

1936 NOBEL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

It is difficult to put into anything like adequate words the profound gratitude I feel for the greatest honor that my work could ever hope to attain - the award of the Nobel Prize. This highest of distinctions is all the more grateful to me because I feel so deeply that it is not only my work which is being honored but the work of all my colleagues in America - that the Nobel Prize is a symbol of the coming of age of the American theatre.

For my plays are merely, through luck of time and circumstance, the most widely known examples of the work done by American playwrights in the years since the World War - work that has finally made modern American drama, in its finest aspects, an achievement of which Americans can be justly proud, worthy at last to claim kinship with the modern drama of Europe, from which our original inspiration so surely derives.

This thought of original inspiration brings me to what is, for me, the greatest happiness this occasion affords, and that is the opportunity it gives me to acknowledge, with gratitude and pride, to you and to the people of Sweden, the debt my work owes to that greatest genius of all modern dramatists, August Strindberg...

Of course, it will be no news to you in Sweden, that my work owes much to the influence of Strindberg. That influence runs clearly through more than a few of my plays and is plain for everyone to see. Neither will it be news for anyone who has ever known me, for I have always stressed it myself. I have never been one of those who are so timidly uncertain of their own contribution that they feel they cannot afford to admit ever having been influenced, lest they be discovered as lacking all originality.

No, I am only too proud of my debt to Strindberg, only too happy to have this opportunity of proclaiming it to his people. For me, he remains, as Nietzsche remains, in his sphere, the master, still to this day more modern than any of us, still our leader.

And it is my pride to imagine that perhaps his spirit, musing over this year's Nobel Award for Literature, may smile with a little satisfaction, and find the follower not too unworthy of his master.

Eugene O'Neill