on the farm. So to speak, she is nothing but a draught animal and a tool. And it is obvious that the design and the atmosphere of the parlor symbolize the continuity of Eben’s mother’s miserable fate on Abbie’s body. It is in the small parlor that the historical and realistic tragedy is ingeniously and truthfully unfolded before our eyes.

The kitchen in the farmhouse is another place where the members of the Cabots move about. Its interior “is now visible. A pine table is at center, a

cook-stove in the right rear corner, four rough wooden chairs, a tallow candle on the table. In the middle of the rear wall is fastened a big advertising poster with a ship in full sail and the word 'California' in big letters. Kitchen utensils hang from nails. Everything is neat and in order but the atmosphere is of a men's camp kitchen rather than that of a home." (p.850)

The description of the kitchen is in fact the reflection of the times. The story in the play happened in 1850; that is to say, before the American Civil War. It is common knowledge that it is after the American Civil War that the American industry and economy develop quickly. So the period before the American Civil War is usually called the period of primitive accumulation of capital. In point of the Puritans, they believe in the original sin; and they think that only when they become the chosen people, can they be saved. At the same time, they stress hard work, thrift, piety and sobriety; and they think that their lives should be disciplined and hard; and they tend to suspect joy and laughter as symptoms of sin. Therefore, it is under the encouragement of the Puritan spirit that the early capitalists unbridledly work for God and money. In the eyes of the early capitalists money is equal to God because money can make them both become the chosen people and own the God's strength. Therefore, they give up all the pleasure, even the sleeping time is reduced to the lowest limitation. Although they accumulate enormous wealth, they cannot have the joys of life. To a great extent, they no longer have their human nature.

In the play the representative of Puritan spirit is Ephraim Cabot, the owner of

the farm. He believes that God exists in stones, and that God is solid, and that God asks the people to use the stones to build His church on the stones. So he gives up the fertile lands and the comfortable life, and would rather open up the land and build his farmhouse on the stones. Moreover, he thinks that industry is a kind of virtue, and that if a person becomes rich without hard work, he or she will be guilty. So he earnestly practices what he advocates and earns a family property from the adverse circumstances. More importantly, under the control of the Puritan spirit he is cruel to those who are weak, including his two wives. Frankly speaking, he drives his two wives as he drives the slaves until he torments them to death. So like a feather in the wind, E. Cabot is controlled by the environment of the day and cannot escape from it.

The south end of the house faces front to the walls of stone. And the walls of stone that surround the land suggest everything that has fettered the bodies and the souls of the characters in the play. For instance, having finished working on the farm one day, Peter says with sardonic bitterness, "Here—it's stones atop o' the ground—stones atop o' stones—makin' stone walls—year atop o' year—him'n' yew'n' me'n' then Eben—makin' stone walls fur him to fence us in!" (p.850) Moreover, he also tries to persuade Simeon to go to the western California with him to track down gold and freedom by saying that they would be slaves of the walls of stone if they continued to stay here. As to Eben, he has the same attitude towards the walls of stone as his two elder brothers, for he thinks that the walls of stone have

been being built since they were children, and that the walls of stone have been built until their hearts so far.

So to speak, foremost among the play's symbols are the rocks that cover the barren farm, and the walls of stone and fences built from them. Repeatedly invoked and cursed by each of the characters, they take on different layers of meanings: firstly, they suggest the difficult and Sisyphean⁸ life of the farmers; secondly, they hint the cold hardness of Cabot's religion and Eben's hatred; thirdly, they indicate the unending harshness of the characters' emotional lives and the fated boundaries that they must experience their misfortune and their tragedy within.

In the middle of the walls of stone there is a wooden gate opening on a country road. As a matter of fact, inside the gate is the secular society that is filled with the desires for the materials and the evils, while outside the gate is the mysterious, peaceful, and happy kingdom; which makes the fact clear to all that the reality is divorced from the ideals, the materials from the spirit, and the bodies from the souls in the human society. Among the family members, only when Peter and Simeon find that their father is married again and they cannot have the chance of inheriting the property, do they lift the wooden gate off its hinges and put it under the arms and go to California to seek for their freedom. Nevertheless, the other family members resign themselves to living inside the gate, willingly accepting their miserable fate.

Similarly, the country road also symbolizes the freedom. Although Eben

always comes to the end of the porch and stands looking down the road to the right, he from start to finish cannot free himself from the terrible fate that has been arranged well for him. Of course, he also tries his best to struggle for a happy life, but in vain, for his terrible fate has been arranged well in advance.

At the beginning of the play, E. O'Neill gives a full description of the elms, which is faithful and accurate, and leaves an unforgettable impression: Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house. They are 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 the shingles. (p.849)

Firstly, the elms function as a dominating presence in the lives of the characters, reflecting the cruelty of the people who inhabit the Cabot farm. In one scene, they are described as possessing a "sinister maternity,"(p.849) foreshadowing Abbie's brutal smothering of her baby. Secondly, the symbol of Abbie is the elms—the trees being the primordial symbol of fecundity and maternity. We recognize the potency of her powers when she directs them at Eben. For instance, after Abbie says that Eben looks all slicked up like a prize bull, Eben says with a sneer that she herself is not so beautiful. Nevertheless, they stare into each other's

eyes, his held by hers in spite of himself, hers glowingly possessive. Evidently, their physical attraction becomes a palpable force quivering in the hot air. At this time, Abbie says softly that his words are not true, and that he cannot speak like that, and that he has been fighting his nature ever since the day she came here—trying to tell himself she is not beautiful. With the words Abbie laughs a low humid laugh without taking her eyes from his. Then her body squirms desirously, she murmurs languorously that the sun is so strong and hot that he can feel it burning into the earth, and that the nature makes things grow bigger and bigger, then makes him want to grow into something else till he is joined with it, then makes him grow bigger like a tree—like the two elms. After having heard Abbie's words, Eben takes a step towards her, compelled against his will. Again Abbie laughs softly, holding his eyes, and she says that the nature will beat him and he may as well admit his failure. Thirdly, the two enormous elms stand for a kind of strong supernatural force. Eben's late mother's ghost is permeated with the trees, and Ephraim always feels that several formless dewdrops drop from the trees.

In the play E. O'Neill again and again describes the sky. Sometimes the sky is clear and boundless, sometimes the sky is covered with dark clouds. It is known that the people of the day are powerless before the sky. To a great extent, the sky is the symbol of the environment of the day. Similarly, the people are powerless before the environment and have to passively accept their own destiny.

For instance, in the play sometimes the sky is beginning to grow flushed with

sunrise, sometimes the sky is of the golden color, but sometimes the sky is gray. And the people living under the sky are passive. When Eben puts his hands on his hips and stares up at the sky, he sighs with a puzzled awe. In another scene, Eben is standing by the gate looking up at the sky, an expression of dumb pain appearing on his face. After Peter and Simeon finish working one day, they stand together in front of the house and stare dumbly up at the sky, leaning on their hoes. At this time, their faces have a compressed, unresigned expression, then their eyes drop. Sometimes even E. Cabot stands by the gate, blinking at the sky, or staring up at the sky with a vague face. It is thus clear that the Cabots have no way out under the sky of the day.

Here a conclusion can be drawn that the details, such as the farm, the farmhouse, the walls of stone, the wooden gate and the country road, the elms, and the sky, are faithfully and accurately portrayed by E. O'Neill in the play *Desire Under the Elms*. That is to say, Chapter One proves this point: one of the features of literary naturalism is objectiveness and directness of the description⁹.

CHAPTER TWO

Scientific Description of the Characters in the Lower Orders

The second naturalistic feature of the play is scientific description of the characters in the lower orders. In general, the characters in the naturalistic works belong to the lower class. And the people in the lower orders are more often than not the direct victims of the cruel competition. Sometimes even they cannot escape from the adversity of the life from generation to generation. So to speak, they are the typical characters whose destiny is determined by the environment and the biological heredity and the animality. Similarly, the Cabots cannot succeed in escaping from the environmental determinism and the genetic determinism and the animality. In the play *Desire Under the Elms* E. O'Neill gives a scientific description of the characters in the lower orders: Ephraim Cabot, Abbie Putnam, Eben, the late two wives of E. Cabot, Simeon, and Peter.

Ephraim Cabot, the father of the family, is not fully in control of his own behavior. When he is a young man, because of a moment's weakness, Cabot leaves the stony farm after two years of hard work and heads west, where the soil is stoneless, and black and rich as gold. Farming is easy there, and the promise of prosperity is inviting. But an internal voice, the voice of Cabot's Old Testament God, commands Cabot to return. Unable to resist the suffering and labor demanded by the Puritan ethic, which is clearly the pillar of his moral code, Cabot abandons

his crops and rejoins the rocky New England farm, approving of his action by characterizing God as “hard, not easy! God’s in the stones!” (p.862)

Once he gets back to the rocks, Cabot is compelled to construct walls. For instance, he sighs heavily when he says to Abbie that he picks the stones up and piles them into walls. In the meanwhile, Cabot starts to identify with the stones: “Ye kin read the years of 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’ nothing’—like the will o’ God, like the servant o’ His hand.”(p.862) Cabot goes on building his church on the rock, and he thinks that he will be in the stones, and that that’s what God means to him.

When Cabot marries and his wife gives birth to two sons for him, he names them Simeon and Peter, clearly suggestive of Simeon Peter, the rock upon whom Christ builds His church, and, in the case of Peter, derivative of the Greek word “petra,” meaning rock. Cabot’s third son, Eben, shares Simeon and Peter’s nominal identification with stones: “Ebenezer,” the fuller version of “Eben,” is the name given by the prophet Samuel to the stone he sets up in memory of divine assistance.

Indeed, since he returned to New England, Cabot’s life has been a loveless one, in which hard work has been his only value. But in his dotage he has astonished his three sons by marrying the youthful, vital Abbie. For this reason, he claims that he has heard the voice of God’s asking him to go out and seek and find in his wilderness and in his lonesomeness. In response, he finds and marries Abbie. But

hardly does the voice he follows echo the voice that has recalled him to New England fifty years earlier; this voice is the one that has summoned him westward and has continued to lure him to the barn, where it is warm and is full of nice smelling because of the existence of the cows.

In spite of Cabot's condemnation of his sons' desire for the sinful, easy gold of California and his repeated commitment to the hard life, Cabot himself still feels attracted to the warmth of the barn and the softness of the cows. It is interesting that almost every time when Cabot speaks of cows, he either calls them queer or speaks of them with "queer affection." (p.860) When Abbie shows indifference towards Cabot's advances, he retreats to "whar it's restful—whar it's warm—down t' the barn." (p.862) With some indignation, he points out to his wife Abbie that the cows are more responsive than she is. So it is no wonder that he says that he can talk to the cows and they will give him peace. It is on the morning after Cabot spends the night in the barn that he announces the success of his self-prescribed treatment: "I rested. I slept good—down with the cows. They know how t' sleep. They're teachin' me." (p.865)

In marked contrast with the hard, cold stones, the cows offer Cabot softness and warmth, perhaps even the satisfaction of a latent sexuality. Indeed, on at least two occasions Cabot calls his son Eben a calf, and in both situations the association with sex is distinct. When Abbie defends Eben against Cabot's rage over his son's sexual advances, the old man admits unwillingly, "I oughtn't t' git riled so—at that

'ere fool calf'(p.860) and, less intentionally, calls him a calf on the morning after the sexual encounter between Eben and Abbie. Similarly, when Abbie suggests the two may have a son, Cabot softens to the point of sentimentality, movingly relating his life story to the woman who is only concerned with what is happening in Eben's bedroom next door. At the end of his monologue, Cabot retreats to the barn to stay with the cows.

Some months later, after Abbie has given birth to the child that everyone except Cabot suspects is Eben's, the old man celebrates his sexuality in a display of raw energy that surprises the neighborhood gossips. Outdancing the fiddler, Cabot becomes seemingly superhuman in vitality. At this time, the fecund life force of Cabot is identified with the cows.

In the play's final scene, Cabot identifies himself explicitly with the cows. Having endured the humiliation of discovering the baby that Abbie bears and kills is not his, but Eben's, Cabot tells himself that he has to be like a stone and he has to judge impartially and incorruptibly. It is thus clear that he does not show any pity or benevolence to the killed baby at all like an emotionless cow.

Then he declares that he wants to head for California. However, moments after his declaration that California is the land for him, Cabot learns that Eben's entrepreneuring has left him without the financial means to go west. His reaction is severe: "He stares—feels [under the floor board for the money]—stares again. A pause of dead silence. He slowly turns, slumping into a sitting position on the floor,

his eyes like those of a dead fish, his face the sickly green of an attack of nausea. He swallows painfully several times—forces a weak smile at last.”(p.873) And then, sardonically, he reaffirms the philosophy according to which he has lived the seventy-five years of his life: God is hard, not easy! Maybe there is easy gold in the West, but it is not God’s gold and it is not for him.

Once again, the hard New England God is in control of him: “I kin hear His voice warnin’ me agen t’ be hard an’ stay on my farm. I kin see his hand usin’ Eben t’ steal t’ keep me from weakness. I kin feel I be in the palm o’ His hand, His finger guiden’ me.”(p.873) The God who calls the young Cabot back from the West has recalled him again, this time to a life without sons and wife: “It’s a-goin t’ be lonesomer now than ever it was afore.”(p.873) At the play’s end, the old New Englander is alone, surrounded still by the walls of stone.

Abbie Putnam is E. Cabot’s third wife, a woman half his age. So to speak, Abbie is the unluckiest person and the most active destroyer in the play. As a matter of fact, the contradictions between her and the other family members fully embody the contradictions between her and the society. Engels says that the individual family of the modern times is based on the women’s family slavery that is either open or concealed¹⁰, which resolves that Abbie has already been caught in the tragedy since she was married to old Cabot.

On the one hand, Abbie is married to old Cabot in order that she can acquire the property and the farm. Just as Abbie herself vindicates, “What else’d I marry an old

man like him fur?"(p.858) Although both sides seem to be on a voluntary basis, this kind of marriage that is on the basis of the greed for the money and the wealth is in essence the slave contract by which the bodies are sold out at beck and call of the money and the selfish desire, which typically stands for the family relationships of the bourgeois marriage. In the hypocritical garb of the capitalist "freedom" and "equality," Abbie's action and character are from beginning to end of initiative and offensive for the purpose of occupying the property. Obviously, she comes into the house with the desires. For instance, she says a word "Hum!" with lust as soon as she enters the house. And the voice is both peremptory and of carnal desire. Moreover, she ceaselessly says in possessive tones that a woman has got to have a home, and that she will go in and look at her house. Besides, such words as "my room," "my farm," "my hum," "my kitchen," "my bedroom," and "my dishes" are more frequently used time after time. In particular, when she proposes to Eben in the parlor, she is a complete attacker and conqueror while Eben is nothing but a defeated general. Because on the one hand, Abbie's desire is dimly awakened by Eben's youth and good looks; on the other hand, Abbie has plans of her own for the farm: she wants to seduce Eben and is pregnant by him, thus insuring that her child will inherit the farm.

On the other hand, Cabot marries Abbie in order that he can acquire both a family slave and a means of letting off the sexual desire. He makes no secret of his feelings and says that a home has got to have a woman. Therefore, the tragic fate

that Abbie is both “a plaything” and “a means” is determined. In fact, the process of Abbie’s getting married is the process of her being commercialized and being a slave, so there is not any true love at all between Cabot and Abbie. Moreover, Cabot is the cold and tyrannical despot of the family, whose autocracy cannot be endured by Abbie who is young and beautiful, and enthusiastic and unbending. As a result, it is under this depressing atmosphere that Abbie abnormally longs for the normal feeling; however, it is Eben—her husband’s second wife’s son—that the real life can offer her and can make her place love on. Thus, she uses the method of committing incest in order to rebel against the depressing environment. But it is not easy for a woman to singlehandedly revolt against the unreasonable marriage so as to be in pursuit of the true love. Later, although Abbie does fall in love with Eben in spite of the common customs, the other people in the neighborhood think that she only gives way to her carnal desires. For instance, after Abbie gives birth to a son, a man obscenely says to her, “Listen, Abbie—if ye ever git tired o’ Eben, remember me! Don’t fergit now!”(p.866) In order to seek true love Abbie does not hesitate to bravely face the pressure from the society, and even gives up the rights of being a mother. It is known that in the end Abbie smothers her son with her own hands to prove her love for Eben.

In short, at any rate, Abbie cannot escape from the tragic ending that the age has arranged well for her, because she herself is the newborn baby of the tragic era.

Eben is the third son of E. Cabot given birth to by his second wife. He is

twenty-five, tall and sinewy. His face is well formed, good-looking, but its expression is resentful and defensive. His defiant, dark eyes remind one of a wild animal's in captivity. Each day is a cage in which he finds himself trapped but inwardly unsubdued. There is a fierce repressed vitality about him. He has black hair, mustache, a thin curly trace of beard. He is dressed in rough farm clothes. So to speak, he is the crystallization of the parents.

On the one hand, he carries on his father's cruelty, greed, and lust. For instance, his mother has been ceaselessly working hard like a slave on the farm until his mother dies of tiredness one day. Therefore, he hates his father so bitterly that he sets himself against his father in all respects. To him, he has been setting ~~on~~ his heart on avenging his late mother, and has been trying his best to seize back the farm that he thinks should belong to his mother's. In the first part of the play, Eben makes use of the wish that his elder brothers want to go to the Golden West¹¹ so as to regain his lawful right of succession. At the same time, the carnal desire that drives old Cabot to leave the farm to look for a "new" woman two months ago is manifested in the thing that Eben wants to go to look for the local prostitute Min. Simeon, old Cabot's eldest son, says that the Cabots have gone to look for the lewd Min since their father: "We air his heirs in everythin'!"(p.852) At the outset, Eben does not admit; nevertheless, he finds that his sexual desire is so strong that he has to admit: "By God A'mighty she's purty, an' I don't give a damn how many sins she's sinned afore mine or who she's sinned' em with, my sin's as purty as any one

on' em!"(p.852) It is thus clear that Eben's words reveal his asceticism as a Puritan and his attitude towards the sin. His pitiful confrontation shows that he wants very much to know what the love is like even if the love is a mere formality. In the third scene of the first part, before dawn Eben sways and enters into the bedroom in which he and his two elder brothers live, and tells his two elder brothers that their father marries a young woman again. At this time, the elder brothers think that they may just as well leave the home as soon as possible now that everything is hers in the end. So Eben seizes the opportunity to put forward the suggestion that he wants to buy off his two brothers with six hundred dollars that old Cabot has hidden so that he alone can claim the farm as his after his father's death. And Eben says that he has not reached the Min's when he hears that their father is married again. Then he narrates his anger at this thing and says, "Waal—when I seen her, I didn't hit her—nor I didn't kiss her nuther—I begun t' beller like a calf an' cuss at the same time, I was so durn mad—an' she got scared —an' I jest grabbed holt an' tuk her!"(p.853) In terms of Eben, he considers conquering the prostitute as a means of being revenged on his father. So after he has made love to Min, he proudly says that she might have been his father's and his two elder brothers', but she is his now. In the fourth scene of the first part, when Eben goes out of the house to do some odd jobs, he stops by the gate and stares around him with glowing, possessive eyes, and takes in the whole farm with his embracing glance of desire. And when he enters into the kitchen and reports that their father is coming, his two elder brothers have

drunk enough whisky so that they are more confused. Thereupon, Eben takes advantage of the occasion to take out the hidden money, and reaches an agreement with his two elder brothers.

On the other hand, he carries on his mother's hope for beauty and longing for love. At the outset, there are two reasons why he commits adultery with Abbie. One reason is that his instinct drives him to make love to Abbie; the other reason is that he still considers making love to Abbie as a means of being revenged on his father. Say, in the fourth scene of the second part, after Eben has made love to Abbie, he says with a strange look that his Maw has gone back to her grave and she can sleep now. Moreover, when he sees his father, he is immensely proud of his having conquered Abbie. Since he thinks that he has been revenged on his father, he says, "Yew' n' me is quits." (p.865) His words and eccentric manner make his father be baffled. Nevertheless, the father's contempt for the son is so great that the father says that the son is so thunderingly soft like his mother. Later, as the plot develops, Abbie does fall in love with ^{Eben} Abbie. And in order to assert her love for Eben, she should murder the child when it is born, leaving Eben the sole heir. And Eben, in shock and horror, goes for the sheriff. Yet he finally acknowledges that he does love Abbie, and when Abbie is arrested, he goes with her to share her guilt and punishment. More importantly, when the three policemen are ready to arrest Abbie, he kisses Abbie and takes Abbie's hand, and they walk hand in hand to the gate. At this very moment, Eben points to the sunrise sky, and they both stand for a moment

looking up raptly in attitudes strangely aloof and devote as if they are praying God and expecting God to send them happiness and to improve their unfavourable situation.

In addition, Eben loves his mother deeply, and he has won the love of his mother at the expense of his father. In order to fulfill his wish he suffers the punishment of surrendering his masculinity by adopting the passive feminine life of his mother: he becomes his father's housekeeper, as his mother has been. When Abbie enters the home, the old conflict is revived; he wins her sexually and fathers her child. His punishment for this is the loss of his son, the loss of the farm, and imprisonment. He is not able to grow beyond his sexual feelings for his mother and his death wishes toward his father. Thus he is doomed to his inability to resolve his Oedipal strivings.

E. Cabot's first wife gives birth to two sons--Simeon and Peter. She must come from a farmer's family, so she can give birth to two sons whose fingers are all thumbs. Her husband looks on her as a cow, and all the time leads her to work on the farm. Consequently, she dies because of overwork.

E. Cabot's second wife gives birth to one son--Eben. She is an enthusiastic woman who longs for love. By a mistake of destiny, she is married to E. Cabot; for she is born a weak woman and cannot meet the needs of her husband, finally she is also tormented to death.

Evidently, both of them are the victims of the Puritan thought of the day, in

which their husband firmly believes.

Simeon and Peter are the sons given birth to by the first wife of E. Cabot. Simeon is thirty-nine years old, and Peter thirty-seven. They are tall men, much older than their half-brother Eben, built on a squarer, simpler model, fleshier in body, more bovine and homelier in face, shrewder and more practical. Their shoulders stoop a bit from years of farm work. Similarly, they inherit the features of their parents.

Simeon and Peter are animal-conscious. Like animals, much of the time they are “placid and self-contained.”¹² As they go to eat, they make their exit by turning, shouldering each other, their bodies bumping and rubbing together as they hurry clumsily to their food, like two friendly oxen toward their evening meal. Their eating is as naturally uncontrolled as that of beasts of the field. This is, perhaps, why the cows, the ^{horses} ~~houses~~, the pigs, and the chickens know them and like them, and why, even after eighteen years, when Simeon thinks back his dead wife, his memory is still about her hair that is long like a ^{horse's} ~~house's~~ tail and is yellow like gold.

Not only do the two brothers have an affinity and an identity with the animal kingdom, but also they are part of the earth. Simeon and Peter wear thick-soled boots caked with earth. Their clothes, their faces, hands, bare arms and throats are earth-stained. They smell of earth. Simeon stamps his foot on the earth and addresses it desperately, “Waal—ye’ve thirty year o’me buried in ye—spread out over ye—blood an’ bone an’ sweat—rotted away—fertilizin’ ye—richin’ yer

soul—prime manure, by God, that's what I been t' ye!"(p.855) They are intoxicated with the scene around them and remark that it is "Purty."

Satisfied with animals and creatures of earth, the two brothers are nevertheless resentful, because of the way in which their father drives them. For instance, Peter says that his father has slaved himself to death, and has slaved Simeon and Eben to death, and has slaved him to death. As to Simeon, he thinks that it is something driving him to drive them. They resent, moreover, the way in which Ephraim has fenced them in. Simeon says angrily that they have worked hard within the walls of stone, having given their strength and years and having ploughed them under in the ground. In fact, their dislike at being driven and their hostility to walls of stone just show their antagonism to the Old Testament God. The hard God is in the stones and in the father. Both are hostile to a free and peaceful animal existence.

When they hear that their father marries a young and beautiful woman, they burn with anger. Imitating his father's voice, Simeon says, " 'I'm ridin' out t' learn God's message t' me in the spring like the prophets done,' he says. I'll bet right then an' thar he knew plumb well he was goin' whorin', the stinkin' old hypocrite!"(p.854) Then they reach the agreement with Eben and give up the hope of inheriting the farm and are ready to set out to prospect for gold in California. And they decide that they should see their father once again before they leave in order that they may have the last chance of laughing at and satirizing their father.

Therefore, when they see their father, they do an absurd Indian war dance about the old man, which makes the father angry. Moreover, Simeon says that the father is lucky enough, for the brothers do not “skulp” him, and do not rape his new woman. At this time, Peter also says that the father is lucky enough, for the brothers do not burn his barn and do not kill the stock. After having finished these words, they stop their dance, holding their sides, rocking with wild laughter. In the end, both of them throw, the stones hitting the parlor window with a crash of glass, tearing the shade.

Indeed, the two brothers do not kill their father; but their resentment, their threats, and their overt acts are those of the primal horde. They hate him very much for his power and for his demonstrable priority in conquest of women, and they wish him dead. Yet the father, like the stones, is too strong to be destroyed. That is to say, they in any case cannot escape from the cruel environment; to the Cabots, the father is the person who dominates the whole family.

According to Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Wdwards, the naturalistic writers should create the animals that are personified and should reveal the powerfulness of the natural phenomena¹³. It is according to this literary naturalistic principle that E. O’Neill describes the characters in the play *Desire Under the Elms*.

CHAPTER THREE

Filthiness, Rocky Toughness and Folksiness of the Languages

The third naturalistic feature of the play is filthiness, rocky toughness, and folksiness of the languages.

The society that the naturalistic writers describe is not a "smiling society," for the naturalistic writers do not cover up or dodge the ugly phenomena in a society at all, on the contrary they truthfully depict them. In the naturalistic works, the characters are petty and low in point of the position. They either treat morality with indifference, or openly offend public decency, or have to do some things that are not in keeping with the social standard under the stress of circumstances. As a matter of fact, the naturalistic works faithfully reflect the filthy reality by means of the filthy languages.

In the play *Desire Under the Elms*, the characters, major or minor, speak scores of filthy words.

Simeon hates his father to such a degree that he looks forward to the coming of the death of his father. To Simeon, he has got used to saying that his father will die soon, and that his father is dead now. Therefore, Simeon stands aghast at the fact that his father has been married to a woman who is about thirty-five, and he cannot help saying that it is a sheer nonsense. After that, Simeon vindictively hopes that the new Maw is a she-devil that will make his father wish he himself was dead and

living in the pit of hell for comfort. Later on, before his father Simeon deliberately employs such words as “smash all the gates,” “break your skull,” and “rape your new wife,” so as to make his father angry. In addition, Simeon thinks that his father is so stingy that he openly and mockingly calls his father an old blood sucker.

As regards Peter, he utterly detests his father so that he calls his father an old skinflint and he calculates that the three brothers may get him declared crazy by the court. After Peter knows that his father is married again, he feels annoyed at losing the chance of inheriting the farm; therefore, he flusteredly and exasperatedly says that the three brothers should just sleep and eat and drink and that the hull damned farm should go to blazes. Moreover, Peter maintains that he and Simeon should wait and see what their new Maw looks like before they leave for California in order to give their father their parting cuss. Additionally, Peter looks down upon Eben so that he thinks that Eben never is much of a hand at milking, for his hands are like hoofs. Especially when Eben wants to the Min's, Peter even calls Min a “Scarlet Woman” with disdain.

In Eben's eyes, it is his father who steals the farm from his mother; therefore, he unfriendly calls his father “old loon,” “old mule,” “old devil,” and “damned idjit.” Besides, the attitudes of Eben towards Abbie are interwoven with the development of the plot. At the outset, when Abbie says in her most seductive tone that she is Eben's new Maw, Eben swears at her and calls her “a harlot,” and “a devil.” Then, when Abbie asks Eben to be a close friend with her, Eben furiously

flings off her arm and calls her "an old witch." Then when he and Abbie are in the parlor, Eben throws himself on his knees besides the sofa and grabs her in his arms, releasing all his pent-up passion by saying that he has been dying for wanting of her, and that he has been loving her since she came. Then after old Cabot tells him that the aim of Abbie's wanting to give birth to a son is to possess the farm, Eben violently accuses that she is a damn tricking whore, and that she is nothing but a stinking passel of lies. Then when Abbie smothers the son, Eben is so furious that he proclaims that he will kill her. At last, after he lodges an accusation against Abbie, Eben is overcome with regret by saying that he gets to thinking how he loves her, and that there seems to be something that is busting in his chest and head, and that he suddenly knows he will love her for good.

Regarding old Cabot, he despises his three sons and his neighbours except God and himself. For instance, old Cabot can rush toward Simeon and Peter and can say that he will break their bones; he can shake his finger threateningly at Eben and can say that Eben is a blaspheming fool; he can impolitely say that the people from the neighboring farms bleat about like a flock of goats and drink like hogs. Nevertheless, old Cabot cannot escape from the sexual passion, either. For example, he stares at Abbie desirously, his eyes grow avid, then with a sudden movement he seizes her hands and squeezes them, declaiming in a queer camp meeting preacher's tempo that she is his Rose of Sharon, and her eyes are doves, and her lips are like a scarlet, and her two breasts are like two fawns, and her navel is like a round goblet,

and her belly is like a heap of wheat.

Concerning Abbie, her words are filled with the flavour of the sexual passion. As soon as she enters the house, Abbie says to old Cabot that Simeon and Peter are staring at her like a couple of straying hogs. Then when she sees Eben, she flirtatiously says that he looks all slicked up like a prize bull. Furthermore, her sexual desire is so strong that she quite confidently says that it is not enough for her to love him like a Maw, and that there is lust for her in his eyes and his lips are trembling and longing to kiss her and his teeth too bite. Even before Eben goes to work on the farm, Abbie also wants one more kiss.

In the play even the words of the fiddler are full of the flavour of the sexual passion. For example, he harbours evil designs and says that Eben can do a good night's work. At the same time, the fiddler shows contempt for old Cabot by calling him "the old skunk." Moreover, he says, "Swing your partner t' the right! That's it, Jim! Give her a b'ar hug. Her Maw hain't lookin'. (*Laughter.*) Change partners! That suits ye, don't it, Essie, now ye got Reub afore ye? Look at her redden up, will ye? Waal, life is short an' so's love, as the feller says. (*Laughter.*)" (p.866)

It is thus clear that the major characters and the minor characters in the play speak filthy words because of their desire for possessing the farm and their sexual desire. So to speak, it is because of these filthy words that the actors were arrested and tried when the play was produced On February 18, 1926 at the Orange Grove Theater of Los Angeles. Seventeen actors, who were employed by Mr. Thomas

Wilkes, the theatrical producer, were presenting the somber tragedy. They knew little of the awful Nemesis¹⁴ of the Law, lurking within the very portals of the theater. Members of the City Vice Squad, acting upon the instructions of Sergeant Sidney Sweetnam, were there to see the performance and to want to find out any possible obscenities. When the curtains closed on the last act, all the actors were put under arrest and taken to the Central Police Station. They were accused of having performed a lewd, obscene, and immoral play.

In the Vice Squad Room of the station, where dipsomaniacs, dope addicts, prostitutes, and perverts stayed before their final consignment either to prison or liberty, as the case might be, these seventeen actors of Thespis¹⁵ were herded together and their finger-prints taken, like ordinary criminals. Thus the actors were held under arrest until half past four the following morning, when they were set free on condition that each of them must hand in fifty dollars bail. Later, through the imploration of Attorney Arthur W. Green, the bail was returned, and the actors were released after they wrote down their recognizance. At the same time, Sergeant Sweetnam, whom one ungracious reporter called "Key-hole Sweetnam," or "the Chemically Pure Cop," asserted that it was a serious affair, for the Parent Teachers' Association and the Board of Education were behind the arrest. Moreover, after several words in the play were changed to suit the moral sensibilities of the police, in particular, Sergeant Sweetnam—that is to say, after "whore," which was used twice in the play, was changed to "harlot," and "gone a-whoring" to "gone to get

himself a woman"—the performances were permitted to continue, leaving the final decision of the court unresolved.

A jury trial was demanded. On April 8, 1926 the case opened in Judge William Fredrickson's court. Twelve men and women—housewives, salesmen, retired farmers—were asked to pass judgment on the morality of the play. In the course of the trial, Le Roy Reams—small in body, large in head, pugnacious, irascible, "the fearless boy prosecutor," as one paper described him—called Officer Taylor to the witness stand. Officer Taylor gravely testified that he "had went" to the play, *Desire Under the Elms*, on the night of 18; that he had heard such horrible instances of profanity as "damn," "hell," and "whore" used on innumerable occasions during the evening—he couldn't say how many; and that, although as a police officer in pursuance of his onerous duties he had gone to the performance "steeled against" anything obscene, he had really been shocked. When he left the play, he felt "like he couldn't look the world in the face again"¹⁶; he had to walk up dark alleys to hide his shame. Officer Taylor swore that he had heard Ephraim Cabot say, "If I catch ye, I'll bust your--!" The dash indicated a word that even the prosecutor pronounced with reluctance. On cross-examination Officer Taylor said that he had not been able to find any good in the play, but he was certain it was very bad indeed.

Sergeant Sweetman, City Mother Gilbert, a salesman, and an elevator operator were the principal witnesses for the prosecution. They also testified that

they had heard such words as “damns,” “hells,” and “certain Biblical words galore.” And they all agreed that the play was unquestionably immoral—a seducing woman in a nightgown, several beds, and so forth.

The prosecutor, in his dispute, took occasion to punish severely “those Greek and French degenerates” who were staining the minds of the children. His words were as follows: *Desire Under the Elms* was mere “smut and filth.” There was no justification for such a play. O’Neill was infamous—morbid, lewd, obscene. The play was not true to life. Had any member of the jury ever heard of a mother seducing her own stepson in real life? Of course not. Were the lives of O’Neill’s characters similar to the lives of any people in New England or elsewhere that they had ever known or heard about? What a question! But they did know of thousands of clean, patient, hard-working farmer folks, didn’t they? O’Neill knew nothing of such people; he only knew about morous, adulteresses, infanticides, seducing stepmothers. Suppose it were true to life. So were sewers. But there was no reason for putting them on the stage. *Desire Under the Elms* should be suppressed. The defendants were guilty of presenting a lewd, obscene, and immoral play¹⁷.

After the heated argument of both sides, the jury retired at three o’clock that afternoon. It discussed the problem for almost nine hours. Shortly after midnight the verdict was announced: eight for conviction and four for acquittal. At the same time, Judge Fredrickson also revealed his intention of proceeding immediately with a new trial.

In addition, in the course of the trial, the prosecutors stressed the fact that not only the individual lines and expressions were filthy, but also the idea of a woman seducing her own stepson was lewd and immoral. As a matter of fact, the hard, perhaps ugly words are the natural and necessary expressions in the mouths of O'Neill's crude, pathetic characters. More importantly, the filthy words are the faithful and accurate description of the rural New England in 1850 as well.

It is known that it is the desires that the characters want to own everything, which make the characters attack each other, have misgivings each other, and hate each other, and which form the basic theatrical conflicts of *Desire Under the Elms*. Indeed, O'Neill depicts the conflicts among the desires. But more importantly, O'Neill describes the conflicts among the desires as the conflicts of the strong desires for the happy life in which the people do their utmost to cast off the yoke of the Puritan asceticism. With the development of the scientific technology, the changes are taking place in the people's way of material life as well. They are not willing to scrupulously abide by the Puritan life creed any longer. In particular, the great upsurge in panning rising in California in 1849 pounds at the social life that sticks to old ways in New England. Therefore, the people long to smash the bonds of old morality, religion, and family, and they spare no efforts to be after freedom, ideals, and life. Unavoidably, the new desires naturally conflict with the old tradition, which is displayed in the play *Desire Under the Elms*. E. O'Neill writes a letter to a friend called George Jean Nathan. He says that he thinks that the readers

cannot figure out the kind of special quality that he feels is of great importance. That is to say, he attempts to endow the constrained life desire in New England with the epic colouring and to make the indescribable desire manifested and released in the poetic form, thus lighting up even the most contemptible and the filthiest blind alley in life.

At the beginning of the play, O'Neill displays this kind of depressing atmosphere by describing the two enormous elms. And it is in the choking atmosphere that the clashes among the characters develop and the clashes between the characters and their fate develop. In terms of the young generation, Simeon and Peter break the fetters and move towards the life filled with risks; Abbie is guilty of a crime in order to satisfy her desire for a happy life; Eben finally understands what he pursues is his realization of himself by the cruel fact, so he is brave enough to share responsibility for the offence and to accept the punishment according to law with Abbie. Only old Cabot remains on the farm by himself. Though a moment's emotional impulse makes him want to leave for California, and even want to set free the domestic animals, and even want to burn everything on the farm, hence he is also free, yet when he finds that the money that he has saved for many years is stolen, his belief that is deeply engraved on his mind conquers him. "I calc'late God give it to' em...God's hard, not easy! Mebbe they's easy gold in the West but it hain't God's gold. It hain't fur me. I kin hear His voice warnin' me agen t' be hard an' stay on my farm. It's a-goin' t' be lonesomer now than ever it was afore...God's

lonesome, hain't He? God's hard an' lonesome!"(p.873)

Not only does the play reflect the reality of America in the middle nineteenth century when the story happened, but also it reflects the reality in the 1920s when the play was written and produced, by means of the filthy languages. After the First World War, the American people are living in a kind of inconceivable and convulsive civilization. And there are confusion and strife here and there. The war destroys the people's belief and degenerates the people's morality. At the same time are spreading the philosophical and psychological ideas represented by the European bourgeoisie, which exert a great influence on the American people; so that they worship the money and the materials than before. To many family members in the society, the only desire is to seek the union of money and sexual passion, which is the reality of the era in which O'Neill is living. So he creates the play *Desire Under the Elms* to reproduce the "crazy" American society in the early twentieth century. And it is the play that profoundly reveals the essence of the bourgeois marriage and the family relations under the control of money and desire. So to speak, the relationship between Abbie and the father and son exactly embodies the abnormal relationship of the modern bourgeois family marriage under the baton of money.

Folksiness and rocky toughness of the language are the features of the naturalistic works, for it is such languages that are the most natural.

In the play *Desire Under the Elms* the language of the dialogue is that of

New England in the mid-nineteenth century. It is known that O'Neill lives in New England and understands the ways and the language of its people. He seems to have imagined the "down-east" flavor of Maine¹⁸ in the language, and he has been careful to build the proper pronunciation into the dialogue. This folksy way of speaking helps to lay stress on the peasantlike qualities in these New England farmers. Through the words spoken by the characters, it is clear that their language is flat and insipid. Moreover, they are wanting in imagination, which reflects that their emotions are suppressed.

The language of O'Neill's characters has a rocky toughness now and then. Characters are laconic; for instance, they often answer in a single word: "Ay-eh." Faithful to his vision of the simple speech of country folk, O'Neill avoids giving them elaborate poetic soliloquies. Instead, he shows that the rural people's profound emotions are constrained as well as their language is limited.

Evidently, a filthy society is vividly unfolded before the eyes after the filthy words are read. Additionally, E. O'Neill manages to imitate indiscriminately the way of speaking that is both artificial and brief, and that is adopted by the New Englanders in the nineteenth century. So to speak, the filthy words are of naturalistic flavour, so is the dialogue in the play.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fatalism and Pessimistic Outlook on Life in *Desire Under the Elms*

The fourth naturalistic feature of the play is fatalism and pessimistic outlook on life. The philosophical starting point of the naturalistic literature is Darwin's¹⁹ biological fatalism and Spencer's²⁰ social fatalism that derives from it. Therefore, fatalistic outlook on life that man is powerless before his or her fate is always expressed in the naturalistic works. In Zola's²¹ opinion, all is summed up in the natural laws, and the human society is subordinated to the same decisive factors as the rest of the nature; namely, the social environment is formed by a group of living people, which absolutely obey the physical and chemical laws²².

According to Darwin, all living things, including human beings, form through gradual changes during the long years. Meanwhile, he also puts forward the theory of natural selection to account for the process of this kind of development and to illustrate the inevitability of this kind of development. In particular, he explains the principle of the species' gradual evolution and the theoretical foundation of survival of the fittest. To him, he thinks that the natural selection is the motive power of the process of the living things' evolution and the basic reason of the evolutionary inevitability.

In the light of Darwin, there are three factors influencing the process of the

living beings' evolution; namely, natural selection, sexual selection, and characteristic heredity that the individual organism acquires in life, in which he places emphasis on the natural selection. Darwin narrates the natural selection like this: firstly, the colony and the individual of the animals and the plants show their respective variations; secondly, in the fight for survival, some organismal variations may produce the preponderance superior to other organisms, which will inevitably be passed on to the future generations; thirdly, now that the natural environment cannot provide enough living conditions for all the future generations produced by the living things, the proportion of the superior variations is higher than that of the inferior varieties in point of the survival; fourthly, in a series of successive processes of the evolution, all living things may produce various superior varieties and inferior ones, and the inferior varieties and the inferior variations may gradually die out, and the heredity of the superior variations will produce new, and more advanced varieties. Besides, Darwin thinks that the sexual selection is the competition in which the males scramble for the females. As a result, the weak either cannot have future generations or their future generations must be smaller than the strong in point of the amount. In terms of acquiring characteristic heredity, Darwin thinks that the superior variations and their specific properties produced and preserved in the course of natural selection and sexual selection are reproduced in their future generations in the hereditary way, and gradually produce new variations and new species through constant choice and heredity, thereby constituting the

process of the evolution.

Therefore, Darwin's theory breaks with the ideal concept of the traditional philosophy and theology towards God and man, thus making the new natural philosophy full of the pessimistic and melancholy flavor arise. According to the new natural philosophy, man is not God's product any more but a part of the nature like the common animals, and man is the outcome of the natural process during the long years. Man's fate is not determined by the all-powerful God but controlled by the natural forces that are mechanical and blind. Before the boundless and indistinct universe, man appears very insignificant and is powerless to his fate, for his fate is determined by the hereditary factors and the life environment; his life is nothing but a small part of the evolutionary process that is continuously repetitive and endless for ever in the world that is controlled by the natural forces beyond measure. At the same time, the new natural philosophy also shows the cruelty of the nature, for the nature is a gigantic machine that is aloof and indifferent to man's unluckiness. To human beings, they inevitably compete with one another in order to survive in the nature, moreover accompanied by the destruction of some people with the progress of the human beings. Thus, appears the naturalistic literature filled with the flavor of pessimistic fatalism when the pessimistic philosophical thought is reflected in the literature.

Although French literary naturalism has a great influence on American literary naturalism, Herbert Spencer's sociology and the social conditions after the

Civil War play an important role in the emergence and the development of American literary naturalism as well. Spencer applies the general rules of the evolutionary theory to the study of the society, and changes the natural selection into the social selection. He thinks that the society is an organism; although the social organism is somewhat different from the living beings' organism, yet the law of their development is the same. The natural selection giving impetus to the evolution of the living things is also the motive power of the social development, for there also exists the fight for survival in the society. Only choosing the most excellent through the technology, the wisdom, and the competition does the society make progress. Therefore, he first puts forward the laissez-faire policy, appealing for the natural rights, maintaining that everyone should have rights to do the things that he likes so long as he is not harmful to the others' identical rights, and claiming that the government is nothing but to impose restrictions on freedom, for the process of moral development is that of a man's adapting himself to the living conditions, during which the evils are finally eliminated. So he advocates the land private rights and the women and children's rights, and shows contempt for the country's rights. Even Spencer does not think that the country should help the poor, for he thinks that they cannot adapt themselves to the society and they should be cleared away in order that the people who are adaptable to the society can have more chances of developing. Stupidity, evil, and laziness are the reasons why the poor lose their lives. The natural law is that they would survive if the poor had

enough ability and they should become extinct if they had not enough ability. Before the natural law everyone should stand a severe test.

Spencer's sociology is the product of the Industrial Revolution in England, but America after the Civil War provides the suitable soil for the development and the propagation of Spencer's sociology. After the Civil War ends up in the victory of the Northern army, such problems as the work forces and the market are settled, the industry and the commerce develop at an unprecedented rate, and the capitalist economy vigorously develops. In the wake of the territorial rapid expansion, the economy of the whole country is in the period of full bloom, just as "the Gilded Age" that Mark Twain has described. Behind the back of the economical development, the post-war America is very much like a cartoon that the people fight for survival. In the course of being after the money the competition is exceedingly intense, and the people can become the millionaires all of a sudden and the millionaires can lose their private fortune all of a sudden. The whole country is like a jungle in which the weak are the prey of the strong. Here everyone launches a life-and-death struggle with the others for the survival; he ruthlessly competes with the others for the position, the honour, and the fortune. And here the traditional ideals are abandoned, and the social conventions and the morality are ignored and forgotten. However, the successful merchants instinctively accept Darwin and Spencer's thought and apply it to arguing in favor of their own behavior. They think that the cruel commercial competition also adheres to the law of "survival of the

fittest.”²³ They are victorious in the competition just because they have superhuman adaptive ability.

Thus it can be seen that Spencer's thought and the social conditions directly lead to American naturalistic literature filled with the flavor of pessimistic fatalism. The naturalistic writers think that the process of man's development is that of living things' development, thus emphasizing man's animal nature, and that man is simultaneously controlled by the natural environment and the social environment, with the result that the hereditary factors and the social environment are the decisive forces that man is unable to resist; the forces of the natural laws and the social laws far exceed man's free will that is tiny and even does not exist. Furthermore, the naturalistic writers think that survival is the highest goal of man's action, while the process in which the animals strive for survival is in fact the process in which they slaughter one another. Only through the struggle in which the weak are the prey of the strong are the most excellent full of superior conditions assured to go on existing. Thereupon, the naturalistic writers depict the violence on purpose in order to stress man's brutish nature. In the meantime, they often put man in the enormous natural and social setting to show man's insignificance, frailness, and that man has no way out.

Under the influence of Darwin's biological fatalism and Spencer's social fatalism, O'Neill also holds the fatalistic thought and pessimistic outlook on life, which are embodied in the play *Desire Under the Elms*.

Early O'Neill deeply loathes the social upheaval, callousness, and hypocrisy. It seems that the society is a paradise to the rich and a hell to the poor. However, he is at a loss what to do before the ugly reality. He cannot understand why the society is like this, nor can he know how to transform this kind of state. So he unceasingly searches after the roots of the things and the origin of the world to find the solutions. What has actually dominated all things on the earth since God died? He thinks that there is a kind of unimaginable force that can push forward everything behind life's back. Moreover, the force is so irrational and agnostic that man is unable to understand it. In terms of the world, it is also agnostic and is unable to be explained in a rational way. So to speak, agnosticism is the starting point of O'Neill's outlook on life, and he all along sticks to it in his life. The twin brother of his agnosticism is his fatalistic thought. He thinks that all is determined by fate since all is taken into the mysterious force's hands. That is to say, man's life and death, and fortune and misfortune, and a variety of phenomena, are in fact decreed by fate well in advance. As a result, the union of his agnosticism and his fatalism leads to his pessimistic feelings that are displayed in his early works. The agnostic and mysterious force is so strong that man is powerless before it and man is always inferior to it when man measures his strength with it. Now that all falls under fate's influence, then man's failure and destruction are inevitable in the man-and-fate struggle. Therefore, in O'Neill's early works the characters are always involuntarily teased by life and are at the mercy of a kind of mysterious force

leaving without a trace; namely, the characters are at the end of their tether and have to resign themselves to their fate. His early play *Desire Under the Elms* attempts to reveal man's struggle against the mysterious force that shapes his existence and limits him, so it is one of the typical examples.

Desire Under the Elms is full of an uncompromisingly mystical view of the forces at work in and through human beings, forces that may manifest themselves in forms that can be recognized by the science of psychoanalysis—i.e. Eben's Oedipus complex²⁴—but that ultimately go beyond scientific or rational explanation. And whether or not O'Neill's emphasis shifts in the course of his career from an "external" to an "internal" concept of fate, in the play the two coincide and fuse much as they do in O'Neill's ancient models. In Greek tragedy, action appears to proceed naturally from a given quantity called "character," a complex of distinguishable human traits usually seen in part as having been shaped by past experience and perhaps even by heredity in ways that reflect universal "laws" of the human experience. At the same time, the action appears as the product of mysterious forces, a reaction against some breach of the cosmic order. That is to say, "the gods are not directing events as if from outside; they work in the events; the action is seen on two planes at once, human and divine."²⁵ Similarly, in *Desire Under the Elms*, we are made cognizant simultaneously of the dark, only partly knowable forces of the individual subconscious and of a superhuman cosmic principle working itself out through the action of the tragedy.

In *Desire Under the Elms* the leitmotif “thin” reveals at every turn of the action the transcendent, inscrutable force working through a large number of indentifiable human motives in the play. The motif is established in the second scene where it recurs several times in quick succession. When Eben bitterly accuses Ephraim of having killed his mother, Simeon replies, “No one never kills nobody. It’s allus some thin’. That’s the murderer.”(p.851) When Eben asks “What’s somethin’?”(p.851) his brother replies “dunno.”(p.851) It is in this exchange that the basic significance of the motif is already revealed. Simeon contends not only that people are the pawns of a force beyond their control, but also that this force can only be identified as a “thin’.” From the outset this recourse to the indefinite pronoun establishes the essential inscrutability of the fate at work in the play. Of course we are attracted to provide an explanation—Ephraim’s grimly irrational Puritan work ethic, perhaps a function of sexual guilt or repression. But it is not his inarticulateness that makes Simeon hesitate to oversimplify the old man’s motivation by naming it. And this cryptic generalization echoes throughout the play in characters’ attempts to explain their own or each other’s actions and to articulate the mysterious influences that they are conscious of at work around them.

Still in the second scene Simeon says, “Year arter year it’s skulked in yer eye—somethin’” (p.851) when he asks Eben to explain his long-standing grudge against the elder brothers. Later in the play Ephraim explains, “I could’ o been a rich man—but somethin’ in me fit me an’ fit me—the voice of God sayin’: ‘This

hain't wuth nothin' t' Me. Git ye back t' hum!" (p.862) when he recounts to Abbie how he once left his stony New England farm for a rich and easy life in Ohio, only to abandon his crop and return home. The tone of wonder in which he exclaims "I actoolly give up what was rightful mine!" (p.862) underlines the profoundly incalculable nature of a force that can drive the intensely covetous Ephraim to such an uncongenial act.

Throughout the play the old man is conscious of a hostile presence in the house: "they's thin's pokin' about in the dark—in the corners," (p.862) and "Even the music can't drive it out—somethin'." (p.867) And then during the festivities in honor of the baby he exclaims 'somethin'.' (p.867) Finally, after he learns the truth about Eben and Abbie's relationship and the child's paternity, he says, "That was it—what I felt—pokin' round the corners—while ye lied—holdin' yerself from me—sayin' ye'd a'ready conceived. ... I felt they was somethin' onnateral—somewhars—the house got so lonesome—an' cold—drivin' me down t' the barn—t' the beast o' the field." (p.872)

The mysterious influence on Eben and his father at work can be identified with the avenging spirit of Eben's mother at one level. Having driven Ephraim out of the house, the same mysterious force seems to impel Eben toward Abbie despite the young man's fierce resistance and to be in charge of their union in the parlor which is sacred to the dead woman's memory:

Abbie: When I first come in—in the dark—they seemed somethin' here.

Eben (simply): Maw.

Abbie: I kin still feel—somethin'...

Eben: It's Maw. (p.863)

At first, Eben does not know why his mother's ghost should seem to favor a union between him and Abbie, her rival for the land. Nevertheless, at last he thinks that he makes out the spirit's purpose: "I see it! I see why. It's her vengeance on him—so's she kin rest quiet in her grave!"(p.864) But in fact this love, while punishing Ephraim, will also destroy both the dead woman's beloved son and his child. The tragic disaster clearly transcends what can conceivably be the will of Eben's mother's ghost. And at least there are two levels of mysterious forces at work in Abbie's frantic answer, "Vengeance o' God on the hull o' us!"(p.864) First there are the immediate and circumscribed influences impinging directly on the characters—Cabot's Old Testament god, the ghost, and the darkly irrational "Desire" of the title. But it is apparent that these fragmentary forces partake of a larger, more remote, more inhuman and inscrutable will. This is what Abbie suggests when she emends Eben's explanation of their passion as retribution on Cabot for his cruelty to the dead woman. The deity she evokes here is something much vaster than the petty tyrant Ephraim serves: it is Moira, the ultimate will of the universe itself.

When Eben learns that Abbie has smothered their child, he cries "Maw, whar was ye, why didn't ye stop her?"(p.870) Again, it is Abbie who senses the

truth: "She went back t' her grave that night we fust done it, remember? I hain't felt her about since."(p.870) This observation not only reveals the limitation of the ghost's influence within the larger cosmic design but also it adumbrates something of the relationship between this cosmic design and human justice or morality.

To sum up, in the play the principal characters are directly motivated by the mysterious forces that they cannot master. Especially, the word "thin" functions as the common denominator linking these half-knowable forces and pointing to the ineffable mystery beyond.

Compared to other critics, maybe Vernon Louis Parrington²⁶ more clearly lists the naturalistic standards of the literary works: 1, trying to win over the objectivity; 2, frankness; 3, adopting an immoral attitude towards the materials; 4, fatalism; 5, pessimism; 6, describing "the strong" who are dying and in abnormal state²⁷. Furthermore, Parrington says that a novel or a play is naturalistic only if it is obviously provided with several of the six features. From Chapter Four, it can be seen that the play *Desire Under the Elms* at least has the features of fatalism and pessimism; therefore, the play is of naturalistic characteristic.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Relationships between Naturalism and Realism in *Desire Under the Elms*

The play *Desire Under the Elms* is a perfect combination of naturalism and realism. Firstly, the play is of authenticity and typification. Secondly, from the play *Desire Under the Elms*, good effect of the combination of realism and naturalism on the description and the means of expression can be found. Thirdly, the union of realism and naturalism makes the play's thought tendentiousness utterly veiled; that is to say, in the play O'Neill does not energetically eulogize certain characters and certain things, nor does he vigorously criticize them. Before probing into the relationships between naturalism and realism in the play, this chapter deals with three basic features of realism and the relationships between naturalism and realism.

The word "realism" can be understood from three aspects. Firstly, it is corresponding to romanticism and is one of the two basic creative methods. So to speak, any artistic works can be included in one of the two categories according to the creative methods. Secondly, the word refers to the literary creative method that is in the position of main-stream in the western world of letters in the middle and late period of the nineteenth century. At this time, "realism" has become a proper word that refers in particular to the method that is used by such writers as Balzac²⁸, Dickens²⁹, and Mark Twain³⁰, and in the meantime stands for the trend of thought.

Thirdly, the term “critical realism” is drawn on the experience of from the Soviet Union and should be paid attention to. The researchers in the Soviet Union and our country value the critical nature of the realistic literature in the nineteenth century. Gorky³¹ points out that critical realism is a chief school that is the most magnificent and the most beneficial in the nineteenth century³², which shows how the men of letters in the Soviet Union understand the concept of the nineteenth-century realism. Later, the concept is spread to our country and is introduced into the teaching materials on the foreign literature. To a great extent, the concept coincides with the concept of the nineteenth-century realism that the Westerners study except to give prominence to the critical nature of this literary school.

Realism and romanticism are two kinds of ideological trends that follow in the age and are opposed in the literary views, in which romanticism advocates the direct expression of the subjective feelings while realism stresses the truthfulness of the life. So to speak, realism develops on the basis of refuting romanticism. Mainly realism has three basic features: firstly, it suggests reflecting the real life; secondly, it maintains that literature should be particular about the typicalness on the basis of faithful reflection of the life; thirdly, it requires that literature should reveal and analyze the social problems, criticize the unreasonable phenomena, and try to reform the society and to improve the people’s morality by means of the mild humanitarianism³³. The theory comes from *The Preface to Comedie Humaine* by Honre de Balzac. In a broader sense, both Henry Fielding³⁴ and Jane Austen³⁵ are

realistic writers; so to speak, they are forerunners of realism. In this period, there are scores of famous writers whose creative art has become highly ripe and who have written a number of immortal masterpieces. This is the period when the whole western literature of modern times is the most flourishing.

Similarly, there is a process of transformation from romanticism to realism in the American literary history. Among the early realistic writers, the most excellent is William Dean Howells³⁶; among the realistic theorists, the most excellent is Henry James³⁷ whose *The Art of Fiction* is a milestone of American realistic theory. The period from 1865 to 1900 is called the realistic period in the American literary history. During this period, the American poets imitate the British romanticists in writing style. There are not many successes in the comedies; nevertheless, America drama in the late nineteenth century is influenced by European "plays of social problems." Like European realistic novels, American realistic novels achieve the greatest successes, and the representatives are Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and Henry James. And it is in their creative practice and theoretical exploration that American realism is finally established.

Between naturalism and realism there are both similarities and differences. Concerning their differences, Realism maintains that literary works should incarnate the political and moral principles, and should function to publicise morality; and that these principles and aims should be naturally betrayed from the scenes and the plots. Yet realism does not think that literature is subordinated to a due political and

moral aim. And then realism stresses that literary works should reflect the internal inevitability of the things by means of typical techniques, and that the truthfulness of the art is superior to that of life. However, naturalism thinks that the real truth is the pure nature; so long as literature collects the fragments of the life and carefully observes them and concretely describes them, it can reflect the essence of the life. Furthermore, realism advocates humanitarianism, and aims to reveal the social contradictions so that the society can be reformed by way of the mild humanitarianism. Yet naturalism thinks that the development of everything is objective and is independent of man's will. It also suggests that the evolutionary process is so slow that the bright future is not foreseeable and the objective reality itself is cruel and man is helpless. After literature has analyzed and explained the society and the people in it by way of natural science, especially the biological laws, it achieves its goal.

Although there are differences between naturalism and realism, yet as a whole they are so similar that it is hard to judge the literary works are naturalistic or realistic only from the narration of them. From the angle of origin and development, both of them appear almost in the same period and are opposed to the romantic imagination and exaggeration. On the basis of philosophical thought, both of them are influenced by positivism³⁸ and scientific socialism, and pay attention to calm and objective scientific attitude. Then from the point of view of realism and romanticism in a broad sense, both naturalism and the nineteenth-century critical

realism belong to the category of realism and are relative to romanticism, which shows their general character. There are many similarities between naturalism and realism in the artistic techniques; for instance, they both place emphasis on the fine and careful description and portray the images that press close to the real life and so forth. So realism and naturalism communicate with each other in many aspects. As a matter of fact, it is inevitable that the two kinds of literary ideological trends existing in the same period influence each other. Realism is a new literary main stream on the basis of inheriting the whole western literary tradition, so it is a naturalistic writer who wants to start something new in order to be different that cannot throw away all realistic factors; indeed, the works that absolutely abandon tradition cannot exist at all.

Some critics point out that naturalistic literature is passive and dispirited and its creative method is unhealthy, which should in fact be treated correctly. To be sure, there is a serious flaw in basis of thinking of naturalistic literature. Darwinism is scientific in natural science, but it can be wrong to apply its theory and concepts to the social science; for there is essential difference between the nature and the human society, and if the principles of natural science are applied mechanically to the social science to analyze and explain the phenomena in the human society, it is inevitable to result in mechanic materialism. Although "survival of the fittest" scientifically reveals the competitive law in the animal world, the case is not the same in the human society; for there exists essential difference between man and

animals. As for man, he is ingenious, which makes man have thought and feelings, and morality and sentiment; namely, man is of social nature. Indeed, there is competitive relationship between man and man; but more importantly, there is conscious cooperative relationship between man and man. In order to make the relationship between man and man harmonious, a series of laws and regulations can be laid down and some moral standards can be accepted through common practice so that man's improper actions can be kept within bounds. However, the animals only instinctively follow some lower standards; for example, it is possible for man not to eat meat because of the religious relief, but it is absolutely impossible for the animals not to eat meat. To some extent, it is extremely absurd to completely apply the method of natural science to the study of the human feelings; for man's joys and sorrows are related to his physiological organs; for instance, deep sorrow makes the lachrymal gland secrete the tears, yet the motive power does not lie in the inside body itself but in the outside social life; that is to say, it is certain stimulus from the external that makes man's feelings change that leads to the secretion of the lachrymal gland inside the body. Some qualitative analyses of the feelings can be given in the logical method, and it is unimaginable to give quantitative analyses of them completely in the method of natural science.

In point of thought, naturalism is completely wrong, but from the point of view of literature it is not without a single redeeming feature; on the contrary, it probes into the art and achieves great successes. Literary art is different from

philosophy, for the task of the literature is to reflect the society from different aspects and different angles so that the readers can have a chance of savouring the life and thinking over the true meaning of life; that is to say, the writers cannot explain and publicize truth like the philosophers, and they only reveal the truth by way of artistic images. Truth is sole, yet there are lots of roads being close to and reaching the truth. Concerning art, it is one of the roads as well. So long as every explorative road is of inspiration and develops a new style of its own, it is meaningful although it has some shortcomings. Beyond doubt naturalism is such an exploration, and to some extent it correctly reflects the society. There are numerous contradictions in the modern western society, so the people in general feel a sense of alienation. The money relationship between man and man twists the society and the human nature. The greed that cannot be controlled arouses some people's brutish nature, which makes the human society not different from the animal world in which the weak are the prey of the strong in some aspects. Naturalistic literature reveals these problems from unique angle of view, which is undoubtedly of great benefit for us to think over and analyze these problems.

In the play *Desire Under the Elms* there are both realistic ingredients and naturalistic ingredients. So to speak, the union is not harmful to the play itself; on the contrary, this kind of creative method adopts an original approach, for it is different from the traditional realism and it is utterly different from general naturalism, which provides a unique angle of view to observe the society and the

people in it. The angle of view is that of the combination of the unwilling naturalism and the moral realism³⁹. In the play there are three aspects embodying the union.

Firstly, O'Neill clearly accounts for the age, the environment, and the characters in the play, and carefully describes all kinds of things; moreover, the playwright fully depicts the psychology of the characters in the stage directions. Just as the narrative techniques that the traditional realistic writers adopt, he elaborately delineates the things and deepgoingly portrays the psychology of the characters, which makes the readers achieve a deeper comprehension of the things and the characters. For instance, at the beginning of the play O'Neill only opens up a picture before the readers' eyes: the outward appearance of the Cabot farmhouse in New England, a stone wall with a wooden gate at center opening on a country road, the elms, the narrow porch, the father's bedroom and that of the brothers, the kitchen, and the parlor, and so on. It seems that the content is simple, but in fact the picture concretely displays the background of the era and the environment of the story, the core characters and the family relation, which is of a kind of ominous atmosphere that forebodes the arrival of a tragedy.

The play truthfully deals with Cabot's determination to live fully and to conquer his land; Eben's hatred of his father and need to lay to rest his mother's spirit, which he feels haunting the farm; and Abbie's compulsion to possess and control something after her years of poverty, compounded with the obsessiveness of

her love for Eben. In order to have a taste of how O'Neill writes in a fine and smooth style and how he describes vividly and truthfully, let's appreciate the following description:

In the next room Eben gets up and paces up and down distractedly. Abbie hears him. Her eyes fasten on the intervening wall with concentrated attention. Eben stops and stares. Their hot glances seem to meet through the wall. Unconsciously he stretches out his arms for her and she half rises. Then aware, he mutters a curse at himself and flings himself face downward on the bed, his clenched fists above his head, his face buried in the pillow. Abbie relaxes with a faint sigh but her eyes remain fixed on the wall; she listens with all her attention for some movement from Eben. (p.861)

It is thus clear that looks and manner of the characters, the relationship between them, and even their personality are true to life. In the whole play, although the playwright concentrates on the development of the plot, he spares no effort to clearly account for the environment and the characters.

Secondly, O'Neill always selects the materials from the real life. So to speak, *Desire Under the Elms* results from his long-term observation of life. Both the heroes and the heroines in the play are strongly after love and are satisfied with running after the carnal desire and the desire for money and property. To some extent, all this reflects the people's life, thought, and feelings at that time. After the First World War, traditional morality and religious relief lose their original

meaning and value. With regard to most intellectuals, they look down upon the reality and want to escape from it. As to the youth, they take pride in dissoluteness. Moreover, it seems that Freudianism⁴⁰ provides the theoretical basis for the unconventional actions that they are in pursuit of sexual passion. Thus, it is inevitable that love and lust are the content and the aim of the life. It is not inflated to say that the play embodies O'Neill's profound insight into the age and his astonishing ability to understand and reveal the people's complex thought and feelings. On the other hand, the playwright dissects that the people of all social strata are after money and property and their words and deeds centre on money. Thus, how are the statements and actions of the people looked upon on earth under such social background? And how are their desire and the following unluckiness explained and analyzed in the world? It is under such social and historical background that O'Neill creates this play that is of universal meaning. Of course, the play is of artistic typification.

In the meantime, the depicted story and the created characters obviously mix up the naturalistic idea of the fatalism, which has been discussed in the preceding part of the thesis.

From the play *Desire Under the Elms*, good effect of the combination of realism and naturalism on the description and the means of expression can be found. The keynote of realism makes the play be of typification; namely, the universal meaning. However, the naturalistic description free from all inhibitions and in

details makes the characters in the play extremely distinctive. The style of naturalism is always sharp-pointed and makes a showy display of its abilities. Especially the naturalistic writers are good at depicting the strong emotions and horrible situation. For instance, after he knows that his child has been smothered by her, Eben's mood suddenly changes to horror and shrinks away from Abbie. Then he thinks that Abbie must be a pizen and must swap her soul to hell, for she should murder a poor little child. Then, he suddenly rages, and says, "Ha! I kin see why ye done it! Not the lies ye jest told—but' cause ye wanted t' steal agen—steal the last thin' ye'd left me—my part o' him—no, the hull o' him—ye saw he looked like me—ye knowed he was ali mine—an' ye couldn't b'ar it—I know ye! Ye killed him fur bein' mine!" (p.871) All this has driven him almost insane. He makes a rush past her for the door, then turns, shaking both fists at her, violently, and thinking that he will take vengeance now, and that he will tell the Sheriff everything, and that he will sing "I'm off to California!" (p.871) and go to the fields of gold in the West. Then he half shouts, half croons incoherently, suddenly breaking off passionately and saying that he is going for the Sheriff to come and get her, and that he wants her to be taken away, locked up from him, for he cannot stand to look at her. At last he turns and runs out, around the corner of house, panting and sobbing, and breaks into a swerving sprint down the road. It is clear that the good results are hard to achieve by means of the realistic implicit tone. So to speak, realism makes the play be of profound social meaning and naturalism strengthens the play's incentives, which

helps each other forward in point of art.

The union of realism and naturalism makes the play's thought tendentiousness utterly veiled; that is to say, in the play O'Neill does not energetically eulogize certain characters and certain things, nor does he vigorously criticize them. In O'Neill's opinion, a person has both good and evil aspects, which objectively exist side by side and mingle with each other. The mobile ways of the various things are both objective and reasonable although they are sometimes unpleasant and even are harmful to the people. For instance, although the Cabot boys do hate their father and do wish him dead, yet they do not kill the father. The three brothers are greedy for money and property out of natural instincts, which is neither right nor wrong to O'Neill. In terms of Eben, he longs to love and to be loved, which is also neither right nor wrong to O'Neill. Nevertheless, his action does bring disasters to the family so that in the end he destroys himself; obviously, he is both hateful and pitiful. Therefore, that O'Neill does not directly discuss the goodness and the evil is not because he utterly escapes from them but because he thinks that they are hard to pass fair judgement.

Clearly, not only can realism and naturalism mix together but also they are inseparable from each other in the play *Desire Under the Elms*. Since O'Neill can grasp the truthfulness of the life, he makes his naturalism easier to be accepted and covers up some of its weaknesses. At the same time, some artistic techniques of naturalism enrich the expressive ways of realism and add the new flavor to realism.

Just as Vernon Louis Parrington says, there are not pure naturalistic works at all, and if there were, maybe the readers could not stand to read the pure naturalistic works⁴¹.

CONCLUSION

The play *Desire Under the Elms* is regarded as not only a copy of surface reality but also a grim depiction of crude lusts and elemental passions that are dredged from the depths of human experience. Although it uses a realistic stage setting to present a reasonable sameness of a New England farmhouse, and there is a conscientious effort to imitate the speech and mannerisms suitable to people like the Cabots, this show of verisimilitude is frankly eclectic and goes no further than is necessary to relate the subject matter to recognizable fact. Beyond this requirement the play employs realistic methods with considerable freedom, and less for the purpose of creating an illusion of outward naturalness than as a way of externalizing concretely the inner nature of its materials. Its manipulation of the farmhouse architecture is symptomatic. Just as it takes no notice of normal reality by taking away the farmhouse facade to expose the action that is taking place inside, it takes similar liberties with the normal facade of life so as to get at the vital mechanism that is housed within. Thus the picture of life that it presents is not so much a photographic reproduction of surface appearances as an X-ray exposure of anatomical structure. The intense relations of the Cabot household are employed to reveal the congenital struggle of human nature with the forces that, operating upon and within it, make it what it is and determine its fate. While the external shell of action roughly approaches a particular aspect of rural New England life in the

mid-nineteenth century, the core of drama is a general life process which exists outside specific place or time. Therefore, the true substance of the play to some extent possesses the isolated and universal validity of a laboratory demonstration. The subject is a clinical case history. The focus of interest is not the fortunes of an individual but the experience of a group. The real protagonist is composite: it is humanity itself, as exemplified collectively by all the characters of the play.

When it presents this case history, the play endeavors to be scrupulously scientific. It treats both events and characters as natural phenomena that is resulting automatically from an organic life process. It regards individual consciousness as a complex product of environmental influences and subconscious impulses that are rooted in the deepest instincts of human nature and obey the compulsions of natural law. Therefore, its analysis of natural functions is, in fact, an inquiry into the fundamental chemistry of life—a study, as it were, of human destiny in terms of basal metabolism. In order to isolate more easily the basic elements of human behavior, uncontaminated by the inhibitions and sublimations of civilized decorum, the play chooses to deal with basic characters in a relatively primitive environment. And it marshals all the formal disciplines of modern natural and social science to their explanation, with particular attention to biology and economics. Thus it presents the antagonism between Eben and his father as a result of harsh economic pressure combined with hereditary temperament and the sexual jealousy induced by an Oedipus complex. It interprets old Cabot's marriage according to such various

factors as an economic urge to possession, a biologic need for survival in offspring, a social desire for congenial companionship and understanding, a confused religious enthusiasm compounded of camp-meeting evangelism and primitive fertility rites, and finally a simple mating instinct engendered by the arrival of spring. It traces the fate of Abbie to the spiritual confusion that appears when her desperate bid for material security is faced with economic competition, domestic and biologic frustration, and the psychological ambiguities of her dual mother-mistress relationship with Eben. Reducing these miscellaneous phenomena to their lowest common denominator, the play resolves the dynamics of human life to an operation of certain commanding urges or basic desires, produced by the most vital needs of human nature, yet often exceeding its physical capacity for fulfillment. In terms of the evidence afforded by its dramatic action the play endeavors to examine scientifically the tragic conflicts and frustrations formed by these elemental desires under the elms of one exemplary New England farmstead.

Such a scientific probing of the tragic evils that destroy mankind lays an inevitable stress upon the ugly, sordid, and cruel aspects of human experience. This is especially so because the naturalistic approach to the problems tends to lay stress on the physical nature of man and the animal instincts that mold his desires. Since the desires that end up in tragedy are destructive of human well-being, it is evident that they represent impulses beyond man's comprehension or his rational control. Hence the picture of tragic man that emerges is that of a more or less rational

animal driven to his own destruction by such blind and primal instincts as self-preservation, sex, and the pursuit of some modicum of happiness. The attempt to view such matters with scientific objectivity leads to a clinical frankness that is as unsettling to conventional notions of propriety as to some tastes it is inexcusably offensive. Doubtless the matter-of-fact candor of *Desire Under the Elms* smacks more of the research laboratory, the dissecting-room, or the stud-farm than of the drawing-room or, for that matter, the public stage; nevertheless, in extenuation it must be recognized that the concern of the play is not with human ideals or illusions but with scientific truth. In a matter as vital as human tragedy it is the actual facts in the case that count; and the facts of life are singularly inconsiderate of polite decorum. Indeed, the physical facts of neither birth nor death are especially prepossessing, and the manifestations of disease are not, either. To a naturalist like O'Neill tragic evil is a disease of human life as virulent, and as obscene, as any other fatal disease. From this scientific point of view, a fastidious reticence toward the lust that rots the soul is as out of place and dangerous as toward the cancer that consumes the flesh.

In the meanwhile, the play recognizes in human desire a range which extends from the lust of the rutting beast to the desire of the moth for the star. Something of this polarity of human nature is suggested at the very outset, as the two elder brothers come in from the fields, their feet heavy with the muck of earth but their eyes irresistibly attracted to the bright sky. Its essence is summed up in a

single word—"Purty!" The scientific mystery, as well as perhaps the ultimate tragedy, which the play perceives in human life is that from the stony soil of human nature, under the inexorable elms of a natural universe, are conceived desires that are not of nature but of the human spirit. They stand for a hunger that at once sets man apart from nature and exceeds the power of nature to gratify. Out of this hunger grow the bitter loneliness of old Cabot, which can find surcease only in brute communion with the cattle, the tormented quest of Eben for a consummation he cannot define, and the terrible transfiguration of Abbie, which results in unnatural crime. To this capacity of the natural creature for more than nature can supply the play attributes both the disaster and the sublimity of human life. As it is the source of old Cabot's tragic frustration, it also explains the maimed exaltation of Eben and Abbie. For, although the latter submit to the frailty of flesh, their very defeat before the forces of nature is a triumph for the human spirit. In the fires of lust, hatred, and crime are purified a compassion for human needs and an understanding of human values that endow them with a spiritual refinement and dignity denied the others. It is the realization of this vital fact that brings Eben back to share the redemption of Abbie's guilt and that constitutes the final ironic purgation of the play.

To sum up, it is because of the play *Desire Under the Elms* that E. O'Neill is called a gifted dramatist. So to speak, O'Neill probes into the inner world of the characters in the play, thus providing a new angle for inquiring into the true meaning of life. Besides, the impacts can be found of three ancient Greek

mythological characters—Oedipus, Phaedra, and Medea, Sigmund Freud's psychological principle, and Friedrich Nietzsche's⁴² philosophy on the play, in which O' Neill deals with committing incest, desire for property, and harmfulness and disastrous effect of this kind of desire. Obviously, E. O' Neill employs the Oedipus complex to lay bare the theme of committing incest. In the play, O' Neill shows the Oedipal struggle between the father E. Cabot and the son Eben, Abbie's dual mother-mistress relationship with Eben, and Eben's taking his father to heart. In terms of Abbie, she is a combination of Phaedra and Medea. On the one hand, she resembles Phaedra, who spares no effort to entice the son of the former wife of her husband; on the other hand, she resembles Medea, who kills her two children in order to avenge herself. In order to possess the farm, Abbie is married to old Cabot who is much older than her. Then she manages to induce Eben in order for her to have the rights of inheriting the farm; indeed, she succeeds in giving birth to a son. Later on, when he finds out her aim to possess the farm, Eben is so cold to her that she kills her son so as to win back Eben's love for her and to prove her true love for Eben. After he reports the case to the Sheriff, Eben repents. Driven by his love for her, Eben is determined to be held responsible for infanticide with Abbie. Thus it can be seen that Eben and Abbie go hand in hand out of the farm. When he learns the truth, old Cabot makes up his mind to burn the farm and to leave for California. Hence, through the fine and smooth depiction of the relations among the son, the father, and the stepmother and the tragedy resulting from them, E. O' Neill deeply

reveals that the desire for property is the root of the evils in the capitalist society. However, Abbie's sexual passion or her thirst for love makes her conquer her lust for the farm. So to speak, her sexual instinct is the internal element that forms her passions. Of course, the sexual instinct is the root of her tragedy, which is doubtless an important view in Freudianism. Besides, the elms in the play symbolize the female; that is to say, they symbolize Abbie, who proudly looks down at the farmhouse like the two elms, dominates the Cabots, and deals with everything according to her own desires. Therefore, the realization of her desires results in the destruction of herself and the whole family. It is thus clear that O' Neill employs the modern psychological views to analyze and create the characters; but at the same time, he associates the characters with the desires for possession prevailing in the capitalist society, which makes the play have the social meaning and the universal meaning.

NOTES

1. Calvinism, system of theological thought found in the doctrinal expressions of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which derives its name from John Calvin (1509-64), the French Protestant reformer.
2. Deism is the belief in a God whose existence can be proved by looking at the world he made rather than by considering some message he personally gave to humans.
3. Civil War, the conflict (1861-65) between the Northern states which remained in the Union and the Southern states which seceded to form the Confederacy.
4. Dreiser, Theodore Herman Albert (1871-1945), one of America's literary naturalists. In his words, man was a victim of forces over which he had no control. To him, life was so sad, so strange, so mysterious and so inexplicable. Therefore, in his books, the characters were often subject to the control of the natural forces—especially those of environment and heredity. Moreover, the effect of Darwinist idea of “survival of the fittest” was shattering, so it was not surprising to find in his fictions a world of jungle, where “kill or to be killed” was the law.
5. Crane, Stephen (1871-1900), a pioneer writing in the naturalistic tradition in the history of American literature. His fictional world was a naturalistic one in which man was deprived of free will and expected no help from any quarter

whatever. It was a world in which God was cold. The universe did not care about man, who was submerged by forces like environment and heredity.

6. Steinbeck, John (1902-68), a significant Depression writer in the history of American literature. In his novels, he always managed to keep a refreshing faith in humanity, in the future when man would come to grips with his problems and come out all right, which gave him his claim to fame and permanence. Of course, his greatest book was *The Grapes of Wrath*. In 1962 he won the Nobel Prize for literature.
7. See *Zola*, translated by Wang daoqian (Pingming Publishing House, 1955), p.70.
8. The word Sisyphean means fruitless, infructuous, unavailing, and ungrateful. Its noun form is Sisyphus, who was a king of the ancient Greece. Because he was steeped in iniquity, he crashed into the hell after his death. Meanwhile, he was punished by pushing the stones on the hills. But after he had pushed the stones on the hills, the stones always came rolling down the slope.
9. See *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*, written by Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Wdwards (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1974), p.267.
10. See *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, written by Fredrick Engels, p.70. The first edition of the book was published in October 1884 in Hottingen-Zurich.
11. The Golden West refers to California.

12. See Edwin A. Engel's *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1953, p.310.
13. See *Backgrounds of American Literary Thoughts*, written by Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Wdwards (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1974), p.267.
14. Nemesis, or nemesis, just and esp. unavoidable punishment, often considered as a goddess or an active force.
15. Thespis (sixth century BC), the "inventor of tragedy," was born in Attica, and was the first prize winner at the Great Dionysia in 534 BC. He was an important innovator for the theatre, since he introduced such things as the independent actor, as opposed to the choir, as well as masks, make up and costumes. Thespis walked around Athens pulling a handcart, setting up a kind of one-man plays, where he showed the bad behavior of man. The word for actor "thespian" comes from his name. His contemporary Solon resented him, with the explanation that what he showed on stage soon would be acted out in reality as well.
16. See Conrad Seiler's *Los Angeles Must Be Kept Pure* in *The Nation*, New York, Vol. CXXII, No.3176, May 19, 1926, p.548.
17. Ibid.
18. A state in the northeast of America.
19. Darwin, Charles Robert (1809-92), born at Shrewsbury, grandson of E. Darwin, was educated at Edinburgh University and Christ's College, Cambridge. He embarked in 1831 with Fitzroy as naturalist on the *Beagle*, bound for South

America, returned in 1836, and published in 1839 his *Journal of Researches into the Geology and Natural History of the various countries visited by H. M. S. Beagle*. His great work *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* appeared in 1859. Darwin had received from A. R. Wallace a manuscript containing a sketch of his theory. Building upon the Uniformitarian geology of Charles Lyell (1797-1875), which supposed a very great antiquity for the earth and slow, regular change, Darwin argued for a natural, not divine, origin of species. In the competitive struggle for existence, creatures possessing advantageous mutations would be favoured, eventually evolving into new species. In the 'survival of the fittest' organic descent was achieved by natural selection, by analogy with the artificial selection of the stockbreeder. An agnostic, Darwin saw no higher moral or religious ends in evolution, only chance and necessity. Other evolutionists, such as Wallace and Spencer, by contrast, identified evolution with progress. Darwin's book gave rise to intense opposition, but found distinguished supporters in T. H. Huxley, Lyell, and Sir Joseph Hooker (1817-1911); the reverberation of his ideas can be seen throughout the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. In *The Descent of Man* (1871) Darwin discussed sexual selection, and argued that man too had evolved, from the higher primates, whereas Wallace made man a partial exception to this rule. Despite religious and humanist fears, evolutionism in general quickly won acceptance, but natural selection, Darwin's evolutionary

mechanism, foundered for want of an adequate theory of inheritance until the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics, which led to the emergence of the modern evolutionary synthesis in the 1920s. A dedicated naturalist, Darwin also wrote extensively on barnacles, earthworms, and orchids, and was a pioneer observer of animal behaviour. *The life and Letters of Darwin*, edited by his son Francis Darwin, appeared in 1887-8, and several further volumes of letters have also been published.

20. Spencer, Herbert (1820-1903), an English philosopher and sociologist. In 1860, after reading C. Darwin, he announced a systematic series of treatises, to the elaboration of which he devoted the remainder of his life: *First Principles* (1862), *Principles of Biology* (1864-7), *Principles of Sociology* (1876-96), and *Principles of Ethics* (1879-93). He was the founder of evolutionary philosophy, pursuing the unification of all knowledge on the basis of a single all-pervading principle, that of evolution, which he defines as follows: 'an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of emotion; during which matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation'. The process continues until equilibrium is reached, after which the action of the environment will in time bring about disintegration. The law holds good of the visible universe as well as of smaller aggregates, suggesting the conception of past and future evolutions such as that which is now proceeding. This theory of

a physical system leads up to Spencer's ethical system, and his first ethical principle is the equal right of every individual to act as he likes, so long as he does not interfere with the liberty of others.

21. Zola (1840-1902), the French poet, novelist, and literary theorist. He refers to Auguste Comte's positivism and puts forward the literary theory of the naturalism.
22. See *The Souls of the Literary World in the Twentieth-Century America*, written by Mao Xinde (Aircraft Industry Publishing House, 1994), p.47.
23. The phrase was coined by Herbert Spencer, but accepted by Charles Robert Darwin.
24. One of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis is the Oedipus complex. According to the generally accepted version during a session of self-analysis Freud unearthed a childhood memory of being sexually aroused by seeing his mother naked. However, as Webster pointed out there is no evidence whatsoever that this episode ever occurred. What Freud wrote about his discovery to Fliess was that he remembered a long train journey, and because it was so long he deduced that he might have had the opportunity of seeing his mother naked. He then deduced further that he might have been aroused by the scene. Although the incident might have happened there is a good probability that the memory Freud recovered was in fact false. Soon after Freud uncovered these memories from his own childhood he postulated a universal law—the Oedipus complex. Freud

believed that in the phallic stage of development (i.e. between the years of 2 and 3) every boy becomes his mother's lover in his dreams. However, the boy's sexual interests are soon met with the threat of castration. The successful resolution involves identification with the father and assuming an active and aggressive social role in a male-dominated society. For a little girl the resolution of the Oedipus complex is different. She gives up the desire for the mother by becoming her Daddy's little girl. In fact she might become too attached to Daddy. While Freud originally believed that the memories his female clients uncovered about incestuous relationships with their fathers were true after the formulation of the Oedipus complex Freud reached the conclusion that these memories were in reality wish-fulfilling fantasies of overly attached females. As such feelings were unacceptable to the moral ego the female repressed them. Freud eventually postulated that all incidents of child sexual abuse reported by women were nothing more but fantasies. This view contributed greatly to the disbelief of women evident in later years. It is extraordinary how this theory could later be switched to defend the very cause Freud himself so violently opposed.

25. See Preston Fambrough's *The Tragic Cosmology of O'Neill's 'Desire Under the Elms'*, in the Eugene O'Neill Newsletter, Vol. X, No.2, Summer-Fall, 1986, pp.25-9.
26. Parrington, Vernon Louis (1871-1929), scholar of American literature, professor at the University of Washington (1908-29).

27. See *Main Currents in American Thought*, written by Vernon Louis Parrington (Oklahoma University Press, 1987), p.323.
28. Honre de Balzac (1799-1850), a French novelist. His *Comedie Humaine* consists of ninety-one novels that reflect the social changes in French.
29. Dickens, Charles John Huffham (1812-70), the greatest representative of English critical realism. His novels offer a panorama of the English bourgeois society of his age, bitterly exposing the evils of the society and showing his deep love for the working people.
30. Mark Twain (1835-1910), a great literary giant of America. He is called "the true father of our national literature" by H. L. Mencken. Moreover, he is the representative of local colorism.
31. Maxim Gorky, a great Russian writer.
32. See *On Literature, Talking with Young Writers*, written by Maxim Gorky, (People Literature Publishing House, 1978), p.335.
33. Humanitarianism advocates to try to improve people's lives, e.g. by providing better conditions to live in and by opposing injustice.
34. Fielding, Henry (1707-1754), father of the English novel. It was he that set up the theory of realism in literary creation: (1) "Nature herself," i.e. the exact observation and study of real life, was the basis of his work; (2) the center of his working philosophy was Man; (3) the profound knowledge of human nature was mainly acquired by what he himself called "conversation;" (4) most of his

characters are compounded of both observation and imagination, of both experience and invention.

35. Austen, Jane (1775-1817), one of the two major novelists of the Romantic period. Her masterpiece is *Pride and Prejudice*.
36. Howells, William Dean (1837-1920), an American novelist. His masterpiece is *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.
37. James, Henry (1843-1916), the first American writer to conceive his career in international terms.
38. Positivism is a system of thought based on real facts that can be experienced and proved, rather than on ideas formed in the mind.
39. See *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*, written by Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Wdwards (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1974), p.267.
40. Name for the ideas of Sigmund Freud, and for the tradition of psychological thought (and psychoanalytic practice) spawned by his theories. The philosophical importance and influence of Freudianism or psychoanalysis derives from its view of human nature, which emphasizes the importance of unconscious forces in determining the beliefs and actions of human beings.
41. See *Main Currents in American Thought*, written by Vernon Louis Parrington (Oklahoma University Press, 1987), p.323.
42. Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844-1900), the German idealistic philosopher.

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