



The Effect of Naturalism School on Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie

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Abstract: In this study we are dealing with one of these great dramatists, namely Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill is considered the father of modern American drama. He believes that the dramatist should know no limitation in his works; he should try everything that can be dramatized, he also believes that the playwright ought not to restrict himself to one type of writing, he should be experimental. O'Neill himself did not stick to one type of writing he was innovative in his works. He made use of such modern European tides and schools as naturalism, expressionism, realism and others. The present study aims at tracing the dramatic experiments in O'Neill's play Anna Christie (1922) and bringing these elements to the surface to be analyzed. This paper focuses on naturalism as a literary movement that originated in France in the nineteenth century; then it explains the naturalistic elements in O'Neill's play Anna Christie (1922) that won the Pulitzer Prize.

Keywords: Eugene O'Neill, naturalism, expressionism, realism, Anna Christie, Pulitzer Prize.

1. INTRODUCTION

Talking about the American drama is as talking about a baby in the cradle. This baby is newly born and should be taken care of by his parents; the American drama too, is newly born and has carefully been taken care of by the American literary men. Eventhough its seeds go back to the nineteenth century yet, the real beginning of the American drama was in the twentieth century. It is only in this period of time the world has witnessed the emergence of a pure American drama. It was a result of

many political and economic crises, that is why the people believed that it is real and true. Among the most prominent literary men who formed the foundation of the American dramatic literature are: Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Others.

The American theatre, now considered one of the strongest and the most outstanding world theatres, was really peripheral until the end of the nineteenth century. It was the last major proportions to come of age (Subhi, p. 26). At the beginning there were primitive and stumbling steps in trying to create a serious American theatre and to have stable cornerstones of the American play. It is worthwhile to mention that drama was the last of all the literary types to come to full flower in America.

2. Eugene O'Neill's Background

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born in New York on October 16, 1888. He descends from an artistic family, as his father was a popular actor and his mother was fond of drawing. His literary career started in December 1912 when he entered a tuberculosis sanatorium (Rogers, p. 5). During his convalescence, he first felt the urge to write. When he left the sanatorium he was a man of purpose.

In the fall of 1914 he went to Harvard University to take Professor George Baker's famous course in playwriting. After a short period he wrote eleven one-act plays, two long plays, and some poetry. In 1916 the Provincetown Players put on *Bound East for Cardiff*, which "was O'Neill's first play to be acted" (Rogers, p. 6). Only after four years, he did win his first Pulitzer Prize for the production of *Beyond the Horizon* (1920); from then until his death no one questioned that he was the leading American playwright of his generation.

Moving from success to success, O'Neill received three more Pulitzer prizes for, "*Anna Christie* (1922); *Strange Interlude* (1928); and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, posthumously enacted" (Clark, p. 5). And he coronated his literary career with the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936. Moreover, "O'Neill was the first American playwright to receive the Nobel Prize" (Rogers, p. 7).

In the fall of 1920 *The Emperor Jones* was staged in London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo and Buenos Aires, laying the foundation for O'Neill's international reputation. In fact, all the critics have agreed on regarding O'Neill as the pioneer and the legitimate father of the modern American drama and the real history of the American drama begins with the production of his plays. Eugene O'Neill was experimental in playwriting, and he did not restrict himself to one particular style of writing. On the contrary, he experimented the style of many European schools, among which are expressionism, naturalism, and symbolism, and this will be our coming subject.

Finally, O'Neill died in 1953 at the age of sixty-five and "no one doubted that he was the greatest playwright America had ever produced" (Rogers, p. 7).

3. Naturalism

Naturalism as a literary movement is originated in France in the nineteenth century; its most remarkable leader is Emile Zola who elaborated it in a literary theory. The year 1868 is regarded as a birth date of naturalism because, it is only at that time Zola published his novel *Thérèse Raquin*, which he later dramatized as a play.

Naturalism has been regarded as a branch of realism, and the French naturalistic writers considered themselves a second generation of realists. In fact, both naturalism and realism aim at reproducing real life in an objective manner; and both of them are defined by their subject matter, the depiction of reality, the interest in ordinary and lower people instead of those who come from a high station in life; and obscene or unpleasant subjects are tackled instead of pleasant ones; but it is worthy to mention that, the naturalistic writers are franker or more extremist than the realists in handling matters of sex, hunger, poverty, disease, and the ugly aspects of the society (Yeganeh, p. 118).

They are more pessimistic than the realists; "their fundamental view of man is of an animal in the natural world" (Flint, and Addison, p. 301), responding to environmental forces and internal stresses and drives, over none of which he has either control or full knowledge (ibid). And finally, the naturalists are atheists; they deny the existence of God, and if He exists, He is indifferent. In general, the naturalists are influenced by two prominent figures, the first one is Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the originator of the theory of positivism in sociology, while the second one is Charles Darwin who has two theories, "The Survival of the Fittest" and "Evolution." Darwin's famous work is *The Origin of the Species* (1859).

Now it is time to say that, Emile Zola is considered as the chief figure of the naturalistic school (Scott, p. 191), and his play *Thérèse Raquin*, is widely regarded as the first milestone of the movement" (Styan, p. 7). It is a grim tale of sexual passion in a lower middle class setting (ibid). It talks about Therese adulterous love and her final suicide (ibid). The plot of this play is that, Therese is married to a man who cannot satisfy her sexually. Therefore, she sought another man to satisfy her. Therese and her lover decided to kill her husband in order to get married to each other. The two lovers succeeded in drowning the sickly husband but on the night of their wedding, they committed suicide by poisoning themselves because they psychologically felt that they did something wrong and to atone for their guilt they decided to die. As a matter of fact, the play focuses on the conflict between feelings, instincts, and conscience.

Before ending up our definition of Naturalism, it is worthy to say that, naturalism does not make use of soliloquies and asides; it does not portray a hero or a heroine, it has no plot, and finally there is no intimacy between the actors and the audience in the naturalistic plays.

4. *Anna Christie*

Anna Christie was written by Eugene O'Neill between 1920-1921. It was a one-act play and it was called *Chris Christopherson*; (Hawi, p. 98) the playwright developed it and gave it the name of his heroine to become *Anna Christie*. The play was so excellent to the extent that "it brought him his second Pulitzer Prize" (Rogers, p. 6). The play was considered one of the most beautiful naturalistic plays that dealt with a serious social malady which was the corruption of the society. O'Neill tried hard to make this play naturalistic in order to convey his message in a truthful representation of life. In this study we are going to trace the prominent naturalistic elements in the play, showing the darkness and frankness of the representation of life. The first naturalistic element that we are going to deal with is the subject matter of the play itself.

In most of the naturalistic plays, the playwright does not focus on the plot and usually the scenes do not have a clear-cut beginning or end because naturalism aims at presenting a slice of life and this slice must be chosen arbitrarily and ending arbitrarily. In *Anna Christie*, O'Neill did not concentrate on the plot. His main focus was on depicting naturalistic characters in realistic situations; he presented to us a slice of life which is chosen arbitrarily and he tried to study this slice scientifically.

In *Anna Christie*, most of the preceding events are reported; they do not physically appear on the stage. The audiences know nothing about the past of most of the characters, their past is reported to them, e.g., Chris' past, the death of his wife, and his desertion to his daughter are all events that do not appear on the stage; they are reported to the audience, and the same is true with Anna's past, her enslavement, her drudgery in the farm, and Paul's seduction of her are all reported. It was the audiences themselves who start putting these reported events together in order to have a clear beginning of the plot, while the end of the plot is so indefinite or as O'Neill himself says: "It seems to have a false definiteness" (Engel, p. 44). It has neither a happy nor an unhappy end because both of the father and the lover continued to work on the sea leaving Anna alone on land waiting for them. About the end David Rogers says "O'Neill does not want to indicate either a happy or unhappy end to the romance of Anna and Mat. The play concludes on the note that the sea directly controls the fate of them all" (Rogers, p. 8).

O'Neill deliberately made the end indefinite in order to stress the fact that fate's endless chain is relentlessly drawing the Christopherson family to their doom; but it is not necessary a foreboding doom (Engel, p. 45). So, the reader can clearly notice that the plot of *Anna Christie* has no clear beginning and no clear end, it is a slice of life that has naturalistic characters living realistic situations.

In *Anna Christie* we are introduced to the character of Chris, he is an old captain of a coal barge. After the death of his wife, Chris deserted the land leaving behind him his little daughter to be raised with her mother's cousins. The poor girl was the victim of her cousin's enslavement and drudgery. They mistreated and enslaved her severely, and what adds a tragedy to her tragedies is that, at the age of sixteen, one of her cousins, Paul, seduced her and that is why she left the farm and passed her way through life, struggling to earn her living. For a time she worked as a governess but sooner she hated that job because she felt that she is taking care of the children of strangers; yet when she left this job her crisis began. Because she had neither a father nor a mother that can take care of her, she slept in the streets and in shady places till the harshness of life led her to be a prostitute. It is worthy to say that Anna did not sell her body for sexual pleasures but because she found herself terribly alone in this hostile world without having a father to defend and protect her and without having a firm and a stable house that can protect her from this barbaric environment. She remained a prostitute till the police raided these shady houses and put all the prostitutes in jail. In prison, Anna felt very sick because she is not accustomed to its life (Hawi, p. 147).

As a matter of fact, the prison is considered a shock that brought to Anna her self-consciousness and self-realization because sooner after that, she decided to look for her father in order to come and live with him because he works as a janitor, as she believes, and as he told her in his letters. Anna really comes wishing to live with him wherever he lives even in a small cottage. This incident reflects Anna's desire to have a shelter and to enjoy the warmth of the family, and it shows her desire to stability. But this big dream is collapsed after knowing that her father is working as a sailor which means that he himself does not have a shelter, and he himself shares with his daughter the same problem, both of them are roaming, Anna is loitering on land while her father is loafing on the sea. In fact, Chris has lied to Anna by telling her that he is working as a janitor, and he lied to Marthy by telling her that he devoted money to his daughter in order to be raised properly: "His bringing me up! is that what he tells people! I like his nerve! he let them cousins of my old woman's keep me on their farm and work me to death like a dog" (O'Neill, Act 1, 175).

And Anna, on her part, has lied to her father when she told him that she is working as a governess while she is practising the worst profession in the world. Now it is time to discuss the lie as one of the naturalistic elements in the play.

Basically both naturalism and realism aim at reproducing the real life of humans. Telling lies is part of being humans, usually human beings tell lies when they want to conceal something or to hush up something. O'Neill is clever enough to portray the slightest thing about the human nature which is telling lies, as if by this, O'Neill wants to show that he is dealing with real human beings in a realistic situation, doing naturalistic things, or he wants to say that life is not consisting of truths only, it consists of lies too. Some critics believe that it is the lies that put hope in Anna's heart that one day she will find a shelter with her old father, and it is the lies that made Chris go on proudly in life because he thinks that his daughter is the most educated woman in the state because she works as a governess while she is, in fact, a prostitute.

And finally, Anna meets her father, she is happy with him, and he is happy with her; as a matter of fact, Chris differs from the men that Anna has seen in her life, he is kind, mild, and he really loves her. He takes her on a trip on his old barge to see the sea with all its wonders. Anna found her lost tranquility not only with her father but with the presence of the sea and the fog. She washes away her sins by the sea, she purifies her body and her soul from the worldly sins and dirt. Anna is reborn in the sea (Hawi, p. 129). In this play, the sea and the fog stand as very functional symbols, they are the two things that did tremendous things for Anna. So, let us shed some light on them as two mysterious symbols in the play.

Thus, although *Anna Christie* is a pure naturalistic play yet O'Neill made use of two symbolic elements of the sea and the fog. Let us discuss each symbol separately, starting with the sea. Most of O'Neill's characters find their shelter and sanctuary in the sea. They feel that, by the sea, they will be away from this cruel and hostile world with all its knots and complexes. In this play, the sea has a mystic dimension; it is a symbol of life and rebirth. It stands in a sharp contrast to the hostile and brutalized world; according to Elia Hawi, "the sea represents a sort of withdrawal from the human conflicts, flesh-eating, and crashing under the feet" (Ibid., p. 119).

In *Anna Christie*, the sea took different shapes, first of all, it took the shape of fate, a domineering power which is beyond the control of the characters. It is the old devil that ruined Chris' life, devouring his age and separating him from his daughter.

Another shape the sea took is the source of purity and love; it was the sea with its peace, tranquility and spirituality that liberated Anna's soul from her sinful body. The sea purified Anna, reconciled her with her father and introduced her to Mat Burke, the ideal husband. It is only by the sea, Anna feels that she belongs to a family, she starts turning the old pages of the history of her family by asking her father "(After a pause she speaks musingly.) Was the men in our family always sailors—as far back as you know about" (Act Two, 186)? And finally, it is the sea of love that introduced Anna to Burke, the lover and the rescuer who saw Anna not as a mere girl but as a mermaid. Perhaps, at that moment, Anna was really like a mermaid by her transparency and spirituality, especially after freeing herself from the materialism of the world (Ibid., p. 134).

Now we will discuss the fog as the second symbol in the play. The fog has the deep symbolism in the play. It stands for the state of transparency by which things are being lit and crystalized (Ibid., p. 132).

The fog separates the soul from the outer world and opens the eyes on the inner self. By the fog Anna's drudgery, fear and sorrow and her feeling of being a victim are over. The returning to the sea and fog, for Anna, is like a foetus returning to his mother's womb.

The sea and the fog, for Anna, represent a shelter and a sanctuary. Anna felt that in the heart of the fog and the sea there is a sort of protection because another man is born beside her, this man is her father. Anna was ecstatic in the middle of the fog because she felt that she is away from everything. She felt herself clean and pure, as if she took a bath or precisely she took a spiritual bath: "I love it! I don't give a rap if it never lifts! it makes me feel clean-out here-'s if I'd taken a bath" (Act Two, 185)!

It is the sea and the fog which introduced Anna to Burke and the appearance of Burke has heated up the conflict in the play, or as Timo Tiusanen says: "With the coming of Burke out of fog, the triangle between father, daughter and a hopeful son-in-law is formed" (Tiusanen, p. 87).

Anna sees Burke as an ideal husband and Burke sees Anna as a faithful wife. He does not know that Anna is only a fallen woman who prostituted herself and made her body a public thing for every man who wants to pass his time. It is worthy to mention that the love story of Anna and Burke is faced with great refusal and denial by Chris. In fact, Chris has a very mysterious repulsion towards Burke and this repulsion is embodied in the fight between these two men. The fight between Chris and Burke stands as a very clear naturalistic element in the play. Let us read what Elia Hawi has written about this fight: "In Act III, O'Neill has portrayed a very naturalistic scene that occurs between the sailors, it is the fight, fight for courage; this fight is something familiar between the seamen" (Hawi, p. 144).

The fight started when Burke insisted that he would marry Anna regardless of her father's will; besides, Burke accused Chris of being a coward because he left his daughter at the most critical moment. Burke told him that he had to accept an Irishman in his family in order to plant the seeds of courage in his ancestry:

Don't ye like the Irish, ye old baboon? 'Tis that you're needing in your family, I'm telling you an Irishman and a man of the stoke hole to put guts in it so that you'll not be having grand children would be fearful cowards and jackasses the like of yourself! (Act Three, 211)

Some critics, among whom is Elia Hawi, believe that any dramatic work must have excitement and suspense, and O'Neill's *Anna Christie* is no exception (ibid). The fight between the father and the lover was the reason behind complicating Anna's complex with herself and with them. According to David Rogers, "the physical clash of the two men is the dramatic sign of the emotional conflict between the jealous father and the strong young man over who is to possess her [Anna]" (Rogers, p. 13).

In fact, each one of these two men wants to complete his life with the life of Anna. Burke wants the lovely wife and Chris wants the dutiful daughter. It is worthy to mention that, Chris' love for Anna exceeds the limits of the love of a father towards his daughter but we cannot think ill about that because at the time of writing this play, O'Neill was not influenced by Freud's theories (Hawi, p. 138).

Anna is changed and everything around her is changed. She becomes purer and cleaner than before. She felt in her heart the desire to atone for her previous sins, the sins of her dark past. But, religiously speaking, these sins cannot be forgiven only by confessing them. Moreover, Anna confessed all the secrets of her past. This confession was like a shock to Burke and to Chris. The lover started cursing her and the father became more addicted to wine. Burke flees away leaving Anna alone; he flees away and after a period of time he returns to her because he believes that Anna is a victim of the society. Burke forgave Anna and asked her to swear on a crucifix he was carrying as a token from his mother. He asked her to swear that she would never do that again, and never betray him. At that time Chris was looking at the sea, cursing that old devil who devoured his age and ruined his life. Tilak believes that the play ends with peace but it is an uneasy one because Chris has lost his daughter, Burke has lost his simple vision of a virgin Anna, and Anna makes terms with a rough reality (Tilak, p. 10).

In this play, O'Neill gave Anna a lamb-like character. She was a passive resistant woman, and this is another naturalistic element in the play. In naturalistic plays, usually, there is no hero or a heroine because the characters are living under a power which is beyond their control. The naturalists do not portray heroes in real heroic situations because they aim at presenting a slice of life and this slice is inhabited by ordinary people who are doing naturalistic things.

In *Anna Christie*, neither Chris nor Anna has a heroic character. In fact, both of them are victims, and life was their victimizer. Anna was a victim on land and Chris was a victim on sea. If we consider Anna as the heroine of the play, many things must be changed and many scenes must be removed because they have no connection with determinism. Marthy herself must be removed because her presence did not lead to the action that Anna has initiated. According to Elia Hawi, the real hero in this play is "man's fate between the hands of life" (Hawi, p. 161).

In this play, life is the sadistic cunning force that is deliberately ruining the people, destroying their dignity and scandalizing their lives. In *Anna Christie* the characters are defeated by the pressure of life, the urgent needs, and by the maddening poverty. They are initially "bound to one another by their weaknesses" (Rogers, p. 8), for all of them are completed by each other. So, the real hero in this play is fate, the power which is beyond the character's control.

After discussing Anna as an unheroic woman, let us broaden our view about the characters in this play; the first thing that we are going to notice is that, in *Anna Christie*, O'Neill was interested in portraying downtrodden characters and this is another naturalistic element in the play.

Usually, the naturalistic playwrights are interested in downtrodden characters. They depict the life of ordinary people instead of those who come from a high station in life. In this point, they differ from most of the sixteenth-century playwrights who are interested in pursuing the lives of kings, emperors, and princes. Now we are going to shed some light on O'Neill's characters in *Anna Christie*. The first character who attracts our attention is Marthy who is Chris' mistress. She is between forty and fifty years old; she wears man's clothes, man's shoes, and man's hat. Elia Hawi believes that "Marthy is derived from the harsh reality that O'Neill could not liberate himself from" (Hawi, p. 108). Moreover, O'Neill deliberately made Marthy wear dead man's clothes in order to suggest implicitly that woman has no place in this hostile and materialistic world, and he also wants to show life as a victimizer of this weak woman. Marthy was the first person who met Anna, and she immediately realized that Anna is practising one of the oldest profession in the world, namely prostitution (Ibid., p. 111). And Anna was clever enough to know that Marthy shares with her the same profession: "I got yours, too, without no trouble. You're me forty years from now" (Act 1, 172). At the beginning Marthy felt angry with Anna but after seeing her miserable condition, she sympathized with her and a sort of intimacy starts combining these two miserable women, it is like motherliness (Ibid., p. 112).

In fact, both of these two women are frustrated in life and both of them have experienced the sense of deprivation. Marthy is deprived of being a mother and Anna is deprived of the family warmth. Marthy spent her life with a desperate old sailor, Chris, who devoured her youth and after all of that, he wants to dismiss her from his barge to host Anna instead. And Anna spent her whole life in enslavement and prostitution. Anna revealed all her past to Marthy just like a daughter revealing her secrets to her mother. Through the image of the mother, the daughter was seeing herself. Anna knows that, she is watching herself through the image of Marthy. She knows that she will be like Marthy in the future: "You're me forty years from now" (Act 1, 172). Anna and Marthy are two heads for one coin. Anna is Marthy when she was young and Marthy is Anna in her old age.

After shedding some light on Marthy and Anna, now it is time to focus on Chris who is Anna's father. Chris is an old captain of a coal barge, he is forty years old; he is neither a father nor a husband, he is the remainings of man. Chris is O'Neill's typical character of defeat, he is the great escapee in this play, he escaped from all the responsibilities of raising his daughter to go to work in the sea.

In *Anna Christie* all the characters are weak; they represent the world of condescension, disappointment, and frustration. They are little insects that are crawling in the mud. Almost everyone of them abandoned his humanity and his role in life, Marthy's clothes refer to her condescension of her femininity; Larry, the barman, is lowered to the level of a dog especially when he eats garbage and thus degrades his humanity. Jimmy, the priest, is just like an apparition because of his thinness and paleness.

From what is said previously, we can notice that, O'Neill was sincere to the naturalists in portraying simple characters instead of great emperors and military generals. He portrayed realistic characters like a prostitute, an old sailor, a barman, and a stoker. He presented them in a naturalistic slice of life. Francis Hackett believes that a prostitute, an Irish stoker, and an old Swedish sailor have great romantic values to O'Neill (Hackett, p. 152), because he himself met such characters, and for him, they were part of the harsh reality that he could not liberate himself from.

In general, the naturalistic plays depend on two theories, the positivistic and the deterministic theories. Now we will discuss each theory separately showing and tracing them in *Anna Christie*. Let us start with the positivistic theory.

According to positivism, man like any other object or animal can be studied scientifically. In *Anna Christie*, O'Neill portrayed a slice of life that is widely experienced by naturalistic characters like a stoker, an old desperate sailor, and two prostitutes. O'Neill wanted to study this slice of life scientifically showing one of the social ills that the American society is suffering from, namely prostitution. O'Neill tried to trace back the reasons that make a woman sell her body; one of the reasons that O'Neill stressed is the family negligence towards their daughter, while the second reason is the cruelty and brutality of the environment that leaves no place for young women to live a healthy and peaceful life. As a matter of fact, some critics have considered *Anna Christie* a piece of social criticism in which the playwright criticizes the American society that is victimizing the poor young girls, making them disease carriers that poison themselves besides the young men. By this dark but frank picture, O'Neill presented to us a scientific study of one of the social problems that the American society is confronting.

Let us now shed some light on the second theory which naturalism depends on, namely the deterministic theory. According to determinism, man's actions and character are determined by powers beyond his control. In *Anna Christie*, this power took the form of fate which is thinly covered by the shape of the sea. In fact, the sea has played a catastrophic role in the life of most of the characters. Let us read part of Chris' story with this disastrous sea:

My fa'der die on board ship in Indian Ocean. He's buried at sea. Ay don't never know him only little bit. Den my tree bro'der, older'n me, dey go on ships. Den Ay go, too. Den my mo'der she's left all 'lone. She die pooty quick after dat—all 'lone. Ve vas all away on voyage when she die. (He pauses.) Two my bro'der dey gat lost on fishing boat same like your bro'ders vas drowned. My o'der bro'der, he save money, give up sea, den he die home in bed. He's only one dat ole davil don't kill! (Act Two, 187)

It is the sea, fate, that devoured the life-time of Chris, it is the sea that separated him from his dying wife, and it is the sea that alienated him from his daughter. It is the old devil and the source of troubles, as Chris believes. Chris wished that his daughter might have lived on land and had married a landsman who had a stable life and a firm house. He tried hard to alienate Anna from Mat Burke and he tried hard to keep her away from the influence of the sea but fate's power which is beyond the character's power determined that Anna must be in love with Burke and must be influenced by the sea.

The second thing that determinism concerned with is the sexual instinct; about this subject, Elia Hawi says that Anna does not deviate from the straight line because of a sexual motive; she has been deviated because her surroundings are unhealthy. First of all, she started wrong or actually her father made her start wrong when he deserted her among reckless young boys and the result of that is that she has been raped by one of them (Hawi, p. 147). So, it was a series of mistakes that led Anna to sell herself and very probably the father made most of these mistakes.

Before ending up our discussion of determinism, it is noteworthy to mention that the characters in this play do not inherit something from each other or as Edwin A. Engel states: "There is no mention of hereditary evil or of retribution in this play" (Engel, p. 40).

So far we have explained the major naturalistic elements in the play. Now let us tackle the role of language as the last naturalistic element in the play. One of the reasons behind the success of *Anna Christie* was the language. It is simple,

pure, and straight. It is the typical language of sailors. The dialogue is one-dimensional and prosaic. About the dialogue, John Gassner believes that a dialogue written in the form of prose is a characteristic feature of a naturalistic play (Gassner, p. 471); he urges that the language of a certain character should be in conformity with his social position in life, e.g., a labourer should speak like a labourer, a bourgeois like a bourgeois, and a duchess like a duchess (ibid). Throughout his career, from the very beginning to the end, O'Neill is concerned with fidelity to human life and human nature. In most of his plays there is naturalness and there is joy in this naturalness of life. In *Anna Christie* the themes, settings, characters and the language are naturalistic. In this play we find a realistic representation of the sea-life and sea characters because O'Neill himself was interested in the sea and he derived these characters and situations from his personal experiences.

Usually, the naturalistic playwrights do not make use of soliloquies and asides because they believe that, such dramatic devices do not render authenticity to the play; and O'Neill was faithful to this option. He did not allow his characters to soliloquize their speech, and he did not allow them to indulge themselves in speaking verse. He presented on the stage a pure naturalistic slice of life that is lived by realistic characters speaking very simple words. So *Anna Christie* is purely naturalistic in its theme, language, handling matters of sex and focusing on obscene or unpleasant subjects instead of pleasant ones.

5. CONCLUSION

Eugene O'Neill is one of the greatest dramatists of America, he is the founder of the serious American drama, to whom goes the credit of securing international honour and recognition for the American drama. He is regarded as the voice of America, the untired voice of a still young country. O'Neill's plays are important and revolutionary, they reflect the post war world, the world in which most certainties moral, ethical, and to an extent, legal had given way to uncertainties. O'Neill's plays performed a historic function, they helped the American theatre to grow up, this fact in itself places O'Neill above his predecessors in American drama.

O'Neill's every play is an experiment with the dramatic techniques in which the traditional devices have been wholly discarded. In *Anna Christie*, and under the influence of Strindberg, he began his experiments with the naturalistic techniques when he initiated a new literary vogue using the colloquial speech of the sea and the land in order to delineate a faithful account of life and reality.

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