



By Women Possessed: A Life of Eugene O'Neill

Arthur Gelb, Barbara Gelb

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Celebrated for their books on Eugene O'Neill and enjoying access to a trove of previously sealed archival material, the Gelbs deliver their final volume on the stormy life and brilliant oeuvre of this Nobel Prize-winning American playwright.

This is a tour through both a magical moment in American theater and the troubled life of a genius. Not a peep show or a celebrity gossip fest, this book is a brilliant investigation of the emotional knots that ensnared one of our most important playwrights. Handsome, charming when he wanted to be: O'Neill was the flame women were drawn to—all, that is, except his mother, who never let him forget he was unwanted. *By Women Possessed* follows O'Neill through his great successes, the failures he was able to shrug off, and the long eclipse, a twelve-year period in which, despite the Nobel, nothing he wrote was produced. But ahead lay his greatest achievements: *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Both were ahead of their time and both received lukewarm receptions. It wasn't until after his death that his widow, the keeper of the flame, began a fierce and successful campaign to restore his reputation. The result is that today, just over 125 years after his birth, O'Neill is a towering presence in the theater, his work—always in performance here and abroad—still electrifying audiences. Perhaps of equal importance, he is the acknowledged father of modern American theater, the man who paved the way for the likes of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, and a host of others. But, as Williams has said, at a cost: "O'Neill gave birth to the American theater and died for it."

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