

A Moon for the Misbegotten I

—“Conflict and Fusion” found in the layers of social structure—

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Introduction

When we study the works of the great American playwright, Eugene O’Neill (1888−1953), whose historical achievements in theatre curtained up the scene of modern drama, expressionistic perspective as well as psychological aspects with respect to Freudian/ Jungian concept and Nietzschean philosophy must be taken into consideration. A Moon for the Misbegotten (hereinafter referred to as “Moon”) was written just after the fourth Pulitzer Prize winning autobiographical play, Long Day’s Journey Into Night (hereinafter referred to as “Journey”) which was written in the latter part of his life. The play is considered as the requiem for his brother, James O’Neill Jr. The play is set at 2 months before his brother’s death. As many critics point out, Moon is a sequel that expresses the author’s reminiscence about his brother, James, which O’Neill was not able to convey in Journey. From this aspect, Journey is an essential part of study that must be taken into consideration when studying the Moon.1

O’Neill’s experimental plays from social expressionism to personal unconscious and to super−conscious via collective unconscious and finally to supra−conscious which is a comprehensive version of super−conscious. In my paper on Long Day’s Journey Into Night2, I used a new approach to unravel the significance of the

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structural layer of social class hidden in the complex architecture of the play. John Henry Raleigh, in his book O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey Into Night and New Irish Catholicism, observes Journey as the most significant dramatic work of art that expresses the culture of Irish Catholicism.

To understand the background of the social layers configured in the play, the social status of Irish immigrants in American history had to be studied in detail. The research note, Land, Class and Faith: Irish Immigrant Voluntary Associations in America by Prof. Shiro Yamada describes the social status of Irish emigrants in 18th and 19th century America in detail.

According to the note, the tide of Irish immigration to America grew up after 1840, where the majority of them accepted the most menial jobs, Americans workers shunned. In the urban areas of the East and Central America, they engaged in construction and dock works as well as other unskilled factory labors. The low-pay, long-hours and seasonal works such as those in railroad, mining and other quarrying industries that were at the bottom of the occupation ladder, often resulted in their unstable income and social unrest, in the worst case, unemployment. In addition, the labor union run by the native whites rejected the Irish immigrant workers. Why? The strong drinking habit of Irish people was blamed as spreading the crime and poverty during the nationwide movement of prohibiting alcohol based on so called Volstead Act. On the other hand, they were looked down as the fake whites, different from other native whites or English immigrants in the same way as they view black people or Chinese immigrants. Behind these anti-Irish movements that pushed the immigrants towards the edge was the nativism by the former occupants, so called anti-Catholic, immigrant exclusion movement. Autocratic and anti-republicanistic Roman Catholic Church used the Irish immigrants as the vanguard to propagate in the promised land of Irish Protestants. While the elevated mood to reject the immigrants pinnacled, the term “Irish immigrant” connoted Catholic to most natives. The elders of early Irish immigrants, mainly Protestants, called themselves as “Scotch Irish” to differentiate themselves from the Catholics. They themselves participated in
the Irish (Catholic) exclusion movement. The American history had witnessed the persecutions and slanders to these Irish immigrants as evident from the above disagreeable situation after moving to the promise land.

John Henry Raleigh exalts *Journey* as the greatest work of art that expresses Irish Catholicism which is a convincing phrase considering the above historical background. Irish immigrants had been the target of insult and ridicule until their social position elevated in 19th century.

The history of Irish immigrants in US is essential in analyzing their social status in the country. In *Journey*, the author expressed the Irish ethnicity using the layer of social class. He intelligently used the structure of social class to show the complexity of the relationship between his father and mother, mother and sons as well as father and sons. In my paper on *Journey*, I have reviewed in detail these inter−personal connections. In other words, though both of the author’s parents were Irish, his father was from lower class (Black Irish) and his mother was from middle class (Lace−Curtain Irish). The difference between the two social classes of his parents had ironically been inherited by the two sons resulting in their tedious and turbulent relationship. The friction and gap between these two classes within the family had persisted while inhumane treatment and slanders by the Yankees attacked Irish immigrants, all contributed to the crack in their family picture of happiness. Irish immigrants who dreamed to be a part of the country faced the similar adverse realities. I have analyzed the social structure built on top of the ethnic culture of Irish people to analyze the consciousness of the four family members to understand their behaviors and action patterns in my paper on *Journey*.

Phil Hogan, one of the characters in *Moon*, is a tenant farmer who plowed the arable land for 25 years. He is apparently an Irish immigrant from low class (black Irish). The same black Irish immigrant woman also appears on stage, Josie Hogan, Phil’s daughter who is the main character. James Tyrone, another Irish immigrant, having black Irish father and lace curtain Irish mother confronts the family. Needless to say O’Neill’s brother is the model of James. The
complexity of unconscious hidden in these three Irish characters is explicitly described in conjunction with the complication of the social layers. With the consideration of these social classes, I will analyze their lines (dialogue) and behavioral pattern from expressionistic viewpoint as well as psychological and philosophical perspectives in this paper.

I. Social stratification seen in the characters

Most of the Irish Catholic immigrants struggled in poverty, starting their new lives from the abyss of American social class without any skills and proficiency. They were not welcomed by the American born Irish Protestants. These new comers were largely Catholics and contrary to America’s renowned liberty and tolerance while having diversified and multi-ethnic immigrants, they were not greeted with open arm. The reality they faced was the society that lacked the fertilizer to cultivate such community. The efforts these new immigrants exerted in unbearable conditions enabled them to build up their status and develop the permissive and magnanimous society. 

The common element found in the characters reflects the above mentioned history of Irish in America which evolved the inferiority complex but resulted in the pride to establish and maintain their identity.

The play is set at dilapidated Connecticut house of a sharecropper, Phil Hogan, in the beginning of September, 1923, between the hours of noon on a day in early September, 1923, and sunrise of the following day. The four main characters are the major players. Throughout the four Acts, the play is set in the shabby and ramshackle house of a tenant farmer, reflecting the poverty and prejudice of Irish immigrant’s living, taunted by the neighbors.

Shimizu Yoshifumi points out in his “Family Structure of Irish Immigrants in America in the Late 19th Century” that the head and members of each household adopted a family strategy in which all family members should have jobs, to pursue their well-being and formed a simple family structure with householder, spouse and
three children, a total of 5 family members.

Phil Hogan has four children with Josie and Mike. Two eldest brothers had been driven out, living away from his father, a typical family structure of Irish immigrant household.

Mike Hogan is 20. He is sturdily built, but seems almost puny compared to her. He has a common Irish face, its expression sullen, or slyly cunning, or primly self-righteous. He never forgets that he is a good Catholic, faithful to all the observances, and so is one of the elite of Almighty God in a world of damned sinners composed of Protestants and bad Catholics. In brief, Mike is a New England Irish Catholic Puritan, Grade b, and an extremely irritating youth to have around.

(Act One)

In the first Act, Mike, unable to stand his ill-tempered arrogance of his father tries to run away from home.

MIKE
How could I sneak here sooner with him peeking round the corner of the barn to catch me if I took a minute’s rest, the way he always does? I had to wait till he went to the pig pen. (He adds viciously) Where he belongs, the old hog!

Act One

Josie’s right arm strikes with surprising swiftness and her big hand lands on the side of his jaw.

JOSIE
Then keep your tongue off him. He’s my father, too, and I like him, if you don’t.

Act One

To Phil Hogan, Josie who is living together with him is the only daughter. To analyze the characteristics of Josie, we need to study the relationship between Josie and Tyrone who is the model of the author’s brother. The relationship between the couple is described
based on the plot of *Journey*. The emotional complication Tyrone felt towards his deceased mother is now directed to Josie, a character with full of maternal love and passion. This complex feeling evolves love, the process of emotional transformation.

The physical appearance of Josie is uncomparable to other female characters of O'Neill's plays. She is described as:

*Josie is twenty-eight. She is so oversize for a woman that she is almost a freak—five feet eleven in her stockings and weighs around one hundred and eighty. Her sloping shoulders are broad, her chest deep with large, firm breasts, her waist wide but slender by contrast with her hips and thighs. She has long smooth arms, immensely strong, although no muscles show. The same is true of her legs. She is more powerful than any but an exceptionally strong man, able to do the manual labor of two ordinary men. But there is no mannish quality about her. She is all woman. The map of Ireland is stamped on her face, with its long upper lip and small nose, thick black eyebrows, black hair as coarse as a horse’s mane, freckled, sunburned fair skin, high cheekbones and heavy jaw. It is not a pretty face, but her large dark-blue eyes give it a note of beauty, and her smile, revealing even white teeth, gives it charm*

Act One

Josie plays the role of a daughter, sister, prostitute, lady and mother in the play. Despite her physical appearance, she is a tender and warmhearted care giver, the unique female character unseen in other works of O'Neill. She may be the most ideal woman to O'Neill and his brother. Unlike Mary, the mother in *Journey*, she possesses strength, courage and tolerance.

The image of stereotype Irish woman is a strong, tolerant lady who can overcome the adverse situation and knows what sadness is. Eugene O'Neill, in his work note, mentioned that Josie believes the future of herself and Tyrone is impossible and recognized she is too unattractive to quality for love, even afraid to dream having an
affair with him. At the same time, she has some expectation that he may have a physical desire towards her, but immediately rejecting the idea, that no one would be sexually attracted to an ugly cow of a woman.\footnote{11}

Below is the first dialogue between the father and daughter in Act One:

HOGAN
To hell with your temper, you overgrown cow!

JOSIE
I’d rather be a cow than an ugly little buck goat. You’d better sit down and cool off. Old men shouldn’t run around raging in the noon sun. You’ll get sunstroke.

Act One

She does not show her rage to his father when he calls her “overgrown cow” though she talks back.

Phil continues, “... A fine curse God put on me when he gave me a daughter as big and strong as a bull, and as vicious and disrespectful. Be God, look at you standing there with the club! If you ain’t the damnedest daughter in Connecticut, who is?”

Mike, the only son at the house, is now gone. Hogan’s anger and frustration is directed towards Josie (though she helped Mike to escape). The lines show he has his complete confidence in her and she is the only person who he trusts.

She tries to comfort her father in the following lines. Here, she is described as a typical Irish woman who is “tolerant, kind hearted and bold, but strong.”

JOSIE
I knew when you’d calmed down you’d think it worth six dollars to see the last of him.
HOGAN
Well, maybe I do. To tell the truth, I never liked him. And I never liked Thomas and John, either ... They all take after your mother's family. She was the only one in it had spirit, God rest her soul. The rest of them was a pious lousy lot. They wouldn't dare put food in their mouths before they said grace for it. They was too busy preaching temperance to have time for a drink. They spent so much time confessing their sins, they had no chance to do any sinning. The scum of the earth! Thank God, you're like me and your mother ... When I think your poor mother was killed bringing that crummy calf into life! I've never set foot in a church since, and never will.

Act One

The above lines show that Hogan is a typical Irish immigrant who likes “to drink”, common to the characters in Journey.

The model of Tyrone in Journey is the father of O'Neill. The character in the play has the strong determination to change the image of “poor and ignorant” Irish immigrant, laboriously climbing the ladder of success, though he beholds the emblem of Irish American pride. He is described as the pious Catholic who never misses the Sunday church even during his tour. His wife is also described as the devout Catholic believer, however, both of them, cannot simply melt into the American culture. This is inherited by their sons as well. The four members of the family could not or rather do not willingly interact with the local community. Hogan, on the other hand, is not religious type of people which is apparent from the above line.

Unlike, Tyrone, Hogan does not even try to fuse into the culture. He insists on living as Irish immigrant working hard from hand to mouth. He is persistent in keeping his life style and do not have any intention in changing.

The appearance and clothing of Hogan represent that of a typical sharecropper.

*Hogan is fifty-five, about five feet six. He has a thick neck,*
lumpy, sloping shoulders, a barrel–like trunk, stumpy legs, and big feet. His arms are short and muscular, with large hairy hands. His head is round with thinning sandy hair. His face is fat with a snub nose, long upper lip, big mouth, and little blue eyes with bleached lashes and eyebrows that remind one of a white pig’s. He wears heavy brogans, filthy overalls, and a dirty short--sleeved undershirt. Arms and face are sunburned and freckled. On his head is an old wide-brimmed hat of coarse straw that would look more becoming on a horse. His voice is high–pitched with a pronounced brogue.

Act One

And he often sings the song:

HOGAN
Oh the praties they grow small Over here, over here,
Oh, the praties they grow small Over here.
Oh the praties they grow small And we dig them in the fall
And we eat them skins and all Over here, over here.

Act Two

This is the old Irish lament, the wailing song describing the great potato famine of Ireland. When O’Neill’s father Tyrone was born, the great famine had struck the potato farm in Ireland which resulted in the death of many thousands of Irish due to starvation and sickness. The natural disaster did not only killed the Irish and forced them to migrate but it shook the whole country and devastated the systems of the nation affecting politics, culture, religions and living of the people. Ruthless disaster took the happiness away from the people and changed their lives, forcing them to be the refugee. In other words, they did not willingly migrate to America with the dream to bloom the flower of success. “Over here, over here” sung by Hogan reflects his rebellion and repulsion against America, at the same time, it shows his strong patriotic feeling Hogan had to-
Hogan’s rebellious attitude and behaviors can be seen in the scene where T. Steadman Harder, a son of the man who made the fortune with petroleum, approaching the age of 40, visits Hogan. He inherits the wealth from his father. He is a man without motivation and greed, dream and hope. In the stage direction, Stedman is described as:

...he usually has the self-confident attitude of acknowledged superiority, but assumes a supercilious, insecure air when dealing with people beyond his ken. He is dressed in a beautifully tailored English tweed coat and whipcord riding breeches, immaculately polished English riding boots with spurs, and carries a riding crop in his hand.

Act One

He also appears in *Journey* as a Yankee Aristocrat but there is no face-to-face confrontation scene in this play. He just appears in the family talk. In *Moon*, however, a war between the Yankee Aristocrat and Irish immigrant is elaborately depicted.

Stedman Harder’s farm abuts Hogan’s and somehow the fence is often broken down and Phil’s pigs wallow in Harder’s ice pond. Now, ice pond is smelling pig. This made Stedman visit Hogan’s not for greeting purpose but to make complaints. This is the first encounter.

Through the dialogue between the two classes of people, the author’s playwright talent shines as seen in the tactical speech strategy used by the Hogans (Phil and Josie). The approach they use is developed through their experience where they counterattack their enemy with seamless speech and they do not give any room to talk back. By changing the speed and tone to create the pace which enemy cannot follow, they control the conversation with words that discomfort the attacker’s ears. At times, Phil and Josie lower their voice with sudden change in pitch to batter their opponent. On top of that, they use Irish accent and dialect to give a final blow.

With the eloquent speech, a typical Irish speaking pattern, they
try to win the argument:

HARDER

(determined to be authoritative and command respect—curtly) Are you Hogan?

HOGAN
I am Mister Philip Hogan—-to a gentleman.

JOSIE

(glare at Harder) Where’s your manners, you spindle-shanked jockey? Were you brought up in a stable?

Act One

Hogan, slapping his thigh, laughs out loud. Josie follows him to burst out laughing. They observe Stedman wile insulting him with scornful words.

To these mocks and insults, Harder mentions, “Listen to me, Hogan! I didn’t come here”?—(He is going to add “to listen to your damned jokes” or something like that, but Hogan silences him.) Hearing what Stedman said, Phil and Josie together strike back:

HOGAN

(shouts) What? What’s that you said? You didn’t come here? (He turns to Josie—in a whisper) Did you hear that, Josie? Well, that’s a puzzle, surely. How d’you suppose he got here?

JOSIE
Maybe the stork brought him, bad luck to it for a dirty bird.

HOGAN
... You’re the blackguard of a millionaire that owns the estate next to ours, ain’t you? I’ve been meaning to call on you, for I’ve a bone to pick with you, you bloody tyrant! But I couldn’t bring myself to set foot on land bought with Standard Oil money that was stolen from the poor it ground in the dust beneath its dirty
heel-land that’s watered with the tears of starving widows and orphans—

Act One

The adversities suffered by the Irish immigrant is explicit from the speech, which is never seen in *Journey*.

On the contrary, Hogan uses his sense of Irish humor cleverly to defeat Stedman:

HOGAN
What I want to know is, what the hell d’you mean by your contemptible trick of breaking down your fence to entice my poor pigs to take their death in your ice pond?

Act One

He tries to knock the enemy down when he sees Harder backs off.

HOGAN
I'll drag you in every court in the land! I'll paste your ugly mug on the front page of every newspaper as a pig-murdering tyrant! Before I'm through with you, you'll think you're the King of England at an Irish wake!

Act One

Hogan orders him off the property which signifies that materialism which is the American belief is not effective on Hogans. Tyrone, who is hiding in Josie's bedroom and listening to the Hogans' successful feat against aristocrats, applauds the triumph.

Tyrone is the character in *Journey* whose model is Eugene's brother, Jamie. *Moon* is the play written as requiem for his brother. He tried to give his alcoholic, washed-up, loafer of a brother the requiem, peace and forgiveness which he never received in his lifetime.¹³

*Tyrone is in his early forties, around five feet nine, broad-shouldered and deep-chested. His naturally fine physique has*
become soft and soggy from dissipation, but his face is still good—looking despite its unhealthy puffiness and the bags under the eyes. He has thinning dark hair, parted and brushed back to cover a bald spot. His eyes are brown, the whites congested and yellowish. His nose, big and aquiline, gives his face a certain Mephistophelian quality which is accentuated by his habitually cynical expression. But when he smiles without sneering, he still has the ghost of a former youthful, irresponsible Irish charm—that of the beguiling ne’er-do-well, sentimental and romantic. It is his humor and charm which have kept him attractive to women, and popular with men as a drinking companion. He is dressed in an expensive dark-brown suit, tight-fitting and drawn in at the waist, dark-brown made-to-order shoes and silk socks, a white silk shirt, silk handkerchief in breast pocket, a dark tie. This get-up suggests that he follows a style set by well-groomed Broadway gamblers who would like to be mistaken for Wall Street brokers.

Act One

From the description, we know that Eugene O’Neill tried to portray his real brother more than Jamie in Journey. Tyrone is born in America with Irish parents, which differs from Hogan family. His Irish identity is alive in him but he rebels against this fact. However, his American identity is also ambiguous, which is similar to Jamie. The main difference between Tyrone and Jamie is that the play curtains in Jaimie’s sufferings, revolting to the suppression as an Irish immigrant but Tyrone changes through Josie. We can see the Irish American of Eugene O’Neill by understanding Tyrone in Moon.

The first dialogue between Tyrone and Hogan:

HOGAN
It’s the landlord again, and my shotgun not handy. Is it Mass you’re saying, Jim? That was Latin. I know it by ear. What the hell—insult does it mean?
TYRONE
Translated very freely into Irish English, something like this. (He imitates Hogan's brogue.) “Ain't you the lucky old bastard to have this beautiful farm, if it is full of nude rocks.”

Act One

The lines above seemingly is the conversation between a land owner and a tenant farmer, but they share a common Irish immigrant attributes. To his tenant, Tyrone tells the tale of his being sent down from a Jesuit university just prior to graduation because of his unsuccessful bet with a classmate that he would be able to pass off a prostitute as his sister which made him expelled from the school. The scene expresses Tyrone’s rebellion as Irish American though he laughs off mocking the priest’s honor. He wasn't able to meet his father’s expectation and was always feeling a sense of self-alienation. However, he spits out his true self in front of Hogan. This is the true face of O’Neill’s brother that was never revealed in Journey.

In Tyrone, the author projects his complex social structure in the deep conscious of the character, which is completely different from that of Hogans. In other words, O’Neill’s father who was originally from lower class (Black Irish) and mother who was from middle class (Lace Curtain Irish) bifurcated the identity of a child into two social classes. The character inherits both layers to form an inter-relational personality.

The relationship between Irish American and Irish immigrant is that of land owner and tenant farmer. However, Tyrone, the superior, is defeated by Hogan, the inferior in the following lines:

TYRONE
Slaving and toiling as usual, I see.

HOGAN
Hasn’t a poor man a right to his noon rest without being sneered at by his rich landlord?
TYRONE
“Rich” is good. I would be, if you’d pay up your back rent.

HOGAN
You ought to pay me, instead, for occupying this rockpile, mis-called a farm. (his eyes twinkling) But I have fine reports to give you of a promising harvest. The milkweed and the thistles is in thriving condition, and I never saw the poison ivy so bounteous and beautiful.

Act One

Hogan family treasures the property. They are attached to the land and always prioritize the soil. This is the Irish farmer’s common attribute. They cannot help cultivating the ground whatever the situation is as evident from Josie words, “I need hard work in the sun to clear it” where she expresses her love towards the soil of mother earth.

What is the reason behind? Why do Irish stick to the land and live together with the soil? “Out of Ireland: The story of Irish Emigration to America” by Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner describes the situation of Irish people through the letters of emigrants migrated to America. From potato blight to the great famine and starvation, then to the new world, sufferings and pain stormed the Irish people. In the book, there is a part where one Irish immigrant man living in America vividly recollects the great famine in Ireland after 50 years, the shocking scene of no harvested crop of potato. He describes the scene where the weed prevails in potato field blooming the yellow flower shining under the sun. His remembrance remains as the painting of the feat of Thanatos where his dark forces embellish the field with colorful decorations of necromantic beauty. Some of the devoted Irish Catholics believed the great famine was the consequence of their sins, the wrath of God.14

From the following lines, we know that Josie and Hogan have frequent spoken to Tyrone’s father and they seem to respect each other as the same Irish immigrants.
HOGAN
You mean he’d think he was marrying beneath his station? He’d be a damned fool if he had that notion, for his Old Man who’d worked up from nothing to be rich and famous didn’t give a damn about station. Didn’t I often see him working on his grounds in clothes I wouldn’t put on a scarecrow, not caring who saw him? (with admiring affection) God rest him, he was a true Irish gentleman.

JOSIE
And then you’d come and before he could get a word out of him, you’d tell him you’d vacate the premises unless he lowered the rent and painted the house.

HOGAN
Be God, that used to stop him in his tracks.

JOSIE
It didn’t stop him from saying you were the damnedest crook ever came out of Ireland.

HOGAN
He said it with admiration. And we’d start drinking and telling stories, and singing songs, and by the time he left we were both too busy cursing England to worry over the rent. (He grins affectionately.) Oh, he was a great man entirely.

Act One

The social layer seen in Hogan family and Tyrone’s deeper conscious can be compared by contrasting the structural constituents: the social layer common to Irish immigrant (Hogan and Josie) vs. combined social layer of two different classes (Tyrone). Hogans have the typical Irish speech and features. They live free from American materialism, though they live in poverty as tenant farmer.

Tyrone, however, leads a life of Irish American which burdens him with immense pressure. He wanders in search of his identity.
His conflict inside his conscious evolves the self-contradiction which is evident from his speech but he hides his urge to be free like the Hogans.

Note: Due to the publication reason, the number of pages are limited and the latter half, *A Moon for the Misbegotten II: “Conflict and Fusion” found in the layers of social structure* will be, if my paper is selected to be included in the next compilation, in the next issue. From the expressionistic, Freudian and Jungian perspective, I will analyze the play in further depth and also study from Nietzschean viewpoint to conclude my research.

2) 大野 久美,『夜への長い旅路』論—社会的階層構造と心理的深層を介した行動様式の複雑性—専修人文論集 第84号 2009 pp. 97–134
4) 山田 史郎, 祖国・階級・信仰—アメリカにおけるアイルランド系移民の結社-同志社大学人文科学研究所 2005年 74号 pp. 80–81
5) 武藤 修二,「メランコリー表象の変容と「進化」―ユージン・オニールの発見」大阪大学出版会, p. 295
7) *op. cit.*, 大野 久美,『夜への長い旅路』論 p. 101
8) Kerby Miller, Paul Wagner, “Out of Ireland: The story of Irish Emigration to America”, Tokyo Sogensha Co., Ltd
9) 清水 由文,『19世紀アメリカにおけるアイルランド人移民の家族構造』, 桃山学院大学総合研究紀要, 第33巻第3号 p. 106
11) *op. cit.*, Virginia Floyd p.381
12) 高柳 乃輔, 馬鈴薯飢饉とアイルランド移民. 北陸史学会40号 1991年 p. 1
14) *op. cit.*, Kerby Miller p.59

All the quotes (lines) used in this thesis is cited from *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, compiled in *O'Neill: Complete Plays* 1932–1943 (The Library of America, 1988)