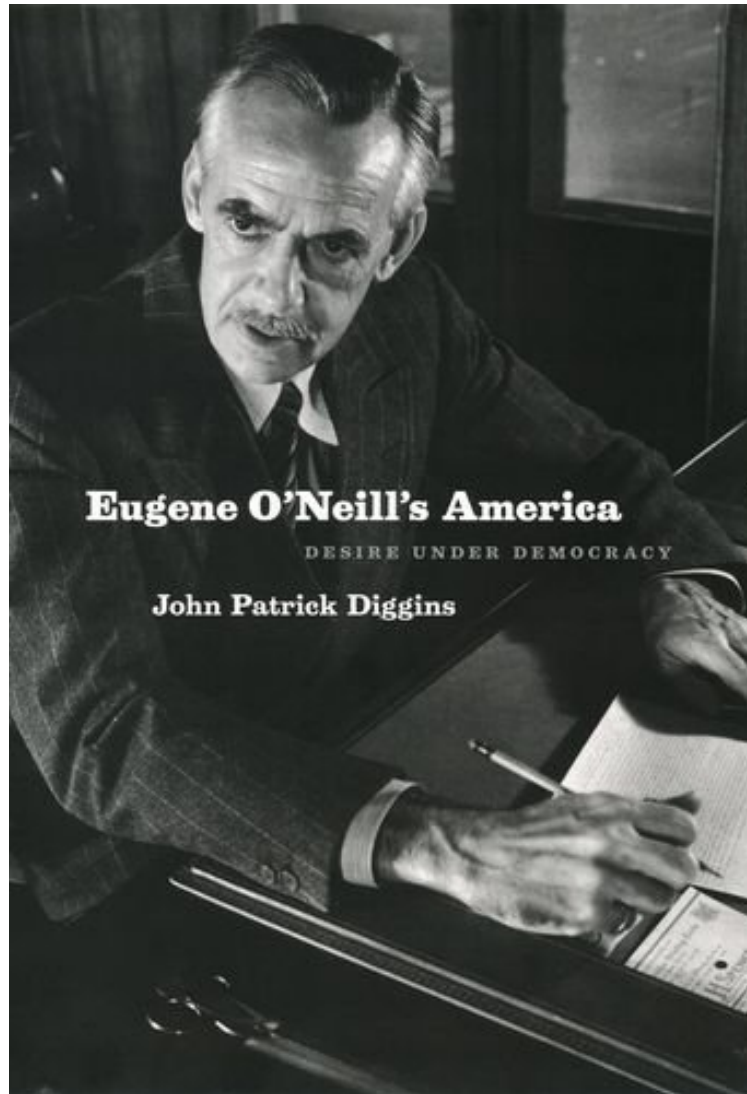


(Free read ebook) Eugene O'Neill's America: Desire Under Democracy

## Eugene O'Neill's America: Desire Under Democracy

*John Patrick Diggins*

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**John Patrick Diggins : Eugene O'Neill's America: Desire Under Democracy** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eugene O'Neill's America: Desire Under Democracy:

In the face of seemingly relentless American optimism, Eugene O'Neill's plays reveal an America many would like to ignore, a place of seething resentments, aching desires, and family tragedy, where failure and disappointment are the norm and the American dream a chimera. Though derided by critics during his lifetime, his works resonated with audiences, won him the Nobel Prize and four Pulitzer, and continue to grip theatergoers today. Now noted

historian John Patrick Diggins offers a masterly biography that both traces Orsquo;Neillrsquo;s tumultuous life and explains the forceful ideas that form the heart of his unflinching works. Diggins paints a richly detailed portrait of the playwrightrsquo;s life, from his Irish roots and his early years at sea to his relationships with his troubled mother and brother. Here we see Orsquo;Neill as a young Greenwich Village radical, a ravenous autodidact who attempted to understand the disjunction between the sunny public face of American life and the rage that he knew was simmering beneath. According to Diggins, Orsquo;Neill mined this disjunction like no other American writer. His characters burn with longing for an idealized future composed of equal parts material success and individual freedom, but repeatedly they fall back to earth, pulled by the tendrils of family and the insatiability of desire. Drawing on thinkers from Emerson to Nietzsche, Orsquo;Neill viewed this endlessly frustrated desire as the problematic core of American democracy, simultaneously driving and undermining American ideals of progress, success, and individual freedom. Melding a penetrating assessment of Orsquo;Neillrsquo;s works and thought with a sensitive re-creation of his life, Eugene Orsquo;Neillrsquo;s America offers a striking new view of Americarsquo;s greatest playwrightmdash;and a new picture of American democracy itself.

ldquo;Biographers have published dozens of books on Eugene Orsquo;Neill over the last 50 years in an attempt to explain the complexities of America's 20th-century lsquo;master playwright.rsquo; What makes Digginsrsquo;s thoroughly researched effort particularly effective is his use of political, philosophical, social, psychological, and religious themes in his discussion of Orsquo;Neillrsquo;s life and plays within the context of a dynamic American society. Diggins begins with a narrative describing Orsquo;Neillrsquo;s troubled early personal life and follows with thematic chapters discussing the major influences on the playwrightrsquo;s writing, from contemporary philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche to the ancient Greek tragedians. Diggins generously illustrates each theme with multiple examples from Orsquo;Neillrsquo;s plays and correspondences. Particularly insightful are his comparisons of Orsquo;'Neillrsquo;s work with that of other great writers on the theme of American democracy, including Alexis de Tocqueville, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Abraham Lincoln. This book offers the reader a lot to think about, regarding not only Orsquo;'Neillrsquo;s life and work but also American society at large.rdquo;