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The Psychology of Home: A Reading of Memory, Nostalgia and Feminist Consciousness in O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms

Samreen Aziz[1]

[1]MA English from Ravenshaw University, Cuttack.

Abstract

This paper argues that home in Eugene O'Neill's "Desire Under the Elms" (1924) exceeds its function as a physical dwelling and becomes a psychic and cultural site shaped by memory, desire, and patriarchal power. Memory and nostalgia enable the characters to confront the meaning of home while exposing the conflict between emotional belonging and material possession. Using Freud's theory of trauma and the return of the repressed, Lacan's concepts of desire and lack, and Bhabha's notion of the unhomely, the study examines how unconscious impulses and fractured domestic histories shape Eben, Abbie, and Ephraim Cabot. The farmhouse emerges not as a source of security but as a space of emotional injury, longing, and inherited trauma.

A feminist reading further reveals patriarchal oppression: Eben's mother is compelled into exhausting labour until her death, while the elm trees and the locked parlour symbolize a confined feminine presence. Nostalgia creates a spectral bond between Eben's dead mother and Abbie, his living stepmother. Whereas the land produces topophilia in Ephraim by affirming his power, it evokes topophobia in Eben's mother through its associations with suffering. Ultimately, home becomes a psychological landscape in which the repressed past persists and suppressed feminine consciousness endures.

Keywords: Psychoanalytic, Phallocentric Structures, Feminine Spirit, Transgenerational Legacy, Phantasmatic Complicity.

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Corresponding Author: Samreen Aziz | **Email:** samreenaziz2024@gmail.com

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I. Introduction

In this paper, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) functions as an intense psychological reflector, presenting the idea of home as a deeply complicated phenomenon within the human experience. It demonstrates how the home becomes a space in which buried memories and nostalgia haunt the characters' minds, leading to consequences beyond their control. At that time, America was experiencing an economic boom, industrialization and the expansion of capitalism which challenged traditional rules and norms. This historical context sets the stage for understanding the play, where characters are driven by materialism. The paper strictly focuses on how home is an integral part of the characters' lives, witnessing them shatter beyond imagination. The Cabot farm is particularly significant because the land is associated with a legacy of grief. For Ephraim Cabot, the farm fulfills his desire for inheritance and possession whereas for Eben Cabot, it embodies the tragic reality surrounding his mother's death.

Memory in the play is not merely a recollection of the past, but rather a source that shapes the characters understanding. The persistent influence of the past demonstrates how memory deeply haunts them - internally fragmenting their psyche and locking them into an inescapable cycle of inherited trauma. Nostalgia here unravels the eternal desire of humans for an idealized home, failing to take into consideration the fact that the space has already been filled by the very history the characters wish to romanticize. The concept of home provides a basis for applying psychoanalytic and feminist theoretical frameworks, which serve as the foundation of this paper. This study draws on Sigmund Freud's theories of trauma and return of the repressed along with Jacques Lacan's theory of desire and lack and Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the unhomely. Though psychology interprets these as an internal mental experience that varies in individuals, the theories here are used to showcase how the physical landscape becomes inescapable for the characters.

From a feminist standpoint, this paper unravels the persistent presence of feminine consciousness in the play. Within this framework the Cabot farm functions not merely as property, but as a physical manifestation of the deceased mother's presence. Abbie Putnam, on the other hand, represents the living presence of the mother in the house. By adopting this perspective, the paper aims to explore previously underexamined dynamics.

II. Literature Review

Previous inquiries into *Desire Under the Elms* predominantly examined its environmental aspect and focused on the unconscious. Extensive research has highlighted Oedipus complex in the protagonist as well as provided an analysis of the setting.

Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) is a foundational text that explores how the home, which is viewed as a private space, is intruded upon by the public sphere, blurring the boundaries between the two. Homi K. Bhabha explains how external forces - political, social and cultural invade the domestic sphere, transforming the home into an unsettled space, and producing a sense of unhomeliness. Serving as bedrock, this book plays a pivotal role in the development of this work.

Sigmund Freud's (1915) metapsychological paper titled "Repression" (Die Verdrangung) analyses

the return of the repressed as an unexpressed emotion, or a painful memory of which the conscious mind is entirely unaware. However, it resists remaining repressed and returns to the surface through slips of the tongue or psychological haunting. This paper perfectly fits the analysis of the parlor that acted as the entrapment of Eben's deceased mother.

Sigmund Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* introduces the theory of trauma in Chapter IV, which argues that trauma occurs when an overwhelming force breaks the protective shield, clogging the mind with emotions. This concept is useful for interpreting the protagonist, Eben Cabot.

Meherun Nesa's (2024) "Environment and the Unconscious in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*" explores how the environment plays a crucial role in interpreting the characters' unconscious minds and how the oppressive environment shapes their internal psyche.

Peck David's (2021) "*Desire Under the Elms*; Analysis of the Setting" explains how the entire house showcases confinement and despair. The elm trees surrounding the house, deepens the psychological haunting in the characters. This helps support the concept of unhomeliness, as the characters witness unsettling trauma throughout the farmhouse.

Irwan Sumersono, Abu Fanani, Ima Masofa's (2022) "The Oedipus Complex in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms"* dive into the psychoanalytic approach analysing the oedipus complex in the character of Eben Cabot, the protagonist. This aspect perfectly explains Eben's vengeful attitude towards his father, Ephraim Cabot.

Jacques Lacan's (1958-1959) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI*: *Desire and Its Interpretation* analyses how desire arises from a lack of being. The text has been instrumental in shaping the trajectory of this paper.

This literature review examines the interpretation of the home as a living presence and explores the role of memory and nostalgia in shaping the characters' psyches. It bridges the gap by analysing the home as a space trapped in past memories, where maternal trauma oppresses the characters. Furthermore, this study subverts the law of the father - portraying feminine consciousness as an active agent. Combined, this research offers a fresh perspective aspiring to contribute novel insights, ultimately elevating the importance of understanding the interpretation of home in literature.

2.1 The Unhomely Homestead: Bhabha's Space, Memory and Freud's Return of the Repressed

The Cabot farm in *Desire Under the Elms* functions as more than a physical place. It establishes itself as a psychological space which has engulfed happenings over the years. "There is no wind and everything is still. The sky above the roof is suffused with deep colors, the green of the elms glows, but the house is in shadow, seeming pale and washed out by contrast" (O'Neill 1925, 5). This description suggests that the atmosphere is charged with emotions that cannot easily be expressed in words. The presence of the natural world outside the house shows the characters' desire to reach the unattainable. This atmosphere of the house, its colors and the looming sadness foreshadows the tragic events that follow. The emphasis on stillness unravels how the physical environment mirrors the characters' inner psychological states: despite their inner turmoil, they are forced to appear calm. The color green which is often interpreted with liveliness here portrays how the deceased mother's living spirit still

clogs the house with its memories denying leaving them. The walls remain cold not because of the weather outside, but because of the emotional coldness within the house, which resists warmth and love.

Home functions as a space that draws individuals back into the past, to relieve all the wrongs that once took place, binding the characters in a never ending cycle of getting into contact with the dead. The environment also mirrors the American society which was in its roaring twenties at that time. The mention of wealth, materialism, greed and infanticide highlights what were considered to be an important aspect of the era then. The characters are affected by the changing world and attempt to adapt to its conditions rather than address their emotional needs, a neglect that contributes to their suffering. This environment also plays a crucial role contributing to Maw's tragic death suggesting that although the society was advancing technologically and economically, it was simultaneously regressing in its treatment of women. "Why didn't ye never stand between him 'n' my Maw when he was slavin' her to her grave--t' pay her back fur the kindness she done t' yew? (There is a long pause)" (O'Neill 1925, 12).

While some women of the era were privileged enough to live according to their own wishes, Eben's mother remains entirely trapped within the domesticity. "She still comes back-- stands by the stove thar in the evenin'--she can't find it nateral sleepin' an' restin' in peace. She can't git used t' bein' free--even in her grave" (O'Neill 1925, 13). She was forced to toil severely on the farm and was heavily suppressed by Ephraim Cabot. The lingering presence of her spirit in the house suggests that the endless toil she endured did not grant her freedom, as her oppression persisted long after her death. The description of "A pine table is at center, a cook-stove in the right rear corner, four rough wooden chairs, a tallow candle on the table" (O'Neill 1925, 9) displays the order and regularity of the house giving an insight into the era's influence on the characters. This is further emphasized by the word "California" (O'Neill 1925, 9).

The psychoanalytic theory plays a crucial role in this paper, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the unhomely. Homi K. Bhabha introduced this concept in his influential collection of essays titled the *Location of Culture* (1994) especially in chapter one adopted from the earlier essays *The World and the Home* (1992). "The recesses of the domestic space becomes sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders become home and the world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha 1994, 9).

Drawing upon this concept Homi K. Bhabha shows how the concept of heimlich and unheimlich, portray a shifts in the domestic space. The word heimlich traditionally refers to a feeling of belonging or homeliness, while the unheimlich is defined as the feeling of uncanny. The place that should be bounded by love, warmth, compassion and understanding is now full of political and historical pressure. "Each day is a cage in which he finds himself trapped but inwardly unsubdued. There is a fierce repressed vitality about him" (O'Neill 1925, 5). These lines offer insight into Eben's psychological state, whose daily life is filled with brutality and the harsh legacy of his father. The public sphere appears to invade the private sphere - where intimate domestic life is consumed by labour and concerns about property ownership. The phrase "but inwardly unsubdued" (O'Neill 1925, 5), gives a glimpse of hope in Eben, who despite being trapped in this cycle refuses to surrender himself.

"Even the music can't drive it 'out--somethin', Ye kin feel it droppin' off the elums, climbin' up the roof, sneakin' down the chimney, pokin' in the corners! They's no peace in houses, they's no rest livin' with folks. Somethin's always divin' with ye. (with a deep sigh) I'll go t' the barn an' rest a spell" (O'Neill 1925, 67). Despite the presence of joy and music, the house feels heavy, preventing the characters from feeling the happiness of the moment as they vocalize their inner loneliness. Homi K. Bhabha does not talk about displacing oneself from the house; rather he demonstrates how a person can live in the very place and feels displaced because of the external interferences.

Ephraim Cabot, instead of loving his sons, is highly driven to acquire material possession. The very farmhouse which he sees as an earning of a lifetime draws him towards isolation. He is unable to bring his family together and lacks the love of his sons. To Eben Cabot; the house acts as a prison where he feels suffocated. This suffocation makes the characters more vulnerable to suffering. On the other hand, for Simeon and Peter, the house only satisfies their materialistic needs, thereby repeating their father's history. The situation becomes even more complex when it is revealed that the farm did not originally belong to Ephraim; rather, it was inherited by Ephraim through Maw.

Within the psychological architecture, memory has always been an important aspect of human consciousness. It captures a haunting moment and later helps the characters navigate the past as well as the future. "Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption" (O'Neill 1925, 3). The elm trees functions as the physical presence of Eben's deceased mother. On one hand it represents maternal love, protection and comfort while on the other hand; it shows how memory burdens the occupants, trapping them in their own histories. Ultimately this can also be interpreted as how the past never truly departs, but rather it makes itself visible by being invisible. The maternal memory becomes toxic demanding complete attention. It craves loyalty and love snatching away every loving bond. Memory thus becomes a living presence in the house. The mention of rain symbolizes a constant, unhealed pain that lingers inevitably over the house. It clogs the house making the characters trap themselves in the past rendering it impossible for them to grow and heal. "It's cold in this house. It's oneasy. They's thin's pokin' 'about in the dark--in the corners" (O'Neill 1925, 49). The cold and uneasy environment, suggest a body echoing or dying from the forces of history. The walls here function as an observing entity capturing within themselves all the wrongs and traumas of the past, becoming a physical store of memory. These instances justify the presence of memory as an essential tool for navigating the *Desire Under the Elms.*

Sigmund Freud defines the return of the repressed in his 1915 metapsychological paper titled "Repression" (Die Verdrangung). The return of the repressed refers to an untold emotion, memory, or a painful feeling that is hidden away from the world- and even from one's own conscious awareness. However, it often refuses to stay buried ultimately forcing its way back to the surface through slips of the tongue or physical haunting. The unhomely also encompasses the return of the repressed, where the mind makes itself visible within the literal house. The body that has been banished from the Cabot farm still feels present. The parlor plays a significant role in this context. It functions as a capture of the unconscious which Ephraim Cabot locked, deliberately to bury his own guilt. The parlor appears as an entrapment of the soul that desires to live alive. However, when Eben Cabot and Abbie Putnam unlocked the room, they seemed to release an energy trapped there for years.

Thus mentioning the return of the repressed- what previously was filled with trauma is now a place filled with passion, portraying how the past shapes the future. To conclude this serves as a justified blueprint for all the future entrapments- affair between Abbie and Eben, Abbie committing infanticide and the eventual cycle of wrongdoings. It sets the stage to navigate how the past helps navigate the future, and how the era's dominance shapes a human, making one, particularly Ephraim Cabot so blind with materialism that he eventually loses all his desired belongings. This provides a glimpse on how the home feels unhomely despite residing in it for years, highlights memory as a source that helps strengthen and rebuild the characters emotional aspect.

2.2 The Ghost in the Elms: Maternal Trauma, Nostalgia and Lacanian Lack and Desire

The Cabot farm in *Desire Under the Elms* functions as a living entity that continually evokes a haunting presence. It functions as a psychological space that has engulfed the household's secrets, preserving the memory of maternal trauma that Eben's mother withstood during her life. Every object and movement in the house evokes her presence for the characters.

"Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption" (O'Neill 1925, 3). The placement of the elm trees on either side of the house establishes their central symbolic significance in the play. They can be interpreted as protecting the home while simultaneously holding it under their clutches, denying it the ability to breathe freely. The branches hanging over the roof may symbolise the lingering presence of the mother, seemingly calling for attention or justice. Furthermore, the leaves being so dark prevent sunlight from reaching the ground, making the characters live in perpetual twilight that binds them to the past. This darkness offers no ray of hope or light, compelling them to bury their feelings and suffer silently. Finally, the weary appearance of the trees serves as a daily reminder of the endless toil and suffering that Maw endured. The elms can also be seen as embodying a duality of feelings. On one hand, the first elm tree may symbolise Eben's emotional attachment to his mother; on the other hand the second elm tree may symbolise the lack of emotional connection between Eben Cabot and his father, Ephraim Cabot, reflecting Eben's deep-seated frustration and anger.

Sigmund Freud developed an influential account of trauma in his 1920 work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. "We describe as traumatic any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me the concept of from necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli" (Freud 1950, 18:29). This definition perfectly illuminates the maternal trauma present in *Desire Under the Elms*, particularly within the suffocating confines of the Cabot farmhouse. In this view, the maternal presence functions as a protective shield, defending the young Eben from the harsh patriarchal dominance and rigid, unforgiving rules imposed by Ephraim Cabot. However, the sudden death of Maw tragically shatters this psychologically protective shield, leaving the young Eben entirely vulnerable to his father's tyranny and trapping him in a prolonged state of psychological suffering.

The clearest manifestation of this unhealed trauma occurs when Eben enters the locked parlor with Abbie Putnam, his stepmother. His involvement with Abbie is not only driven by physical desire; rather, it functions as an act of unconscious revenge against his father. By re-visiting the parlor and

acting against his father, Eben attempts to master the unresolved trauma caused by his earlier loss. "Didn't he slave Maw t' death?" (O'Neill 1925, 10). The above quoted lines refer to how Eben directly blames Ephraim Cabot for breaking his most protected shield, Maw. The persistence of this rage over the years demonstrates how trauma can break through silence and resurface as a desire for revenge against past injustice. "I know whar it's hid. I been waitin'--Maw told me. She knew whar it lay fur years, but she was waitin'. . . It's her'n--the money he hoarded from her farm an' hid from Maw. It's my money by rights now" (O'Neill 1925, 18), the gold represents the stolen energy and labor of Eben's mother. Furthermore, Eben's statement "Maw told me" (O'Neill 1925, 18), blurs the absolute boundary between the past and the present externalizing how his internal psyche is guided by his mother, who, despite being in the grave resides permanently within his consciousness. Such an interpretation demonstrates that Eben's trauma never healed, as he asserts his rightful ownership by claiming his mother's hard- earned labour.

Unlike memory, nostalgia does not focus on haunting experiences; rather, it filters out those disturbing elements and idealizes the positive aspects of the past. It presents the house as a static image. The kitchen and parlor seem frozen in Eben's memories. It can also be seen as a weapon which Eben uses to protect himself from his father's harsh and rigid rules. On one hand where Ephraim Cabot always puts forward the concept of time and engages himself in material gains, Eben chooses to take shelter in the nostalgia of his mother. By using nostalgia as a coping mechanism, he prevents himself from adopting an excessively practical outlook on life. It is due to nostalgia that Eben forces himself to reside in the house which to him is a physical reminder of his mother's death. This nostalgic feeling allows him to feel the presence of his mother strengthening his courage to fight the situation. Furthermore, Eben envisions Abbie Putnam as a substitute or a replica of his mother, bringing back all the memories he desired to fulfill with Maw. It also leads to the development of the psychological concept named Oedipus complex. Ultimately, Abbie Putnam appears to fulfill Eben's desires. Although their relationship ends tragically, it reconnects him to the nostalgic ideal of his mother.

The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI: Desire and Its Interpretation (1958-1959), provides a useful framework for this analysis. According to Jacques Lacan, desire takes birth when there is a "lack of being" (Lacan 2019, 401-402), emphasizing that desire does not begin because humans witness something they like; rather, it starts because individuals experience a sense of lack. "Then he puts his hands on his hips and stares up at the sky. He sighs with a puzzled awe and blurts out with halting appreciation" (O'Neill 1925, 5). Jacques Lacan's theory perfectly illuminates this passage, suggesting that the sky may symbolise the unattainable object of Eben's desire. Eben, standing at the edge of this oppressive environment, looks upward at the sky, representing his internal psyche. Sometimes, language fails to capture the satisfaction that the object of desire promises to provide. The environment within the Cabot farmhouse is filled with suffocation and suffering. This study interprets that the moment humans enter the world of language and societal norms; they tend to develop a lack of being, as it makes them feel what they lack internally. The farm also functions as the symbolic order, a concept established by Jacques Lacan; it shows how the house functions as a realm of rules, societal structure and laws. No matter how much Ephraim tries to control the house, he cannot deny the void inside him, thereby justifying the theory of desire and lack. As discussed earlier, language sometimes acts as a barrier between people, and humans cannot always communicate their deepest secrets. This is illustrated when Ephraim Cabot, the patriarch, who himself created the symbolic order inside the

house is forced to move away from it. In order to communicate his deepest emotions, he speaks to the animals that exist outside of this symbolic order, showcasing a desire driven entirely by lack.

"Abbie has sensed his movement. She stops rocking, her face grows animated and eager, she waits attentively. Eben seems to feel her presence, he scowls back his thoughts of her and spits with exaggerated disdain--then withdraws back into the room. Abbie waits, holding her breath as she listens with passionate eagerness for every sound within the house" (O'Neill 1925, 36-37). Desire is not created out of closeness; rather, it is something that thrives upon separation and the gaps between people. Despite Eben being upstairs and Abbie sitting in the porch, they both feel a deep sense of connection. This sense of feeling one another's presence before touching or seeing one another is what makes desire thrive, showing how the lack of something leads to a greater desire to make it attainable.

"I killed him, Eben" (O'Neill 1925, 76). Abbie Putnam perceives the baby as an obstacle that creates a lack between her and Eben. By committing infanticide, she desperately believes that removing this physical barrier will eliminate the structural lack in their relationship. The child's death does not fulfill Eben's desire; instead, it deepens Eben's psychic lack by haunting him with his past trauma. *Desire Under the Elms* operates as a domestic landscape showing how the ghost in the elms represents maternal trauma. It explores how memory and nostalgia are connected, emphasizing how nostalgia helps Eben move forward in life. Ultimately the theory of desire and lack helps frame the concept as a standpoint for the analysis of this paper.

2.3 Subverting the Father's Law - Feminist Consciousness and the Collapse of Patriarchal Order.

From the very beginning, it is evident that the Father's law- manifested in Ephraim Cabot's ruthless authority - prevents the farmhouse from functioning as a comfortable and safe place. Instead of establishing the home as a monument of love and affection, Ephraim transforms it into an extension of his own harsh ego: "They couldn't know what I knowed. When ye kin make corn sprout out o' stones, God's livin' in yew! They wa'n't strong enuf fur that! They reckoned God was easy. They laughed. They don't laugh no more. Some died hereabouts. Some went West an' died. They're all under ground--fur follerin' arter an easy God. God hain't easy" (O'Neill 1925, 47). This passage clearly captures the egocentric nature of Ephraim Cabot. To him, the Cabot farmhouse is strictly a result of his own toil. Ephraim very ruthlessly removes the labor of his own deceased wife, Maw, who was literally slaved to death under the crushing burden of his laws. Instead of acknowledging the hard work of everyone involved, he focuses on the neighbors who laughed that him. He takes satisfaction in declaring that they are all buried underground while he remains standing on the land he dreamed of possessing. This description exposes a dark, inhuman side of Ephraim, where even the dead are not pitied.

Consequently, the farm functions as a manifestation of his personal authority, allowing Ephraim to enforce rigid codes that trap and repress everyone within the household. His hubris reaches its peak when he places himself equal to the divine. This self-deification incorporates the concept of Topophilia - his love for the land, which he views as his supreme achievement. Conversely, this reinforces Topophobia - for the remaining characters, who feel suffocated and trapped in the haunting, dictatorial atmosphere. One significant instance of resistance to father's law includes Abbie Putnam's opening

of the parlor room. The room, which Ephraim locked in an attempt to preserve his control over Maw even after her death, is finally opened. This act subverts the patriarchal order.

Abbie Putnam also shatters Ephraim's topophilic attachment to the farm by committing infanticide within the very space he considered the epitome of his authority and dominance. The phrase "Build my church on a rock" (O'Neill 1925, 48), of which Ephraim speaks proudly is instantly transformed into a tomb - a space of isolation, loneliness and the constant, haunting presence of the past. By sacrificing the infant, she breaks the lineage of Ephraim's ambitions. While Ephraim once claimed that it was he who made the land flourish - this infanticide converts it into a space that previously only echoes in silence. This further brings Eben's mother's presence in the house to peace. Her haunting psychological presence grasping for breath, can finally breathe a sigh of relief upon witnessing the collapse of the very system that led her to death.

Feminist consciousness, in this context, refers to an awakening that fosters survival and also makes Abbie emotionally aware of her situation, particularly in a male-dominated society. When she enters the house she observes that every tiny detail is treated strictly as an object. This atmosphere makes her aware of the entrapment she will face, prompting her to create a sense of identity within the house. Abbie's opening of the parlor room aligns with Eben's dead mother's suffering. This blurs the line between past and present. Abbie realises that she is not alone in being silenced by Ephraim, which gives her an invisible strength to fight against all odds.

In the beginning, Abbie believed that possessing the house would provide her with success and identity. However, her feminine consciousness ultimately rejects this type of success, making her aware that staying in a marriage solely for material security is another way of empowering Ephraim and submitting oneself to slavery. True feminine consciousness and autonomy lie in emotional gratification over material possession. This consciousness gives her the strength to resist the trap. Although her actions lead her to a tragic fate, it is a result of her own choices and not out of dominance. It is this feminine consciousness which makes Eben Cabot change his perspective. At first, he viewed Abbie as a selfish woman who married Ephraim just for money and land. However, as the play progresses, this perception of selfishness gives way to blissful episodes of love interwined with Abbie's flourishing self- realisation..

"In the next room Eben gets up anc paces up and down distractedly. Abbie hears him. Her eyes faster on the intervening wall with concentrated attention. Eben stops anc stares. Their hot glances seem to meet through the wall Unconsciously he stretches out his arms for her and she half rises" (O'Neill 1925, 46). Despite the wall being present, the two could connect with each other psychologically. There seems to be an invisible attraction that pulls them close and compels Abbie and Eben to be together. Although Ephraim seeks to control the household and its inhabitants Abbie, through her feminine consciousness, mentally removes these walls, surpassing the dominance imposed by Ephraim. Unlike Eben, Abbie pushes past entrapment. She silently trusts her intuition, letting her inner feelings and the spectral presence of Eben's mother shape her response to the present. Ephraim seeks to preserve his heritage through an heir who will inherit the land; however his fate is overturned through Abbie. To interpret this, it is necessary to understand how the child she was bearing was not Ephraim's. This breakdown of trust becomes the first sign of dismantling his desire. Secondly, the

act of infanticide completely destroys Ephraim's last hope. In doing so, Abbie not only sacrifices the infant but also brings to a halt the dominant patriarch's future.

The lines "It's agoin' t' be lonesomer now than ever it war afore--an' I'm gittin' old, 'Lord--ripe on the bough" (O'Neill 1925, 85), emphasize the weight Ephraim finally feels, realising that the house will no longer have people moving around. His older sons have left the farm, and now that Eben and Abbie will be jailed, he is left to feel all that he has lost because of his rigidness. He feels like an ageing branch on the edge of falling, leaving his hard-earned farmhouse in ruins. Ephraim now understands that being as hard as stone leads only to solitude. A true patriarch must always fill the domestic space with happiness and pass on his legacy to his heirs. However, dismantling this rule leads only to a lifetime of guilt.

"I lied this mornin', Jim. I helped her do it.Ye kin take me, too" (O'Neill 1925, 86). Ephraim Cabot's world is centered solely on turning everything into a personal possession: the farmhouse, the land and even the people within it, treating them like objects. This rigidity forces characters to conceal their actions. Eben and Abbie, however, do not fall into this trap in the end. Instead, Eben, out of love, confesses that he too is equally responsible for what happened, destroying Ephraim's rule. This proves that a home built entirely on harshness and a lack of emotionality is destined for ruin. The home is now occupied solely by the memories of the dead mother, demonstrating how feminine consciousness successfully breaks down the Father's law. To conclude, this shows how a system ruined by systemic oppression will always disintegrate whenever human emotion attempt to challenge or change them.

III. Conclusion

This paper has examined the psychology of home within the broader frameworks of memory and nostalgia, drawing on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan's theory of desire and lack and Homi K. Bhabha's concept of unhomeliness.

The study ultimately reveals that the home is not merely a physical structure; rather, it is a space shaped by the characters inner psychological lives, in which they remain trapped in their pasts, almost like the living dead. The maternal trauma explored in this paper gives voice to the dead mother; while Eben Cabot's remembrance of his mother helps him navigate how the deceased often guide the living through the channels of memory. The arousal of feminine consciousness allows Abbie Putnam to subvert the Father's Law- leading to the collapse of the farmhouse standing upon patriarchal dominance.

This research has focused primarily on the concept of home, deliberately setting aside the role of fate in molding the characters towards an inevitable end. Future researchers, however, could explore these broader aspects to develop a more sophisticated interpretation of *Desire Under the Elms*. By bringing together memory, nostalgia and the concept of home, this study presents *Desire Under the Elms* as a site of extreme psychological exploration, demonstrating how these concepts shape individuals' lives and psychological development.

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