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The Cycles Of Trauma In Eugene O'Neill'S Long Day'S Journey Into Night

Alvin Alexis Gonzalez

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THE CYCLES OF TRAUMA
IN EUGENE O'NEILL'S *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT*

A Thesis

by

ALVIN ALEXIS GONZALEZ

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

MAY 2017

Major Subject: ENGLISH

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Approved as to style and content by:

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Major Subject: English

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Alejandra Gonzalez, and my father, Albino Gonzalez, for giving me the feeling since I was a boy that I had it all because I had their love. I would also like to thank everyone who has supported me throughout my academic and personal life. I am grateful for the time the professors of TAMU have taken to listen to their students, give us feedback about our writing, or guide us in a difficult situation. I will continue to carry their wisdom and guidance through every path in my life. I would like to thank every past (and future) employer for supporting me in my endeavor to achieve a goal I dreamt about since I was a child. Reaching this point has come with many hours of research and moments of stress, but I am blessed with the support of my loved ones who have motivated me to never give up.

ABSTRACT

The Cycles of Trauma in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*
(May 2017)

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Long Day's Journey into Night is Eugene O'Neill's attempt to come to terms with the pain he suffered as a member of a family that battles with drugs, hostility, and a lack of understanding for each other. My thesis pairs the playwright, Eugene O'Neill, who valued the importance of an individual's story, with the psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, who created a discourse that studies human relationships and our basic instincts. My thesis begins by diagnosing the traumas the Tyrone family members have experienced, and then develops into a study of human emotions and behavior under conditions that threaten freedom and life. As Anne-Marie Sandler and Joan Schachter explain, the Freudian psychoanalysis enables "the patient to become aware of the wars in which their defenses distort their experience and limit their capacities" (10). My thesis argues that O'Neill brings to life characters with cycles of trauma that connect to Freud's work on the human experience and civilization.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), the Tyrone family is unable to coexist in harmony, and their relationships with each other suffer from the detachment they feel towards each other and the rest of the world. From the living room of a seaside home tormented by the moan of a fog horn each night, we witness the decline of a family that is trapped by its traumatic past and unable to reconcile the past with the present. Their failure to temper their frustration towards each other is fed by drug abuse, and their altered consciousness further blurs the line between dreams and reality. We first encounter the male Tyrones—James, Jamie, and Edmund—excited about the return of their mother, Mary. They bite their tongues and put on a façade because they want to believe that Mary's repeated efforts to cure her addiction have finally been successful and they can move away from her painful past. Their hope leads most of them to ignore the signs that Mary's ailment has returned, but this self-deception is unsustainable as Mary becomes increasingly influenced by the morphine she secretly injects. As their initial harmony degrades, the Tyrones resort back to their defense mechanisms such as “denial, projection, and rationalization” (Rothenberg & Shapiro 56). The unpleasant truth resurfaces and they give up their hopes for Mary's recovery. Under this condition of discontent, the characters numb their consciousness with drugs. The repetitive nature of their lives, along with the futility of their actions, are part of a grim reality that prevents readers from having much hope for these characters. At the end of the play, nothing has changed and we expect their future to remain caught in the same cycle of addiction.

O'Neill's play is a captivating drama that follows the tragedy of the Tyrone family as

This thesis follows the style of *Arizona Quarterly*.

they cope with their addiction and struggle to find peace at home. O'Neill's understanding of trauma within a family exists beyond his poetry, prose, or drama. It is a situation he personally experienced. Although the characters within *Journey* directly relate to the author's family, the problems the Tyrones face are universal to the human experience. Behind the conflict these characters face is an underlying desire to be happy and to avoid further pain.

Sigmund Freud's works will be essential to my reading of *Journey*. Freud discussed the ways we cope with the real world and our desires to be happy in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). Freud's theories of the mental processes we go through in order to attain pleasure are critical to understanding the Tyrones. For example, the failure to confront truth is a major reason why the Tyrone family is destined to continue in their struggle to achieve happiness. The "tendency towards the pleasure principle" manifests through our desire to keep a constant quantity of pleasurable experiences. In the course of the pleasure principle, an individual disregards reality. Under these conditions, happiness becomes harder to reach because an individual constantly seeks an impossible outcome. We may consider a home as a place of refuge, and the family is expected to be an eternal source of love. However, we know that the Tyrones have a different definition of home and family: the intolerance they have for one another causes them to have a dysfunctional relationship. Although the Tyrones require a greater understanding between each other, they each in their own fashion seem unable to cope with this reality. A pipe dream is all they will ever have, but they prefer this to nothing.

The play begins with high hopes within the family that their course of life will be different now that Mary's chemical dependency is believed to be cured. In trying to maintain this illusion, the family's willingness to confront the real world is put into question. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud holds that a crucial step of development consisted in the realization

that instant gratification is impossible, and we develop a tolerance for “unpleasurable experiences” through the reality principle (4). Some people disobey the reality principle in an “inefficient and even highly dangerous” attempt to redefine the external world so that it suits their idealization of it (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 4). The more elaborate an illusion we create, the farther away from reality it gets. Individuals may be driven by a desire to have a rich life of health, cooperation with others, and to reproduce. Others are defined by what Freud called the death instinct in which an individual has a regressive aim to return to their original state before life. In fact, Freud sees life as a series of “detours” by which the organism eventually satisfied its death drive (32-33).

A traumatic experience is a defining moment in an individual’s life, and it demands attention. Freud’s patients were World War I veterans that had recurring episodes in their dreams of the horrors they experienced while in combat. The repetitive symptoms by which an individual’s traumatic experiences return to interrupt the present are certainly present in O’Neill’s play. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud says that one can display an inward or outward destructiveness. The Tyrones exemplify this through intoxication and their aggressiveness towards each other. Nevertheless, there is an unconscious desire to end their suffering—a death drive—so they behave irrationally by consuming excessive amounts of alcohol or injecting morphine, thus relieving their anxiety. In discussing the significance of intoxication in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud believed that “we owe to such media not merely the immediate yield of pleasure, but also a greatly desired degree of independence from the external world. For one knows that, with the help of this ‘drowner of cares’ one can at any time withdraw from the pressure of reality and find refuge in a world of one’s own with better

conditions of sensibility” (25). This facet of escapism is a major obstacle for the Tyrones because it blocks healthy attempts to ease their suffering.

Each of the subsequent chapters will explore how James, Mary, Edmund, and Jamie struggle in their journey to obtain happiness. By following each character individually, we can mark the past events that can be classified as traumatic for them and trace the social and individual conditions that impede them from confronting reality. The traumas that haunt the Tyrones interrupt their present view of reality and form a psychological barrier between each character. This means they can only see the world through own their point-of-view, and as a result, they unconsciously alienate each other. Michelle Balaev explains that “the idea that traumatic experience pathologically divides identity is employed by the literary scholar as a metaphor to describe the degree of damage done to the individual’s coherent sense of self and the change of consciousness caused by the experience” (150). This means that trauma’s ability to affect an individual’s identity may manifest through a distorted introspection. In other words, trauma can have a negative impact on how an individual perceives an experience in their life.

My first chapter is dedicated to Mary Tyrone, and discussion begins with the trauma that destroyed her identity and undermined her needs. Near the end of the play, in a drugged state, Mary reminisces about the period of her childhood when she felt the safest because she had a stable home with a loving family. She left this life behind to begin a family with James Tyrone. Her disillusionment grew quickly, and eventually her hope of having a place to call home or being part of a community died. Her biggest mistake seems to be trusting the quack doctor James had her see and from whom she received her first prescription for opiates. As her drug addiction becomes the center of her problems, Mary feels she is a prisoner in her own home. She becomes

conflicted with a fear of being abandoned by her family and a desire for isolation so she can inject herself with morphine.

My second chapter begins by covering James' childhood of extreme poverty and how this forced him to create a vision of the world that overvalues the material need for money and underestimates the emotional needs of his family. Balaev suggests that "the trick of trauma studies is that the individual protagonist functions to express a unique personal traumatic experience, yet, the protagonist also functions to represent and convey an event that was experienced by a group of people, either historically based or prospectively imagined" (155). This insight is important to justify the case that James represents the immigrant, working class individual who has an earnest desire to keep his family content, but he is also an individual that exhibits the symptoms of a capitalistic society overly concerned with money and less concerned with the needs of others. James stubbornly dismisses his family's concerns and demands because he believes providing the bare minimum for them should suffice. The few possessions he owned as a child dominate his memory. He has now become obsessed by the things he could lose, but he has no more strength to help his family recover from their emotional trauma.

My next chapter focuses on Jamie, the eldest of the Tyrone children. Jamie is crucial to creating a portrait of the Tyrones because he is a key witness of the troubles the family has faced. Only he can understand the piercing pain of being blamed by a mother for the death of a sibling. Specific traumas like this turn the Tyrones against each other and lead them to create mechanisms of self-defense. To protect themselves from further heartbreak, they resist trusting each other. After repeatedly being betrayed, Jamie struggles to believe in his mother's promises that she has stopped using morphine. Freud says that, "Against the dreaded external world one can only defend oneself by some kind of turning away from it" (*Civilization and its Discontents*

24). This attitude of escapism is clearly evident within Edmund, but it suggests that the callousness of the Tyrones towards each other when they are intoxicated might also be a façade and a means of impeding their vulnerability from being exposed to the harsh light of day.

My fourth chapter seeks to determine how Edmund's vantage point, as the poet who temporarily escapes the prison of home, relates to Freud's description of the "oceanic feeling" as a feeling of "eternity" and a bond between an individual and the world (*Civilization and its Discontents* 11-12). Through a poetical lens, Edmund's understanding differs from his family's perspective because his experience at sea reveals a connection between an individual and the external world, and O'Neill uses Edmund to demonstrate the importance of telling and listening to stories. While memory is important to the storyteller, the suggestion Edmund makes to his mother about being mindful of the past does not result in her improvement. Physically incapacitated by consumption, Edmund now longs to return to the sea where he finally felt he had a sense of purpose. Although the play ends in stasis—with few signs of hope—O'Neill makes an important point about the significance of our past and how it plays into our present and future. Similar to the rest of the family, Edmund's memories are never an objective chronicle. Instead, they are alive in the present because they are inseparable from his understanding of the nature of reality.

CHAPTER I
MARY TYRONE

Families build civilization. Civilizations set rules about how individuals interact with each other “which affect a person as a neighbor, as a source of help, as another’s sexual object, as a member of a family and a State” (Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* 42). We should understand that family is not simply a word used to define a relationship of humans sharing the same space. An individual’s family creates the foundation for life because they inherit their genetic material and cultural identity from their parents. Christine Kerr notes “that the family is the primary and except in rare instances, the most powerful system to which we all belong, O’Neill assaults this system in an effort to become a person by artistically exploring his own family” (116). O’Neill revives his own family through the Tyrones as an artistic method of linking fiction with reality, and his purpose is to reach a deeper understanding of the special relationships between family members. In the most ideal of circumstances, the membrane of every family should be connected through love to make sure it can thrive. However, in *Journey*, alcohol threatens the coherence of this organism. Understandably, an individual could then feel trapped under these circumstances. Unlike the emergency exits inside a building, there is no easy escape to this threat. Indeed, the sense of being trapped that these characters face is twofold: they are perpetually trapped by their past and their inability to confront the truth in the present. This feeling of isolation is not aided by being surrounded in a home with family members who only alienate each other. They feel trapped in a family, a lifestyle, a career, or a home they wish they could flee. The Tyrones have a strong desire to be set free from their internal conflicts. Unable to

quell this desire, they take drugs to create a psychological barrier between themselves and the external world.

Perhaps no other character can compare with Mary in terms of her feelings of loneliness and chemical dependency. Mary has several reasons for feeling this way, beyond the simple fact that she has the house to herself most of the time. She has been feeling alone for a long time. Although her drug use depends on being left alone, she is nonetheless terrified of having no one that can comfort her when her drugs fail to provide a lasting euphoria. Under the spell of morphine, we have an important revelation about Mary's feelings. During this altered state of consciousness, Mary reveals: "It wasn't the fog I minded, Cathleen. I really love fog. [...] It hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you any more" (2.2). This feeling of hiding becomes easier with drugs because they mean no one and nothing can truly faze Mary. However, the audience cannot afford to desensitize themselves to the feelings of self-hate that would cause a person to inflict upon themselves a poison in order to feel they can "hide" away from the world. The effect is certainly harsher to the user's body and emotions than to others, but it has the downside of being toxic to others too. This is not too different from the effects that alcohol has on the Tyrone males.

Mary's role as an individual is particularly inhibited because her needs are denied, but she is asked to fulfill the demanding roles of being a nurturing mother and supportive wife. She fails in both respects. Her failure to abide by the norms of spouse and mother does not mean her family stops loving her. However, she is sent away when her addiction is discovered, and now she feels distrusted and abandoned. None of these seems like solutions from a supportive family, and Mary cannot help the loneliness that takes over when the family wants nothing more from

her. It is important to note that the set of circumstances that destroyed her health were beyond her control. In fact, her children constantly remind us that James' criteria for choosing a family physician is based on the lowest bidder.

Having the ability to follow your aspirations is a defining characteristic of freedom. Mary grew up with a perfect notion of who she was and who she wanted to be: she was the daughter of a caring family and she expected to grow up to become a nun. When she meets James, the leading character in a "nobleman's costume," she finds a new cause for her devotion. James became her savior who would remove her from a predictable life within the church and insert her into his much more exciting future. All the signs of a better life are with James; he is a man that started from the dregs of poverty and has managed to become a respected Shakespearean actor. While he accommodates a few of the necessities of building a family, such as having children and providing them with a dwelling place, James constantly tries to get away with what Mary calls a "cheap" way of doing things. This is an issue that she brings forward in her discussions with James because she is seriously hurt that her husband would think so lowly of his family. At the play's conclusion, James complains that he can no longer trust his wife's promises to stop her drug abuse, but Mary has similar reasons to distrust her husband. For example, Mary's trust in James to look after her health is what first led to her exposure to an addicting drug. Therefore, she can no longer trust her husband to meet her emotional and spiritual needs.

The angst that Mary feels is divided between her sons and her husband, but it is overshadowed by a broken dream. She feels that James stole from her the opportunity of living her adulthood in a proper home. It proves impossible to make James see that the home is a place of refuge because he does not share the notion of a comfortable domestic life that filled her childhood. Dugan notes that, "Hard work and professional pride have given him financial results,

but [James] Tyrone has not learned (or learned too late) that this is a limited philosophy of the workplace, not the home” (385). She repeatedly complains that she was forced to live in cheap “second rate hotel rooms” that were no comparison to a real home. Their small space in the seaside country house is a poor solution to this problem. Yet, the family continues to come to this summer home each year where the weather never improves, the house service is terrible, and the feeling of needing to escape each other is always there. The only reason they are at this location is that James is bent upon acquiring property despite the needs of his family.

Mary’s demand to be recognized as a free individual echo that of alienated groups within a society that demand respect for their lives. As an author who recognizes the real world, O’Neill understands that within society there are groups of people stripped of their individuality when they are valued only by their utility; among these are women. The purpose endowed upon Mary by her sons and husband is of a person who must sacrifice her life to serve the needs of her family. Although she is no longer in the convent, she is expected to still fulfill a pure life. The men do not reproach each other for their heavy drinking. In fact, they will encourage each other to share a drink. Mary, though, is vigorously reproached for taking morphine, and the men fail to see their hypocrisy. In a handful of instances, James condemns his children’s’ drinking, but it soon becomes clear that he is irked more by the fact that his sons are drinking from *his* supply of alcohol than he is by their alcoholism. Even though she voices her discontent to James, her effort to produce change falls short.

As the play begins in the seemingly tranquil living space of the home, the audience witnesses the cause of much of Mary’s angst: a room furnished and lit to the cheap standards of James, bookcases with contents representing the generational difference between father and son, and a seclusion from their neighbors. All of these objects signify the absence of Mary’s influence

in the home. James enjoys speaking at great length with the members of the community, but Mary is left to manage with the company of Cathleen, the house maid. James is surprised Mary does not welcome his petty provisions. Like a victim of war in defeat, Mary cannot feign to be at peace with Tyrone. Her ideal home and family are destined to exist only as dreams and memories (and never materialize). Mary is aware of the things that she cannot do; she is unable to forget the past and cannot escape her home. However, she is unaware of what she can do to escape her present situation. Mary is unable to deal with this conflict in a healthier fashion and finds comfort in morphine.

Although it is understood that drugs are necessary to satisfy her chemical dependency, Mary's drug abuse may be a desperate attempt to regain control. In one instance of intoxication, Mary has a conversation with herself where she is upset that the family has left her by herself, but she realizes that now that she is alone, she can follow her own will: "You wanted to get rid of them. Their contempt and disgust aren't pleasant company. You're glad they're gone" (2.2). It would be beyond Mary's power for her to try to accept a way of life that she has not chosen for herself. This means that James will never be successful at making his wife happy if he expects her needs to adapt to his scant provisions. Mary's unwavering idea of a home is an intangible dream, and it is part of the reason they cannot move forward. As Roy Schafer explains, Freud's idea of "moving forward" consists of an "increased adherence to the reality principle, that is, moving away from reliance on fantastic wishes and fears and primitive defenses and moving toward sustained reality testing" (1160). During her childhood, Mary was accustomed to a different way of life than what James provides. Since the reality principle requires an individual move away from "fantastic wishes," we may conclude that Mary's failure to modify her

expectation of a home means she does not reach the reality principle. She will continue to desire an object that she does not exist and, therefore, her dream of a better home cannot be obtained.

In another example of Mary's desperate desire to regain control, she demonstrates an obsession with her wedding gown. The dress is a reminder of the time before her marriage to James, and it is an object that she was able to independently determine how she wanted it to be. Regarding her wedding dress, Mary says, "Oh, how I loved that gown! It was so beautiful! [...] I used to take it out from time to time when I was lonely" (3). She prizes the wedding dress because it reminds her of a time when no one would tell her to "mind what it cost," but the gown also represents an artifact of her autonomy. The making of the dress depended on meeting her standards, and she would complete authority in determining every detail of the gown, slippers, folds, satin, basque, blossoms, and lace (3). She has lost that sense of control the wedding dress gave her. When her voice is silenced, she develops manipulation and deflection as her only tools to regain that power. Mary resorts to manipulation to get the solitude she needs to abuse drugs, and she deflects their suspicions by trying make them feel shame. Mary tells Edmund, "Your brother ought to feel ashamed" (2.1). Her manipulation is so effective that after a brief discussion, she can make Edmund suggest that she take a nap. Edmund explains to Jamie why he leaves her alone: "She made me feel ashamed. I know how rotten it must be for her" (2.1). While it is apparent that she is taking drugs, it must be hidden. Taking the drugs from the pharmacy is an inconvenience, but to have her family see her ingest the morphine would be catastrophic. It would mean that she would have to go back to a medical institution and be away from her family. While they do not offer her the support she needs, she uses deceit and shaming to breed a life where she can retain the control she desperately seeks.

Against the egoistic desire of an individual, civilization decides which freedoms are enjoyed and which must become restricted. Freud observes that the individual's struggle for greater freedoms within a civilization "may be their revolt against some existing injustice, and so may prove favorable to a further development of civilization; it may remain compatible with civilization. But it may also spring from the remains of their original personality, which is still untamed by civilization and may thus become the basis in them of hostility to civilization" (*Civilization and its Discontents* 43). At times, Mary's struggle is narrowed to the latter cause; her "untamed" personality is exhibited in her desire to indulge in morphine, but this selfish desire ignores the threat that her addiction to drugs poses to herself and the family. Mary's true focus is her desire to return to a time before she had become a prisoner of her own home and a victim of James' stinginess. Remembering all the injustices James has done to her leads Mary to conclude that their marriage should have never occurred because "[t]hen nothing would ever have happened" (2.1). The return to nothingness signifies a regressive desire to modify the past. In Mary's case, this means erasing the memories she has with James and her sons and returning to a time before her roles of wife and mother began.

Although Mary has lost hope in Jamie and James, she remains positive that Edmund's frail condition will improve because she believes it is not life-threatening. Except for Edmund, the family tries their best to prevent Mary from knowing the gravity of her son's condition. Mary is so intent upon this desire that throughout the entire play she remains convinced that nothing is seriously wrong with Edmund. This delusion suggests that to maintain happiness one must create a vision of the world that adapts to our own desires. Mary's belief that his sickness is temporary—together with other examples such as James' belief that Edmund's drinking is good for his health—suggest that we are a race that cannot be trusted to determine what is real because

our minds will rationalize harmful behavior and jump to conclusions that match our view of the world.

Perhaps O'Neill draws from his own brother in creating Mary Tyrone as a figure that struggles to achieve individuality and control over her role in life. In "The Drama in America," James O'Neill, Jr. argued for a reform of the theatre and addressed the point that "women are the real support of the stage" (qtd. in Shaughnessy 82). He asks us to question if we are delegitimizing their need of a "grand and noble" experience of the soul: "Are they all the mere butterflies cynics would have us believe—forever flitting from flower to flower, and sipping nothing but sweets? Do they never pause in delight over some substantial garden or waving field?" (qtd. in Shaughnessy 82). O'Neill uses Mary to demonstrate women can aim for a purpose beyond the sphere of motherhood. Before she can exercise her role as a mother and wife, she must first be valued as an individual trying to assert control over her own life.

Although James accuses Mary of having left the family, she never physically abandons them. We also know that Mary's threat to commit suicide never evolved into action. Leaving the family in any other way is never discussed in the play. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), after being branded with a scarlet letter for the entire community to see, Hester Prynne decides to stay in the town and not flee. Similar to Mary, Hester decided to stay in the same ground that brought her ignominy, "so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at large purge her soul and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saintlike, because the result of martyrdom" (Hawthorne 144). Mary's guilt is influenced by being constantly reminded by her family of her failed attempts to cure her addiction. This imposition is symbolic of the scarlet letter placed onto Hester Prynne. It is an unnecessary tool and the

community knows it. They understand that no punishment that they impose on Hester Prynne will be able to outweigh the pain that “will be always in her heart” (Hawthorne 121).

Mary’s life has become a prison because she deems all tenses of time are equal: “The past is the present, isn’t it? It’s the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won’t let us” (2.2). Indeed, this feeling of being trapped is perpetuated as her family caution her to recall her frailty as a measure to prevent her from breaking her abstinence. Hawthorne describes that punishing an individual by forcing them to feel an endless guilt is unfavorable because it does not bring them closer to absolution. Hawthorne writes that Hester Prynne “could no longer borrow from the future, to help her through the present grief [...] for the accumulating days, and added years, would pile up their misery upon the heap of shame. Throughout them all, giving up her individuality, she would become the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman’s frailty and sinful passion” (142-143). Seeking to constantly punish individuals such as Mary Tyrone or Hester Prynne is counterproductive to their path of redemption, and it is not clear how a society benefits from having a “symbol” for the “moralists” to use. Freud remarks that “as long as things go well with a man, his conscience is lenient and lets the ego do all sort of thing; but when misfortune befalls him, he searches his soul, acknowledges his sinfulness, heightens the demands of his conscience, imposes abstinences on himself and punishes himself with penances” (73). O’Neill and Hawthorne demonstrate that society also reacts with an increase of their “demands” and “penances” toward individuals that are befallen with “misfortune,” even though this lacks any evidence of effectiveness.

It is worth noting that Mary’s perception of reality is never in question. Nevertheless, the family attempts to shield her from reality because they believe the grim details of Edmund’s

condition will be harmful for her recovery. In order to protect Mary from unwanted emotions, the family perpetuates the lie that Edmund is healthy. When Edmund tries to share the truth, she resorts back to denial. While Mary is clearly aware of the times James has failed her, she fails to notice until it is too late that she has failed James and her children. This is counterintuitive because there are multiple examples of Mary's ability to empathize and understand her family: "Don't you know your father yet? He would be terribly hurt" (2.1). Mary is acutely aware of what injures her husband, and her concern is demonstrated through this example. What it takes to hurt each other is never in question for the Tyrones. Whether they choose to act upon it or not, they are familiar about their influence over each other's feelings. Mary says, "I should have never have borne him. [...] I could never have hurt him then. He wouldn't have had to know his mother was a dope fiend—and hate her" (3). She understands clearly who and what she is, and she has an estimation of how others see her. Therefore, the underlying problem behind her addiction is guilt. She believes that it was her mistake to bring Edmund into a family that had not learned to heal from its trauma.

CHAPTER II

JAMES TYRONE

There are two specific expressions of blame that the family inflict upon James that cause him the most pain: criticism about an overvaluation of money above family, and the accusation that he is indirectly responsible for Mary's addiction. These charges dehumanize James, and they succeed in breaking down the spirit of hope he has at the beginning of the play following Mary's return from the medical institution. Because of this burden, we witness James undergo a stark transformation from the play's beginning to its end; the jovial husband full of hope towards his wife's recovery ends the play, as the stage directions suggest, with telling signs on his face of "a sad, defeated old man, possessed by hopeless resignation" (O'Neill 125). The image of a desensitized monster runs contrary to O'Neill's assertion in the inscription of this play to create "understanding" of his characters. Like all individuals, James Tyrone is a product of the community and society he grew up in. James feels life taught him a hard lesson about what the lack of money meant because of his own experience with poverty. His experience with materialism and capitalism are emblematic of the American experience in the late nineteenth century.

During this period, as Craig Brown and Barbara Warner note, "Immigrant workers represented a seemingly infinite supply of cheap labor that attracted the hostility of the native-born" (294). James became aware at a very young age that he belonged to a social class that was required to work out of necessity rather than pleasure, and he measured his success by the amount of money he could accrue. In this capitalistic environment, immigrants were the interchangeable pieces of an engine that enslaved people with promise of commodities.

Underneath this system intended to bring economic prosperity is a deep and cold truth about the broken promises the working class in this country have faced. James' identity is developed within this capitalistic economy, and it causes him both to have hope and doubt for a better future.

James was not sure what would lie ahead within the life he was entering when the fruits of his acting profession began to materialize. Although he held a promising career ahead of him through his work as a Shakespearean actor, he believed he had achieved true success when he amassed a lucrative profit from the staging of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Through his economic success, he would gain the power to purchase objects he could have only dreamt about in his youth. Of what use would life's lesson be if it suddenly presented James with wealth and made him a prisoner of his past? This aspect of social Darwinism motivates the individual to move up in the "social ladder," and as they make this climb the individual exercises the power to purchase to fill their life with possessions that are tied to their conception of success. "Capitalism, the system of consumerism and oppressive gender stereotypes which engenders nothing but the compulsion to buy, is the paradigm of this compulsive craving for the hollow as an ensign of the substantive, the real. We are hoping the dream will come true, that our next purchase will change our lives" (Larner 11-12). With every new purchase of real estate, James is trying to fill the vacuum of hope that exists for the future of the family. Although he is unable to fix the family's relationship, he can use his money to try to secure his wealth. Wealth provided him the opportunity to buy real estate, but these possessions fail to make him feel complete. James is forced to ask himself: "What the hell is it that I wanted to buy" (4). The opportunity to accumulate vast amounts of money every year was too enticing for a young man that wanted to be successful. It was an opportunity life was offering him after having worked so hard. The

purchasing power provided by money proves to be insufficient for Tyrone, and it leaves him with a sense of emptiness.

Edmund and Jamie struggle to understand their father because they do not understand the conditions of life suffered by the poor. Jamie's brief acting stint has permanently ended and he will now be earning his living by the money his father gives him in exchange for the maintenance work at home. There is no evidence that he expects anything more or less from life. Edmund, on the other hand, is proud of his voyages as a sailor, and he yearns to return to sea. O'Neill uses Edmund to endow him with the same obliviousness the author had during his youth about the struggles of the destitute and powerless class. Patrick Chura finds that, "Like O'Neill in 1912, Edmund has recently returned from a slumming adventure at sea where he has damaged his health while apparently forming a rudimentary socialist class consciousness" (537). James suggests Edmund has a mere idealization of poverty, but there is a great difference between the world Edmund briefly visited and the experience James lived. James sees Edmund's experience with poverty as nothing more than a romantic's venture into discovering oneself in an exotic environment.

Through James' retelling of his childhood, we are privy to the real consequences of poverty, but we also become aware of the capitalist force that explains why he has become a "miser" that is enthralled by the power of money. Among the capitalist figures that James must combat is himself. Although James remains in perpetual fear of the "poorhouse," it will take great difficulty for him to oppose the system that has brought him financial stability. As O'Neill writes, this fear is overwhelming for James: "It was at home that I first learned the value of a dollar and the fear of the poor-house. I've never been able to believe in my luck since. I've always feared it would change and everything I had would be taken away. But still, the more

property you own, the safer you think you are. That may not be logical, but it's the way I have to feel. Banks fail, and your money's gone, but you think you can keep the land beneath your feet" (4). James' experience shows us that the economic system exploits the lower class, and it also convinces them that they are "safer" with the more "property" they have. James believes his wealth has been secured through the speculation of property. His acquisition of property may be the only protection between himself and the poorhouse. While this may be a false sense of security, it is necessary illusion because it provides what most individuals seek: a sense of purpose in life.

Although unsupportive of the idea that socialism dissolves the centralized power of a particular group over a weaker one, Freud contends that "a real change in the relations of human beings to possessions" is necessary (90). In *Journey*, it is not clear that O'Neill is developing an argument to change how society associates the value of an individual with the amount of possessions they own. However, when O'Neill allows us to visit James' childhood and witness the pains of an impoverished family, he is making a point about the dire consequences of poverty and specifically questioning the capitalist model that governs us. Alan Weinerman suggests there is an important element to the contradictions of capitalism beyond exploitation of humans and nature: "the need to exploit human consciousness—to so distort reality and people's perception thereof that these perceptions become a material force essential to maintain the system" (269). This means that capitalism makes use of an already innate behavior within human beings: aggression. Freud clarifies that human aggression is not caused by our struggle to attain property, and he goes against the communist argument that the abolition of property would be successful in abolishing the imbalanced power structure within society. If this system were not to exist, Freud believes that a more primal force would take over; in its place, would be a system of

struggle of “power and influence” within sexual relationships (*Civilization and its Discontents* 60). In other words, by displacing the struggle over personal wealth, man would look for an alternative outlet for their aggression. In both the capitalist driven and sexually driven systems, Freud suggests that the primitive nature of men makes us inclined to aggression (*Civilization and its Discontents* 61). In his own words, “Aggressiveness was not created by property” (Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* 60). This means that aggression is an instinct that can at times be controlled, but it cannot be abolished. Coming to terms with this is an important process of studying civilization.

One of the factors that influences our aggressive instincts is a desire to maintain dominance within the social relationships we form. It is a pillar of the survival of any civilization for its members to be able to get along as a community; the most basic unit of which is the family. Of course, competition and cooperation do not represent opposite ends of a spectrum, and there is much to be gained when we work together for a common cause. However, there is an anxiety we experience in terms of how we are perceived by others that deters cooperation. While we may share common interests with other individuals, our self-interest seeks to be served through divisions of values, religion, politics, and economy. Jamie’s concern with his social profile deters him from wanting to be seen working outdoors, Mary becomes upset when the community finds out James’ lover is suing him, and Edmund is disgusted because he knows his father’s concern with becoming impoverished is the topic of conversation in their community. These characters help demonstrate that we value social recognition, and the Tyrone’s confidence in their social standing diminishes as James’ fear of the poor house begins to influence how their community sees them.

James' fear of losing his money is important, as it serves to highlight that the hunger he felt as child of a humble family did more than galvanize him to succeed as an actor. In the working-class environment that James understood better than any member of his own family, greed is present within those that survive. For example, one of the reasons that James fears ending up in financial ruin is the amount of medical and domestic expenditures he has had to make, and he believes that the sacrifices he is willing to make for his family is a sign of how much he cares for them. Between Mary's doctors, the family, and his properties, James suggests he is in constant peril of losing his wealth. This is certainly how James expresses the problem to the family, but Mary and Edmund believe his anxiety may be caused by his mismanagement of his money. Even though his actions are marked by his fear of becoming impoverished, his family sees that his greed causes him make foolish decisions with his money. For example, Mary suggests that James degrades his family through his second-rate purchases such cheap houses that are mortgaged and difficult to sell. Mary regards the facility with which James wastes money is due to his vulnerability to be swindled. She says this occurs because James settles for "second- hand bargains" when it comes to their home, his acquisition of property, and the medical attention the family receives. Instead of making smarter investments, James places a greater importance to bargains. This problem is further compounded as James cannot help reminding his family that his expenditures represent a sacrifice, rather than the natural actions of a caring patriarch. In addition, Edmund suggests that if his father would have simply taken his mother to a more reputable doctor from the beginning of her sickness, then he could have spared her of further woes and would have saved himself more doctors' fees. Compounded with of all these suggestions about how James could make better use of his money is James' own fear that what you can gain in this economic system can so easily be taken away from you.

O'Neill uses the Tyrones to show us that one cannot escape the past. As we have seen in the case of James, economic systems that govern over society regulate our negative instincts of aggression. Similarly, the trauma that the family has undergone shapes their identities and influences their actions. James Tyrone utters a powerful warning that sets the theme for the rest of the play: "For God's sake, don't dig up what's long forgotten. If you're that far gone in the past already, when it's only the beginning of the afternoon, what will you be tonight" (2.2). The recurring problem for the Tyrone family is that they cannot set aside a past that they believe is responsible for the misery they face in the present. For this reason, brief periods of unity are interrupted by their most disturbing memories. We see that the open wounds are seldom left to heal before a deeper force reopens them. James pleads to his wife not to recall the past because he does not want its weight to overpower the present. While he is hopeful that Mary's condition has improved, his inability to cope with the past further prevents him from facing reality.

After James first realizes his wife has relapsed into drug abuse, he asks: "For the love of God, why did you not have the strength to keep on" (2.1). When James questions Mary's strength he suggests that her will power was too weak to prevent her drug habit from resurfacing. When James discusses the same topic with his son in the next scene, he makes the following observation: "[N]ow there's no strength of the spirit left in her to fight against her curse [...] Only I wish she hadn't led me to hope this time" (2.2). James is the one who has lost the strength to "keep on." James is tired of the farce Mary has made him play; the "strength" of his initial hopes has worn out, and he resents his wife for getting his hopes up. James cannot help thinking about himself even when he is meant to be supporting his wife. Although he portrays himself as a caring husband seeking medical help for his wife, Mary understands that behind this portrayal is a revealing conversation with Dr. Hardy. Through these conversations, unseen by the audience,

James tells the doctor that his wealth is diminishing, and he conveys that he would like to purchase the most affordable treatment for his wife. Jamie scorns his father because he knows James intends to have a similar conversation with Dr. Hardy now that Edmund needs medical help.

In the last act, as a final effort to put to rest his sons' charge that he is a miser, James jumps to turn on the light bulb, but he unwittingly is too late to reignite the hope that change is possible. The power of truth, the Promethean light of knowledge, is difficult to maintain without oxygen; it is easily extinguished without the support of individuals. In his attempts to forget the past, he was making a futile effort to erase the history they had shared. To remember their history would mean to bring up the most embarrassing and haunting experiences of their past; the time when he was sued by his mistress, the trips to quack doctors to treat a disease they understood little about, or reliving the fears from his childhood of a family struggling to survive poverty. These memories, this reality, eats at their insides. As Larner notes, the reality that is laid bare is symbolic of the eagles that injure, without the ability to destroy, Prometheus (15). Larner concludes that the "Tyrones have somehow seen themselves clearly for the first time. The world is no longer the same. Once the family has finally seen itself, it has a chance to mourn its losses and live. It is transformed" (15). By mourning their losses and learning to move on, the Tyrone family have an opportunity to adjust to the real world. Instead of destroying the Tyrones, confronting their reality transforms the understanding the family has for one another.

Echoes of Prometheus's unending punishment exist within the cyclical nature of the Tyrone's lives; their shared trauma follows them throughout the play, and they are condemned to continue in this path if they are unable to liberate themselves from their pain through a method that does not include drugs. After countless arguments, there is no definitive right and wrong

side or a sign of absolution. Gerardine Meaney surmises that “this play does not culminate in catharsis, nor even in destruction. It ends instead in a stasis which implies an inexorable continuity without change” (56). Instead, the family’s wounds are bandaged and left in this vulnerable state until one of the characters lifts the gauze. The pain that usually arises from a wound persists, and alcohol is James’ best “tonic” to treat his feelings of disappointment and fear. In truth, there is little hope that the Tyrones will change. However, hope may still exist for the Tyrones through their interest in interpersonal relationships. As Robert Combs points out, “The characters in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* have lost their true selves forever, yet they still care what the neighbors think. There’s hope in that” (125). This means that if the Tyrones care about how their community sees them, they will, at least, abide by a minimum set of standards of decorum. There is hope that these standards will help create a more peaceful environment which may cause the family to forgive each other and finally move forward.

CHAPTER III

JAMIE TYRONE

One of Jamie's most negative characteristics is his obvious envy of his brother. His envy manifests in his resentment of his brother's successes and his spite towards him for a perceived favoritism from his parents. Unlike the feelings of anger towards his mother and father, his negative view of his brother is explicitly admitted. We must recognize the universality of sibling rivalry. It is a pattern of behavior addressed throughout centuries in literature. George Foster et al. argue that envy is particularly dangerous to society: "[I]t implies hostility, which leads to aggression and violence capable of destroying societies [...] But to admit to envy is enormously difficult for the average American; unlike anger, there is no socially acceptable justification that permits us to admit to strong envy" (165). In fact, the consequences of jealousy are engraved in the bedrock of Judeo-Christianity; in Genesis, the first death is caused when a spiteful Cain kills his brother Abel. In the Tyrone family, the gravest accusation is placed upon Jamie. According to his mother, Jamie's "jealous" feelings compel him to transmit a deadly infection to an infant Eugene.

Lisa Dillon states that, "[j]ealousy is a context-dependent emotion that results in an abhorrent feeling when one is aware of a threat to a relationship with a loved one. Jealousy results after observing someone enjoy attention or advantage that one wants for him- or herself" (14). Not only does jealousy stem from an insecurity of not being loved, it also arises when one perceives a threat to a relationship. Mary tells us of a time when she was proud of a young Jamie, but this relationship ends with Eugene's death. Initially, she blames herself for not being at home. However, she transfers her guilt onto her defenseless surviving child. After this scarring

experience, the damage only worsened when Jamie noticed a new member of the family receiving the love and attention he had not seen in many years. Nevertheless, it should not escape our attention that Jamie has been conditioned to feel angst as a result of the scorn he receives from his parents. James, for instance, has berated his son with labels such as morbid “cynic” and “loafer” throughout the play. Jamie’s jealousy for his brother may be a byproduct of this conditioning, and his destructive behavior may be a sign of his anxiety from seeing two younger brothers intrude upon the strong bond he once enjoyed with his parents.

Although there is no proof to sustain Mary’s belief that Jamie is a threat to his siblings’ lives, it is difficult to ignore Jamie’s claim about wanting to prevent Edmund’s success. His relationship with his brother seems to be the most complex because Jamie must often deal with conflicting intentions. Albert Bermel points out, “Having once wished to become a writer himself, Jamie says he tempted Edmund into writing. Why? So that writing would defeat him. At the same time he wanted Edmund to be the ‘success’ he had never been and to reflect some glory back on his mentor” (110). In these examples, it is important not to confuse the “glory” Jamie is talking about with a desire to promote himself to anyone outside the home. In both scenarios, Jamie is trying to restore the bond he once enjoyed with his parents. If Edmund’s writing leads to his demise, Jamie reasons that this will cast his own failures in a softer light. Alternatively, if Edmund finds success, then his father’s accusation that Jamie is a negative influence will cease. He fails to notice that Edmund may succeed *despite* his negative influence, but in this situation, he would not be able to utilize Edmund as a means of fixing his parental relationship.

Our first description of Jamie is under the shadow of James. His identity is constructed by the characteristics he shares with his father. O’Neill draws comparisons and contrasts between Jamie and James: “He has his father’s broad shouldered, deep-chested physique...appears shorter

and stouter because he lacks Tyrone's bearing and graceful carriage. He also lacks his father's vitality" (19). In describing Jamie, the stage directions suggest he cannot escape being judged by the success of others. As the eldest son, he inherited his father's name and the expectation to maintain a patriarchal legacy. This is opposed to what Jamie wants, and he enjoys the role of combative son he plays throughout the play. In one scene James believes he has managed to outwit his son by padlocking his "fresh" whiskey: "The padlock is all scratched. That drunken loafer has tried to pick the lock with a piece of wire, the way he's done before" (3).

Jamie's rebellion with his father is a fight he will never win, but he gains a satisfaction in resisting James.

A curious and seldom discussed fact about Jamie is that he relishes the idea of his father knowing that his sons have drunk his whiskey but having no means to prove it. James only has to taste the whiskey to figure out that it has been watered down. Indeed, the scheme does not fool anyone; James has figured out what Jamie has been doing all along. Jamie knew this would happen, but he still insists in this game of trickery. What was his gain in adding this water? Perhaps Jamie prefers to act innocently rather than admit to an evil act. He has already been accused by his mother of the worst evil possible, so adding water to whiskey would not seem like a serious crime to him. Lying to themselves and each other is its own form of intoxication because it creates a cycle where one lie begets another; this habit of deceit becomes a soothing treatment to the sobering reality around them.

Understanding the reason behind Jamie's angst with his father reveals that he has a tremendous capacity for empathy. While the sparring between Edmund and Jamie suggests there are unsettled difficulties they have not faced, Jamie is protective of anyone else harming his younger brother. Jamie demonstrates this when he confronts his father's notion that Edmund's

condition is fatal. He is afraid that this may negatively impact James' decision in selecting the best medical institution for Edmund. Jamie voices his concern to his father: "What I'm afraid of is, with your Irish bogtrotter idea that consumption is fatal, you'll figure it would be a waste of money to spend any more that you can help" (2.2). At this moment, O'Neill shows us that Jamie does take his duty as a brother seriously, and he will not tolerate his father's stinginess to get in the way of Edmund's health. He seems willing to achieve this by delivering a harsh critique of his father. Similar to Hamlet, who faces opposition from every character within the play, Jamie's arguments serve a greater purpose. Hamlet remarks, "I must be cruel, only to be kind" (Shakespeare 3.4.178). Pointing out that his father is being taken advantage of once again with more unprofitable real estate deals will be worth the repercussions if it motivates James to choose a higher quality institution for his brother. He cleverly taunts his father by saying, "Prove I'm a liar. That's what I want. That's why I brought it up" (2.2). Like diluting the whiskey, Jamie makes sure that he conceals his actions. He does not profit from getting his father to spend more money on his brother. He only wants to protect his sibling.

Jamie's traumatic experience with his mother has a negative impact upon his feelings towards women. While Freud argues about the folly of loving everyone, Jamie finds it ridiculous to love anyone at all. Jamie says that he prefers a prostitute because he cannot trust any other type of woman. At the brothel, Jamie chooses Fat Vi because he pities her the most. Although he seeks her for sexual benefit, Jamie believes that he can give her the acceptance that they have both failed to receive. Fat Vi's horridness may have been unappealing to others, but he sees value where others would look away. His appreciation may stem from a first-hand knowledge of being cast away from his family. This moment is important to highlight as it shows the person behind the mask of a cold-hearted individual. Furthermore, Jamie's relationship with women is

narrowed down to an illegal bargain where he exchanges money for sex. Freud says that, “Civilized society has found itself obliged to pass over in silence many transgressions which, according to its own rescripts, it ought to have punished” (52). Freud’s case is that actual sexual life differs from the ideal that is held by civilization. On the surface, we believe we are a society that protects women and have high standards for men, but we seldom seek to understand what causes individuals to break these rules.

The feeling of alienation has accompanied Jamie since the age of ten, and this feeling appears to be intensified by the parental disappointment that has followed him ever since. Children who are victims of trauma commonly sustain the belief “that he or she must have caused what has been suffered, must have wanted it, deserved it, didn’t deserve any better, or at least did not do enough to avoid it” (Schafer 1154). In other words, they blame themselves for the pain they have suffered. Instead of seeing themselves as victims, they believe they are at fault for what was done to them. There is at least one way that Jamie can still recuperate his relationship with his father, but Mary seems to have already lost hope in Jamie. James scorns Jamie for failing to follow in his footsteps in the theater, and James cannot understand how someone with so much promise could waste his talent. Nevertheless, James suggests he would be satisfied if he saw his eldest son dedicate his intellect and passion in any profession. His father is providing him an avenue to fix their relationship and to get rid of the “loafer” title. On the other hand, Mary blames Jamie for killing his young brother, Eugene. She does not suggest that there is anything Jamie could do to lift this burden. Therefore, Jamie must forever carry this guilt and acknowledge that his hopes to enjoy a peaceful relationship with his mother are futile.

Mary and James have repeatedly griped with Jamie for being a pernicious influence upon Edmund. They believe that he acts in malice as he teaches Edmund about “atheist” poets and

models a destructive behavior for his younger brother. The only lasting influence he has ever had has been on his siblings: responsible for having killed Eugene, and now he is killing Edmund. Jamie's struggles with contradictory feelings of hatred and love for his brother: "[t]he dead part of me hopes you don't get well" (4). Besides not wanting to seem worse by being compared to Edmund, Jamie knows he has had a negative influence on his brother. This revelation is preceded by Jamie's belief that Edmund is his Frankenstein: "Hell, you're more than my brother. I made you! You're my Frankenstein" (4). Of course, Jamie appears to have made a strange mistake for a well-read individual, and this is a curious oversight for both he and his brother have an exceptional ability to recite several lines of literature at a time. Jamie should have said he is Edmund's Frankenstein because he has asserted responsibility for animating a demon that cannot find his way in society. Seeing his creator as the source of his pain, the monster seeks retribution for his suffering: "Jamie will also take revenge on Edmund by killing his beloved sibling. This sibling is not Eugene, who died before Edmund was even born, but Jamie himself" (Cordaro 125). Jamie's self-destructive behavior is a form of retribution because Edmund took his place as the favored son, but it is a form of protecting Edmund from further any harm Jamie possibly cause him to suffer.

Of course, Jamie is not a monster, and his overt callousness is a development of many years of distrust towards his parents. Jamie's cynicism often makes him suspicious of his father's intentions, his mother's promises, and his brother's behavior. At times, Jamie uses dark humor to boast about his overindulgence in alcohol and prostitutes: "I expect a salary of at least one large iron man at the end of the week—to carouse on" (1). The iron man, a person of great strength, is an important asset in manual labor. There is a considerable contrast between the iron man, using the force of his arms to beat and mold metal, and Jamie, who is responsible for house chores.

Embedded in Jamie's words is an insensitivity towards the working-class groups that labor long hours to make ends meet. Surprisingly, his family does not jump at the opportunity to condemn Jamie's offensive humor. His joke is ignored and Mary goes on to ask why her sons were talking about a doctor. Instead of suggesting that Jamie is making a crude joke at the expense of the poor, the irony is perhaps made at his expense; comparing himself to an "iron man" makes his lethargy stand out. After his attempt to bring laughter fails, he suggests that Mary's presence brings everyone happiness. Again, his attempt to provide "tenderness" falls flat and he is "rebuffed" by his mother. Despite his contrary remarks, his attempt to humor, praise, and comfort his mother shows that there is still hope within Jamie that their relationship is not lost.

This observation also leads us to hypothesize that Edmund has no confusion about the role of Frankenstein: Edmund sees himself as the creator of his brother's despair. "Edmund Tyrone is in the same position as Frankenstein, as he must also be subjected to the hatred of the monster he creates. Edmund is Jamie's creator because he is responsible for the one event in Jamie's life from which Jamie has never recovered: the loss of Mary to drugs" (Cordaro 123). The stage directions suggest that Edmund responds to Jamie's assertion with "amusement" as a grin appears on his face, "All right, I'm your Frankenstein. So let's have a drink" (4). Notwithstanding the many instances in which he and Jamie joke about their father, Edmund's grinning is a trademark response when his life seems to depend on someone else's hands: "You can choose any place you like! [...] Any place you like within reason" (4). As the stage directions instruct, the "within reason" line is particularly amusing for Edmund and it causes him to grin. His father's search for a medical institution that will help Edmund comes with the condition that it must also be economically convenient. James has failed to see that is still within his power to control Edmund's fate. Therefore, Edmund grins after his brother's metaphor

because he sees Jamie as having an influence not just in their present tense: Edmund understands that his brother has an important influence on his future.

CHAPTER IV
EDMUND TYRONE

The Tyrones' concern with the past is expressed through the memories they selectively choose to retell. Stories represent a legacy, and it is important for the living to cling to them. Each family member builds a narrative that supports their beliefs. Mary, for instance, frequently brings up memories of her upright father who was mostly abstinent from alcohol. Mary's memory of her father is important because she contrasts his upstanding characteristics with James' alcoholism and stinginess. The narrative Mary presents about her father is particularly troubling for James. James does not discount that Mary's father was a good man, but he believes his father-in-law was a drunk just like him: "Her father wasn't the great, generous, noble Irish gentleman she makes out [...] She condemns my drinking but forgets his. It's true he never touched a drop till he was forty, but after that he made up for lost time" (4). James suggests Mary's father's drinking coupled with consumption made for a fatal combination. Mary benefits from omitting her father's vices because the only experiences she can look back upon with fondness and without anxiety are tied to the family she was raised in. Although the memories that the family share are based on real events in the past, their narratives do not encompass a full image of reality.

To prevent Mary's drug addiction from reoccurring, Edmund believes it is necessary for his mother to "remember" the past. Edmund tries to convince her that "[t]he right way is to remember. So you'll always be on your guard. You know what's happened before" (1). However, heeding Edmund's advice is not enough to prevent Mary's drug relapse. Maintaining her focus on the most traumatic moments of her life is distressing for Mary, and she seeks relief

for this anxiety with morphine. Edmund's notion that Mary should be mindful of past experiences is not necessarily the formula for her happiness. Perhaps there is no a guarantee that any set of guidelines will result in happiness, but Edmund chooses to have hope for his mother's recovery. Edmund's advice for his mother is an attempt to save his family, and it is a sign of his hope that the family relationship may improve. When confronted with his brother's cynicism towards their mother's recovery, Edmund persists in upholding the fiction that his mother's promise has real potential. Unlike James, he does not hope that his mother will improve out of fear that her condition will be talked about in town or because her condition is exhausting their material resources.

Unfortunately, Edmund's call to his mother to "be on your guard" overestimates the power of knowledge. Knowledge alone does not empower individuals, and presumed knowledge may be faulty; facts can be manipulated to fit an agenda, and others parse through information selectively, hearing only what is more convenient for themselves. Saul Kassin and Gisli Gudjonsson warn that, "[O]nce people form a belief, they selectively seek and interpret new data in ways that verify that belief" (41). In other words, when individuals adopt an opinion, they primarily focus on the information that confirms their opinion. For example, Edmund wants to believe that his mother must have been in the spare room to mute the disturbance of the fog horn and James' snoring. Of course, his reasoning is biased because his intention is not to find out what his mother was doing in the spare room; rather, he unwittingly creates an artificial scenario where his mother is not taking morphine. Edmund's confirmation bias makes him susceptible to delusion, and Mary takes advantage of his faulty reasoning. She resorts to shaming her children in order receive her privacy. Her manipulation would be ineffective if they relied on facts and ignored the importance of emotions such as fear and hope that influence human reasoning.

An integral component of any story is the listener, as the tale needs an interlocutor to be told. The overall purpose of telling and hearing stories is to learn and understand from each other. This exchange of ideas created by the listener and speaker of a story is impossible to produce by force. For example, Edmund is unwilling to listen to the story of James' youth. He complains that it is a tale he does not need to hear once again, and it is likely that he has learned it by heart. Mary responds to his complaint by saying, "Yes, dear, you've had to listen, but I don't think you've ever tried to understand" (3). If Edmund continues to regard James' account of his childhood as one of his many lectures, Mary warns her son that he will continue to fail to understand his father.

The O'Neill brothers endured many lectures and tiring commands from their father. Norman Berlin writes, "His father was forever quoting Shakespeare, much to his sons' annoyance [...] A wager with his father prompted [Eugene O'Neill] to memorize the entire part of Macbeth" (6). Having no formal education, there were few texts that their father could use to instruct his children—except for classic literature such as Shakespeare. "It had been in 1903 that James O'Neill had wrestled his 15-year-old son down the staircase of the Monte Cristo cottage on Pequot Avenue, insisting that the lad accompany him to Mass" (Shaughnessy 25). James was passionate that his children hear from works that he hoped would define them, although his sons were just as passionately opposed to their father's tastes. James associates his sons' inclination toward the morbid and unreligious as a failure to understand his sense of religious values: "Morbid filth! Where the hell do you get your taste in literature? Filth and despair and pessimism! Another atheist, I suppose. When you deny God, you deny hope" (4). Hope is the important lesson James wants to teach his children. He does not gain pride that his son can memorize lines from Shakespeare. In fact, he criticizes his son for having "murdered" the lines.

His real satisfaction is to offer a pleasant escape from the “pessimism” and “despair” of their taste in literature.

Edmund’s poetic voice is lauded for its sincerity, but it pains James to hear that it must be a “morbid” voice. As Combs points out, “The poetry [Edmund] sardonically quotes expresses, among other things, the painful liberation he is experiencing as a result of his ‘consumption.’ He is beginning to realize that no familial or social roles can prepare him for his own confrontation with life-threatening illness” (11-12). Edmund’s consumption plays a role in endowing him with a spiritual awakening. When he can longer look forward to a peaceful future, Victor Frankenstein decides to take responsibility for the monster he created: “I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price, perhaps, of the existence of the whole human race” (Mary Shelley 114-15). Similarly, Edmund begins to appreciate his place in the world as his illness leaves him uncertain about his own future.

Through poetry and quotation, Edmund finds the voice to get through to his father. Dugan points out that the Tyrones’ purpose of quoting from works of literature is to evoke “attitude” and to illicit a specific response from each other. For example, when the characters recite a poem or work that is unfamiliar to James, the reader notes “the father listening to his sons who learned so much from him about recitation; but the arguments seem so deadly earnest that any sense of showing off evaporates” (384). Dugan’s point cannot be understated because it tells us that the sons use recitation, a familiar tool vital to the actor, as a means of grabbing their father’s attention. Through Baudelaire, Dowson, Kipling, and Wilde, the sons find a voice that breaks through James’ stubbornness with a depth and emotional conviction that overshadows any presumption the sons are flaunting their knowledge. Instead, this suggests that poetry, as when

Edmund relates his experience of the sea, is an effective means of getting through to the traditionalist, close-minded James. He may disagree with the poets, but he will be forced to listen.

Avoiding confrontation is not part of the Tyrone's legacy. James is ready to fight anyone that challenges his religious values such as his faith in God or the "wisdom" of the Bible. Jamie's trajectory in life shows he is ready to argue, but his lack of motivation leaves him unmoved and complacent with inaction. Edmund, however, is willing to sacrifice his life (his health) in order to be closer to the idea of happiness he has associated with the sea. It is likely he would still be on a ship if he were not physically incapacitated. The lingering question for the reader is why the Tyrones attempt to maintain a farce when they are clearly able to see through each other's lies. If they are unable to convince each other, then perhaps their version of reality is only meant to create an internal peace.

Internal peace is exactly what Edmund seeks after coming back from one of his most revelatory experiences while riding through the Argentinian sea. Edmund explains:

I lay on the bowsprit, facing astern, with the water foaming into spume under me, the masts with every sail white in the moonlight, towering high above me. I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself...I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God (4)

The veil of the fog is lifted during this experience, and Edmund no longer feels trapped by an anxiety pulling him towards the past and preventing him from envisioning a better future. The highlight of his experience is gaining the sense that he finally "belonged." After becoming "drunk" with beauty of the external world, Edmund suggests that he feels a sense of connection

to every object around him. Edmund's experience helps elucidate a real example of O'Neill's understanding of Freud's "oceanic feeling."

What is clear from Freud's interpretation of the oceanic feeling is that it represents our need to fill a vacuum. For Freud, the vacuum begins after childhood when our parental needs are no longer being satisfied, and a substitute for our "helplessness" is sought (19). For the spiritual or religious, a group Freud identifies as clearly affected by the oceanic feeling, the "more inclusive" ego-feeling of our past mental life wishes to "bond with the universe" (15). In *Journey*, Edmund confirms the idea that the feeling of universality relates to a sense of being incomplete. He longs for the sea because he desperately wants to feel that he is part of a boundless existence greater than the smaller and temporary nature of human life. It would not be enough to say that Edmund simply enjoys the sea as a recreational sport. Instead, the purpose of the sea is that it is a necessary means for him to experience the oceanic feeling.

Edmund hopes he can once again reach a higher state of consciousness where he feels he belongs to the world. Edmund says, "As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death" (4). In this passage, Edmund articulates the emotions going through the other Tyrones as well. Even in his own home, James cannot find refuge from the feelings of distress that have followed him throughout his life. The "stranger" who feels out of place in a house she does not consider "home" echoes the pain felt by Mary. The individual that "is not really wanted" reminds us of Jamie after being blamed for Eugene's death, and Jamie will "never belong" outside the shadow of a disapproving father. The absence of the oceanic feeling leads the Tyrones to feel more isolated from each other.

To gain access to this feeling is a privilege. Freud suggests his understanding is limited because he has never felt it and the science of feelings are never easy to grasp, but he concedes that there are many credible instances of people going through the sense of universality to verify its existence (19). Under the night's stars and above tumbling waves, Edmund is overwhelmed with the oceanic feeling, and he wishes that this feeling would not end. Feelings are never permanent. This, of course, does not stop Edmund from lamenting: "Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on towards nowhere, for no good reason" (4). Earlier in this thesis, we noted that Mary desired a return to "nothing" because this represents our original state—she yearns for a blank slate. Edmund sees that beyond the oceanic feeling is his death drive directing him towards this similar "nowhere" place. It is fundamental to human nature that all living things perish and there is nothing we can do about this—this is not the death drive. Instead, as Matt Waggoner notes, "the human organism contains traces of its own pre-organic past and is compelled to return to it, finding 'pleasure' in its own failure to get very far" (217). Edmund and Mary seem to embrace nothingness because are desperate to experience a pure life that is unmarred by the cruel reality of life. They are willing to put their hopes in a blank slate even if it does not exist.

With a wry grin, Edmunds explains the mistake of his existence: "It was a great mistake, my being born a man, I would have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish" (4). Fundamentally, the differences between individuals are trifling when compared to the differences between a person and an animal. Evoking the seagull and fish are suitable companions to his memories of the sea, but they also to fall into their own fixed roles as hunter and prey. Edmund realizes that their role in life has been established by nature. Edmund recognizes that the sense of purpose for these creatures is unyielding to external forces because they lack the ability to make

conscious decisions. The “mistake” Edmund refers to, by “being born a man,” indicates the innate failure of every individual that is caught “between the aspiration to transcend nature and a compulsive repetition of the failure to accomplish it” (Waggoner 224). Stephen Black argues, “To Edmund it seems natural to be a little in love with death. Not because he despairs. Even less because he wants to die. But because death offers a feed point by which to set the compass” (69). Edmund’s struggle is not with life itself. The real concern for Edmund is the burden of knowledge carried by conscious individuals: we follow the journey of life, despite the fact that it must one day end.

CONCLUSION

My thesis set out to explore the traumatic experiences of the characters involved in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. In order to develop a better understanding of the trauma that affects the Tyrones, each chapter of my work has examined the traumatic past of each family member. My analysis has been based to a great extent on Sigmund Freud's theories of human instincts and drives. The struggles faced by the Tyrone family are connected to Freud's ideas on subjects such as the reality principle, aggression, and the death drive. In addition, this thesis relies on the trauma theory of Michael Balaev to develop the argument that the Tyrones are victims of their environment. Regardless of the blame the family members place on each other for their suffering, the Tyrones must confront the fact that they are victimized by circumstances in their lives beyond their control.

As discussed in Chapter I, I argue that Mary's inability to confront unpleasant facts, such as Edmund's poor health and her own addiction, causes her to seek relief in delusion and prevents her from developing the "reality principle." In other words, Mary is unable to deal with the most important problems in her life, and as a result, she develops a false sense of reality. The family's efforts to protect Mary from unpleasant feelings contribute to the negative consequences of her delusional disorder. Her self-delusion makes it difficult for her to accept that she can have control over her opioid addiction. Her loss of control over her life contributes to the resentment she feels towards her family. She repeatedly tries to make her family feel ashamed of themselves because she blames them for her suffering. She deflects their concern for her drug rehabilitation through a series of defense mechanisms. However, without a better means of dealing with her

pain, she ultimately resorts to morphine as her only method of coping with unpleasant thoughts or unnerving feelings.

In Chapter II, I argue that James is traumatized by his experience with poverty. The childhood memories of his family's suffering have taught him only too well about the cruel consequences of being poor in a capitalist society. Although James has achieved financial stability, he continues to feel that there is a vacuum of hope in his life. He believes that he can fill this void with material possessions, so he takes advantage of every opportunity to acquire real estate. His behavior comes at a cost to his relationship with his family. The Tyrones struggle to deal with James' miserliness and his materialistic obsession. Although James holds a strong conviction that property is a solid investment, he neglects to meet many of his family's emotional and material demands. They feel victimized because they believe that James is more interested in preserving his financial security than in helping to end his family's dysfunctional relationship.

Jamie directly confronts his father for his neglect. His hostility, however, helps to mask an emotional pain. As discussed in Chapter III, Jamie suffers from the conditioning factors he experiences during his childhood. It is obvious that Mary regards Jamie with scorn because she believes that he is guilty of intentionally killing his infant brother, Eugene. Such pain and remorse have a traumatic effect on Jamie, leading him to express himself to others with verbal aggressiveness. Jamie is a complicated character who struggles with contradictory feelings of resentment and love for his family. Although he expresses a wish to hurt his young brother, he does not want to lose Edmund from his life. Therefore, he challenges his father to give up his miserliness so that Edmund can enjoy a proper medical facility to treat his consumption.

As discussed in Chapter IV, Edmund Tyrone represents the storyteller and poet who interprets life. As an expression of Edmund's feelings, his poetic voice highlights the anxiety he experiences at home and at sea. At home he abides by Charles Baudelaire's suggestion to "be always drunken" in life. While telling his father about his experiences with the sea, Edmund's speech becomes poetical because he has discovered a sense of connection to all things in the universe. This sense of boundlessness and cohesion with the world is related to Freud's theory of the oceanic feeling. Like all emotions, the oceanic feeling is temporary. Edmund yearns to return to the sea because it has given him a greater understanding of his existence, but due to his failing health, he is forced to stay at home and put his life in the hands of his father.

My reading of *Long Day's Journey into Night* concludes that the Tyrones are doomed to relive their history because they have been consumed by their traumatic past. Although they have a rich memory of works of literature and can recollect great details of their experiences, knowledge alone cannot save them from the consequences of trauma. I argue that O'Neill uses this play to demonstrate that human capacity for knowledge does not give us control over our lives. Today's reader lives in a digital age that enjoys ready access to information from around the world. As is the case in O'Neill's play, information alone has not helped us end hostility or injustice. The play ends with James stirring in his chair, Jamie and Edmund remaining motionless, and Mary staring aloof in a trance. The ending does not inform the reader whether change will be possible, but we may gather a valuable insight into the play by looking at the author's own words in his dedication to his wife, Carlotta O'Neill. In the play's inscription, O'Neill reminds us that he faces the traumatic experiences of his family "with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones." O'Neill admits that this play may be an "inappropriate" wedding gift for Carlotta. After all, this play contains several tragic

episodes that haunted his life. Nevertheless, O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a prime example of how understanding and forgiveness are an important part in the process to healing the pain of a traumatic past, which may be the first step to finally break the cycle and pave the way for a happier future.

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