CHAPTER V
A SPIRITUAL QUEST

The first American production of Eugene O'Neill's *A Long Day's Journey into Night* at the Helen Hays Theatre on November 7, 1956, drew immediate accolades from a preponderance of this country's most distinguished dramatic critics. The New York production following the play's debut in Stockholm earlier that same year, was directed by José Quintero and featured Fredric Marcy, Florence Eldridge, Jason Robards, Jr., Bradford Dillman, and Katherine Ross. Three years after his death the play earned O'Neill a covey of literary awards including the Pulitzer Prize, the Circle Award, and the Tony Award. John Chapman was effusive in his praise of the play, stating:

*Let us now forget something that everybody knows by now, that Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* is about himself, his parents, and his brother. This is a mere detail... The news this morning, is that *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a magnificent work, and last evening it was given a magnificent performance by Florence Eldridge, Fredric March, Jason Robards, Jr., and Bradford Dillman.*

Richard Watts, Jr., of the *New York Post* hailed the play as "magnificent and shattering." In *Herald Tribune* Walter Kerr called the play "a stunning experience." Although Robert Coleman of *The Mirror* and Tom Donnelley of *The World Telegram* and *The Sun* offered favorable reviews, they criticized the play's length feeling that this factor diminished its dramatic effect. Brooks Atkinson offered his review of the play in *The New York Times* saying, "*Long Day's Journey into Night* has been worth waiting for. It restores the drama to literature,
and the theatre to art." Atkinson's assessment of the play provides not only a perception of O'Neill's unique manipulation of dramatic constituents and his creation of a distinctive dramatic form:

Twelve years before he died in 1953, O'Neill epitomized the life of his family in a drama that records the events of one day at their summer home in New London, Conn., in 1912. Factually, it is a sordid story about a pathologically parsimonious father, a mother addicted to tope, a dissipated brother and a younger brother (representing Eugene O'Neill) who has T.B. and is about to be shipped off to a sanitarium.

Roughly, those are the facts. But the author has told them on the plane of an O'Neill tragedy in which the point of view transcends the material. The scenes are big. The dialogue is blunt. Scene by scene the tragedy moves along with a remorseless beat that becomes hypnotic, as though this were life lived on the brink of oblivion.

John Chapman, Richard Watts, Jr., Walter Kerr, and Brooks Atkinson have established the critical reputation of O'Neill's A Long Day's Journey into Night. Atkinson has provided additional observations of the work which address not only its merits, he has offered perceptions of the play's "point of view", as well as addressing its use of dialogue, and the pace of the action. In so doing, Atkinson initiates an assessment of O'Neill's manipulation of dramatic form. Atkinson's observations are significant not only in establishing the play's reputation in the modern American theatre, he identifies specific components of the dramatic work which distinguish it. Certainly his emphasis upon "point of view," establishing a visual, oral, tactile environment projecting each family member's private torments, his or
her needs and aspirations, each individual's way of thinking, is paramount in the play. This emphasis upon "point of view" lends the play its tremendous power on the stage.

But it is Atkinson's identification of the threat of nonbeing, "life lived on the brink of oblivion," that characterizes the impetus of the play's dramatic action. The family's haranguing and bickering belie a profound discontent connected with the family's waning consciousness. The pace of the action is catapulted by this threat and by a spiritual longing. The sense of personal loss each member of the family experiences and the often lengthly soul-baring discussions used to present this spiritual loss move the play beyond the familiar landmarks of selective realism. This type of overt emphasis upon the psyche pushes the play toward the establishment of a dramaturgy rooted in this spiritual necessity.

Several theorists allude to O'Neill's experimentation with dramatic form. A brief examination of the critical literature addressing his unique orchestration of the dramatic constituents in his Long Day's Journey into Night provides an excellent starting point for a study of the play's employment of an existential-familial dramatic form.

Oscar Brockett and Robert Findlay comment on O'Neill's concentration upon spiritual themes in their Century of Innovation. Both refer to the playwright's development of material consumed by a spiritually deprived modern man set adrift in a material world. The sense of personal loss both Brockett and Findlay identify in O'Neill's work and his continuing refinement of a discourse criticizing
inauthentic values, constitute a major component in his development of a psychological drama embracing consciousness. For as both Findlay and Brockett note, O'Neill is not concerned primarily with the establishment of objective detail and daily routine. His work reflects a more subjective quest, a reunion with the God-head:

O'Neill once declared that in all his plays he had been concerned with man's relations to God-by which he meant man's search for some set of values to which he might commit himself. O'Neill was almost obsessed by the conviction that man has lost faith in his old gods but has been unable to find a new set of values on which to build a meaningful life. Consequently, he saw man as adrift without faith in a materialistic world, a lost creature searching for some way to escape despair.6

In quoting O'Neill's own statement of intent, Joseph Wood Krutch's article "Eugene O'Neill," seeks to provide an explanation of O'Neill's work which addresses the author's employment of this spiritual theme. Krutch states that O'Neill also develops a complimentary scheme of dramatic action and organizes these devices into a cohesive dramatic design:

"The playwright today (writes O'Neill) must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with".

He needs to feel that loving and lusting, singing and weeping, mean something beyond themselves, that there is some justification in the nature of things for that importance which they have for him. And if Religion--the belief in a supernatural power capable of investing them
with meaning—has decayed, then man must discover some attitude toward himself capable of investing him once more with the dignity he has lost.\footnote{7}

Krutch's observations identify O'Neill's habitual employment of a spiritual theme reflecting states of being, authentic values, consciousness, and a quest for fulfillment. Robert Brustein recognized this same intent in his book, *The Theatre of Revolt*. He traces O'Neill's translation of this recurrent theme into concrete dramatic form. Brustein relates these influences to O'Neill's reliance on Fredrick Nietzsche and Nietzsche's philosophical ideologies:

\begin{quote}
O'Neill's messianic revolt centers on the dilemma of modern man in a world without God; and it is informed by the spirit of a philosopher who was also important in Strindberg's life--Fredrick Nietzsche. O'Neill's concept of tragedy is obviously influenced by *The Birth of Tragedy*, and his religious ideas are almost all culled from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.\footnote{8}
\end{quote}

O'Neill's thematic preference characterizing modern man as a spiritual being pitted against an encroaching materialism, echoes William Spanos' observation of existential man's predicament in a technological society. Spanos describes modern man as a spiritual being who has been subordinated to the tool in a machine society. This impersonal and superficial contact has robbed him of his humanity. It has also placed him at odds with a perception of reality in conflict with his spirituality:

\begin{quote}
According to the existentialists, scientific rationalism and its counterpart in practical life; the technological society, locate reality in the objective realm of measurable matter, and value in the production or utilization of objects. In so
doing, they subordinate man to the tool, consciousness to efficiency, and the individual to the social and productive organizations (including educational institutions). By the inescapable logic of this system of valuation, the individual becomes dehumanized."

It is this thematic thrust which is utilized by O'Neill in his *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Voiced by James Tyrone as he laments the loss of his acting talent, his identity, his very soul, this focus is instrumental in shaping each dramatic constituent of the drama:

**TYRONE**

That God-damned play I bought for a song and made such a great money success—it ruined me with its promise of an easy fortune ... What the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder, that was worth--well no matter. It's a late day for regrets."

Robert Brustein was fundamental in identifying O'Neill's employment of an existential perspective. He recognized the existence and the interaction of several components common to O'Neill's development of a specific type of messianic drama. This drama echoed the same plea of the lost self that James Tyrone describes in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Brustein pointed to O'Neill's translation of these philosophical abstractions into a concrete dramatic form, tracing such an influence to August Strindberg. For it was Strindberg whom O'Neill credited as being "the greatest of all modern dramatists." As Brustein explains:

*Strindberg, for example, turns to existential revolt after the horrors of the Inferno crisis convince him of the vanity of trying to be God; O'Neill, in his last plays, converts his messianic demands into existential appeals; and existential revolt can even be detected under the fixed smile of Shaw."*
Brustein has provided a pivotal link in the critical literature addressing O'Neill's development of an existential dramatic form. Unfortunately, Brustein has not provided a definition of the ontology. His personal disaffection for what he considered to be an existential philosophy resulted in his description of a form bearing little resemblance to the tenets expressed by Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, William Spanos, Soren Kierkegaard, and Jean-Paul Sartre, the founding fathers of the perspective. Brustein's assessment of the philosophical perspective is so negative in its orientation that his observations have not promoted any investigation of O'Neill's development of an existential dramatic form. In his *Theatre of Revolt* Brustein states:

> In the last stage of the modern drama, existential revolt, the dramatist examines the metaphysical life of man and protests against it; existence itself becomes the source of his rebellion.\(^{13}\)

This type of broad generalization, supplying more a critique of some still undiagnosed malady than a precise correlation to existential tenets must be reevaluated in terms of its capacity to shed any light upon the emergence of such a dramatic form in American dramaturgy. For without providing a thorough explanation of the composite and complex philosophical perspective, critics like Brustein will continue to dismiss it as a type of bastardized nihilism with no place in the drama. Brustein also states:

> Existential revolt represents Romanticism turned in on itself and beginning to rot. Extremely contemptuous of messianic ideals, desbelieving totally in messianic individualism, the existential rebel, nevertheless, shows vestiges of the old
radical demands. He is a Neo-Romantic, raging against existence, ashamed of being human, revolted by the body itself. One of the strongest identifying marks of the existential drama is its attitude towards the flesh, which is usually described in images of muck, mud, ashes, and fecal matter, in a state of decomposition and decay.14

Brustein similarly describes the existential protagonist as "disadvantaged, humiliated, perverse, and thoroughly incapable of significant action."15 It seems odd then, that Brustein should recognize O'Neill's A Long Day's Journey into Night as an example of this emerging dramatic form and still characterize the play as a modern masterpiece. "The Iceman Cometh and A Long Day's Journey into Night are, in my opinion great works of art.16

Brustein sheds little light on O'Neill's incorporation of specific traceable existential ideologies into dramatic constituents. Any investigation of the playwright's development of an existential dramaturgy must be prefaced by the establishment of a definition of existentialism. For without establishing what the phenomenon entails, it is impossible to discern whether O'Neill has employed it and translated it into dramatic form in any one play. Existential philosopher William Barrett provides the most succinct definition of the perspective in his What is Existentialism? Barrett states:

These themes-- the incurable isolation of the individual, the absurd mechanisms of society that destroy him, and the courage to face death while affirming life-- have been persistent ones in existentialism, or at least one side of existentialism.17

However, such a complex and multifaceted phenomenon defies any one simplistic description. Any definition of the term must
take into account the related observations of major existential philosophers. These observations provide a composite definition of the perspective, a definition which demonstrates the symbiotic nature of ten basic tenets. These tenets are interrelated, one giving rise to another. This type of approach avoids the ambiguous or biased references which are so prevalent in the critical literature. It also offers a specificity, a designation of ten elements that can be used in a comparison study of dramatic constituents. This composite delineation of existentialism abstracted from the critical perceptions of major existential philosophers, offers the most comprehensive, the most accurate definition of the ontology. The following tenets are synonymous with an existential perspective: consciousness, alienation, the affirmation of life, freedom and choice in relation to man's capacity to create his own being, Angst, dasein, the call of care and the capacity of human relationships to encourage spiritual growth, authentic values, and a presentation of the concrete in contrast to an analysis of the abstract.

Given this comprehensive definition of this complex philosophical perspective, it is possible to proceed with a point by point comparison of these ten existential tenets and O'Neill's manipulation of the dramatic constituents in his *Long Day's Journey into Night*. A close study of the text of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey* in which each production constituent (subject, theme vision of reality, dramatic action dialogue, characterization, symbol, set design, lighting and sound) is examined and compared to existential ideologies,
provides the most adequate means of determining if the play gravitated beyond the bounds of messianic drama which Brustein described, to the formation of an American existential dramaturgy. Such an investigation should also shed some light on O'Neill's capacity to satisfy his stated intent of presenting "man's relation to God." This spiritual quest for enlightenment and purification provides a focus for such a study in which each dramatic constituents is examined in terms of its capability to satisfy this intent.

Several dramatic theorists have addressed O'Neill's employment of individual existential ideologies. However, a systematic study of his translation of this composite phenomenon into dramatic form in any one play has not been undertake. The many isolated references in the critical literature which connect O'Neill's plays to an emerging existential dramaturgy support a comparison study of existential tenets and dramatic constituents. Indeed, if these scattered fragments in the critical literature which compose a uniform perception of the existential foundation of the play had been previously collated, the existential form O'Neill uses would now comprise a well documented segment of American theatre history. Since a systematic ordering of these separate perceptions augments the credibility of a comparison of existential philosophy and dramatic form, inclusion from a number of these articles will appear in conjunction with a comparison of each dramatic constituent to an existential equivalent.

To begin, the entire action of O'Neill's Long Day's Journey takes place in the living room of the Tyrone's summer home, a dark
and shabbily furnished room sporting little more than the essentials necessary to maintain a modest sense of comfort. "A dark windowlesss back parlor, never used except as a passage from living room to dining room," is included, as is a doorway leading out to the front porch and the harbor. Several windows likewise overlooking the foggy harbor, allude to the world beyond. This claustrophobic environment encapsulating the four Tyrones, simultaneously separates the family from the larger community outside while forcing them in toward one another. The singularity of the room and the utter darkness surrounding it at the play's end, evokes an immediate comparison between the physical cell the Tyrones inhabit and the frustrated psyche of the family members. The presence of the fog which increase as the day wears on, the play of light and the increasing shadow within as the onslaught of familial accusations reach a climax, signal a type of metaphysical kinship. It is almost animated, a silent, brooding, darkening chamber of the family's joint consciousness. It is virtually the fifth member of the family Tyrone. On a symbolic level, the house serves as a repository harboring both the tangible and intangible items lost over the years which the Tyrones now strive desperately to regain. Somewhere within, James Tyrone has misplaced the newspaper clipping given to him by the famous actor Edwin Booth. Mary has lost the bridal gown she connects with her lost idealism and the happy days of her young married life:

TYRONE

_The praise Edwin Booth gave my Othello. I made the manager put down his exact words in writing. I kept it_
in my wallet for years. I used to read it every once in a while until finally it made me feel so bad I didn't want to face it any more. Where is it now, I wonder? Somewhere in this house. I remember I put it away carefully—

EDMOND

It might be in an old trunk in the attic, along with Mama's wedding dress.¹⁹

Mary Beth Dakoske, whose dissertation addresses the archetypal images in the play, comments on the symbolic nature of the physical environment O'Neill presents on stage. Although she connects this orchestration of the stage environment to a perception of consciousness, a spiritual quest, she does not pursue a comprehensive study of the existential foundation of the play:

Through symbols that once told them who they were, they try to recover the fragments of their identity. James Tyrone is certain that the newspaper clipping is "somewhere in this house." Marry Tyrone knows that her wedding gown is also in the house; it never occurs to her to look outside the house for it. Sure enough, the fragments of identity are there:²⁰

The drab Tyrone living room, with its bookshelves and its wicker charis, its "windowless back parlor," assumes an added dimension in the play. Each family member's constant references to "home," and the lost self that each member is searching for coincides with the physical setting O'Neill has presented. This setting presents the spiritual vacuum the Tyrones lament in concrete form on the stage:

MARRY

I've never felt it was my home. It was done in the chepaist way. Your father would never spend the money to
make it right. It's just as well we haven't any friends here. I'd be ashamed to have them step in the door. But he's never wanted family friends. He hates calling on people, or receiving them. All he likes is to hobnob with men at the Club or in a barroom. Jamie and you are the same way, but you're not to blame. You've never had a chance to meet decent people ...21

O'Neill combines the cloistered environment he creates on stage with the family member's individual perceptions of consciousness and self identity. James Tyrone describes his wife's temporary abstinence from drugs as a return home, as a return to her old self. The Tyrone home is equated with the self:

TYRONE

It's damnable luck Edmund should be sick right now.
It couldn't come at a worse time for him.
He adds, unable to conceal an almost furtive uneasiness.
Or for your mother. It's damnable she should have this to upset her, just when she needs peace and freedom from worry. She's been so well in the two months since she came home.

His voice grows husky and trembles a little.
It's been heaven to me. This home has been a home again. But I needn't tell you, Jamie.22

Ultimately, the realistic facade of the Tyrone living room is overpowered by the darkness creaping over it, the family's inability to face one another honestly and to come to terms with their own fears, failures, and guilts. There is little room for self exploration, just as there is little light to guide the weary and confused. And, when Jamie returns home drunk, broke, and emotionally bankrupt, he sees the Tyrone home both as an extension of himself, and as an extension of
the family. Both are capable of inflicting pain:

*JAMIE*

*He bends and slaps at the knees of his trousers.*

*Had a serious accident. The front steps tried to trample on me. Took advantage of the fog to waylay me. Ought to be a lighthouse our there. Dark in here too.*

*Scowling.*

*What the hell is this, the morgue? Let us have some light on subject.*

Philosopher William Barrett's description of the existential perspective, "the incurable isolation of the individual, the absurd mechanisms of society that destroy him, and the courage to face death while affirming life," provides a stunning comparison between the physical environment O'Neill creates, the options for action open to his family Tyrone. The Tyrone living room, little more than a comfortable cell, isolates each of the Tyrones from society on the outside. It directs the members inward toward each other for answers. And the darkness so closely associated with it, virtually enveloping it, signals both the waning consciousness of the family and the void beyond. The tattered, darkened interior signals the diminished capacity of the family to reconcile themselves "to what life has done to them," and what they have done to each other.

The Tyrone living room is the last bastion of consciousness, the last glimmer of light. Its dimly lit chandelier dangles from the ceiling as the fog covered windows appear pressed flat against the darkness beyond. This inoffensive room crowded with its chairs and bookshelves, dictates the nature, the pace of the action of the play as well as
establishing the vision of reality the play projects. It both restricts and inhibits physical action while encouraging the mental interplay between family members. As the darkness increases and the realistic detail of the room fades in the background, only what is significant remains in view, the psychological interplay between the family members.

O'Neill has translated Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of consciousness to the stage, presenting it in the form of a real room, but a particular room, made more particular by the four members of the Tyrone family who inhabit it. It is at once, home, self, and consciousness. It is the only environment capable of housing the family's symbolic journey from light into darkness, unconsciousness. As Sartre states, "What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only afterwards defines himself." Sartre continues his explanation of this idea by stating that man's awareness of self and his capacity for spiritual growth is based upon an interplay with other people. This captive and restricted environment in Long Day's Journey, this home of the family of the soul, demands that such an interplay take place. Sartre explains:

Thus, the man who becomes aware of himself through the cognito, also perceives all others, and he perceives them as the condition of his own existence. He realizes that he cannot be anything (in the same sense that we say that someone is witty or nasty, or jealous) unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person.

The physical environment of the play, isolated, closed,
singular, with all light sources fading, reflects the psychological and spiritual decay of the family. O'Neill's orchestration of the physical setting coincides with the Tyrone's steady progression toward non-being. O'Neill has transposed the primary tenet of existentialism, consciousness, into dramatic form in his presentation of a specific set and lighting design. This design is symbolic of the family's waning consciousness and shapes the focus and pace of the ensuing dramatic action.

This integration of an existential philosophical construction into dramatic form, its translation into theme, subject, set design, characterization, and dialogue; is represented objectively in the character's lives on stage. O'Neill continues this externalization of the psyche with an emphasis evoked through symbol. In so doing, he dictates a distinctive vision of reality operative on stage. It is this vision, this establishment of the play's migration from actuality, which points to the emergence of an existential American genre expanding the implications of surface reality or realistic detail. Such a form presents a psychological reality determined by an individual perception of being in the world, a subjective view determined by the individual's state of consciousness.

The critical literature addressing the play's dramatic form suggests that O'Neill has incorporated such an emphasis upon a psychological reality in his development of the play's dramatic constituents. Several dramatic theorists have suggested that Long Day's Journey migrates beyond the bounds of selective realism,
although no comprehensive study to date documents the existence of such an influence in Long Day's Journey or any other O'Neill play. These observations remain little more than suggestions. The dramatic devices O'Neill manipulates in Long Day's Journey have not been previously examined to determine what forces associated with such a psychological drama are operative in O'Neill's design. In examining his manipulation of subject, theme, dramatic action, characterization, dialogue, set and lighting design, symbol, and the vision of reality the play presents; it becomes clear that O'Neill has combined these elements of the drama with specific existential tenets. This study, in presenting the correlations between O'Neill's employment of specific existential tenets and his manipulation of dramatic constituents in Long Day's Journey into Night, provides evidence that the playwright combined these two phenomenon, presenting a unique vision of reality synonomous with an existential perspective. Any investigation of O'Neill's development of an existential dramatic form would not be complete without providing a collation of the scattered references in the critical literature which point to O'Neill's development of a unique psychological drama. Such a collation brings these isolated critical observations together, presenting them in mass as an additional substantiation of O'Neill's employment of an existential dramatic form. It also provides a summary study of the critical literature heretofore left ungathered.

Oscar Brockett and Robert Findlay allude to O'Neill's
employment of an existential perspective in their *Century of Innovation*. Brockett and Findlay limit their discussion of O'Neill's use of this philosophical base to the playwright's development of the same theme used by existential authors. Both theatre historians also refer to O'Neill's use of a strikingly singular set to coincide with his concentration upon a psychological drama revealing a joint spiritual quest. As Brockett and Findlay explain:

*Many critics consider Long Day's Journey into Night O'Neill's finest achievement. Like The Icemand Cometh, it is realistic in method and much longer than the average play. Here the action is confined within a very restricted framework: it takes place in a single room on one day and focuses on four characters... All of the characters are caught in a hell created by their own psychological and spiritual failures. All seek to evade an unpleasant present-through drugs, alcohol, dreams, and memories—but there can only be a temporary escape backward to a time before faith and hope were shattered, for as in the earlier play, here O'Neill suggests that life without faith can only be a delayed journey into night. Thus, in his own distinctive way, O'Neill pursues the same theme that preoccupies the existentialists and Samuel Beckett.*

This constant attention to theme and plot, as well as an additional focus upon the autobiographical nature of the play often found in the critical literature has consumed the greater portion of the collective efforts of drama critics over the past three decades. Such efforts have diverted any investigation detailing the connection between existentialism and O'Neill's development and texts composing the critical literature establish the excellence of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey*, but do not proceed with studies aimed at examining his

Tom Scanlan's Family, Drama, and American Dreams, concentrates on O'Neill's development of theme and his use of a spiritual quest in his Long Day's Journey. Scanlan points to O'Neill's unique reliance upon symbol and a manipulation of this convention in characterization, action, and set design. And yet Scanlan, like Brockett and Findlay, does not supply a rational for O'Neill's presentation of objective detail in his treatment of these constituents as they coexist with his manipulation of overt and repeated symbols. As Scanlan states:

O'Neill takes special pains to isolate the Tyrones, and their story is the most purely presented of any of his dramas. All the action takes place in one room on one day. The family is small, with two parents and two children. Contact with the outside world is sparse and the minimum that a play in the realistic mode will allow.29

Scanlan alludes to the dramatic implications inherent in O'Neill's design, but does not proceed with a comprehensive analysis of the various production constituents and how these elements might be shaped by O'Neill's development of theme. Scanlan recognizes a repetitive motif in the play which distinguishes it, but along this emphasis only with O'Neill's choice of family as the subject matter to convey his thematic thrust. "Finally, it should be said that the repetition in Long Day's Journey evokes a sense of endlessness to the actions of this family."30
In "Eugene O'Neill: The Long Quest," Jay Halio comments not only upon O'Neill's continuing refinement of this spiritual theme with an emerging dramatic form. Halio recognized that O'Neill was subtly tampering with the facade of selective realism, expanding it to encompass his existential drama. Halio stated:

> But the quest remained central to O'Neill's work, and the earnestness of his seeking as much as his indefatigable experimentation with technique, greatly contributed to the revitalization of the American theater in the early decades of his century—even as one illusion of "home" after another was examined and found for what it was—an illusion.31

Although O'Neill presents a physical environment grounded in realistic detail, "As the curtain rises, the family has just finished breakfast. Mary Tyrone and her husband enter together from the back parlor, coming from the dining room,"32 his commanding and repetitive use of symbol moves the play beyond the perimeters of realism. O'Neill's symbolic treatment of time, his commanding use of symbol in the dialogue and dramatic action overpowers objective detail to present states of being. Travis Bogard describes this quality of O'Neill's design in his introduction to The Early Plays of Eugene O'Neill. Bogard observes that O'Neill achieved this effect primarily through a manipulation of lighting. As he states, O'Neill was concerned less with narrating events in time, and more with projecting states of being, set to some extent, out of time.33 It is the graphic reduction in light that Bogard identifies that parallels the family's symbolic journey from consciousness to psychic, spiritual darkness. This emphasis
projecting "states of being," raises the scheme of dramatic action to a level synonymous with the Tryones' consciousness. As Mary tells Jamie in Act I, "Well, if you're going to work on the hedge, why don't you go? I mean, take advantage of the sunshine before the fog comes back." As Bogard recognizes, Act III commences with yet a more severe reduction in light. Although the scant presence of light emanates from real sources, it's almost dictatorial control of the action begins to judge O'Neill's drama toward an existential format concerned with presenting states of consciousness in concrete form:

**SCENE**

The same. It is around half past six in the evening. Dusk is gathering in the living room, an early dusk due to the fog which has rolled in from the Sound and is like a white curtain drawn down outside the windows. From a lighthouse beyond the harbor's mouth, a foghorn is heard at regular intervals, moaning like a mournful whale in labor, and from the harbor itself, intermittently, comes the warning ringing of bells on yachts at anchor.

Carl G. Jung characterized such representations as O'Neill's manipulation of symbol in the play, as a descent into psychic darkness. "Day and light are synonymous for consciousness; night and dark for the unconscious." O'Neill presents the family's turn from consciousness on several converging planes. His title indicates a descent into psychic darkness, the day's progression into night. The repeated references to the fog and to darkness in the dialogue augments this influence. Add to this, Mary's growing detachment, and the drunken stupor of the Tyrone men, and Jung's description becomes even more
appropriate.

In his *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Juan Cirlot reveals the symbolic nature of O'Neill's title and the ensuing dramatic action as a quest for illumination:

*The form of symbolic journeys representing a quest that starts in darkness of the profane world... and gropes toward the light. Such ordeals or trials--like the stages of a journey--are rites of purification.*

By infusing each production constituent with the theme of a spiritually bankrupt modern man groping in the dark of unconsciousness for his lost self, O'Neill has subtly altered the realistic form to suit his own existential intent. The emphasis derived from the cumulative effect of this symbolic presentation creates a vision of reality rooted in individual consciousness. The "rites", which Circlot refers to must conform to prescribed patterns of movement, gesture, and focus in accordance with the restricted physical environment O'Neill has presented. As Act I begins, the family enters the living room. Their actions are stimulated by a robust quality which pales as each begins to lapse into unconsciousness. O'Neill's symbolic reduction, the family's journey into darkness, is manifested in a physical reduction of the characters' movements on stage:

*James Tyrone is sixty-five but looks ten years younger. About five feet eight, broad shouldered and deep-chested, he seems taller and slenderer because of his bearing, which has soldierly quality of head up, chest out, stomach in, shoulders squared...*

Mary is described in a similar robust states. She is characterized in the following manner:
She is dressed simply but with a sure sense of what becomes her. Her hair is arranged with fastidious care. Her voice is soft and attractive. When she is merry, there is a touch of Irish lilt in it.\textsuperscript{39}

Both descriptions suggest a physical demeanor characterized by crisp, energetic, broad movements indicative of their mental state. As the couple appear for the first time, "Tyrone's arm is around his wife's waist as they appear from the back parlor. Upon entering, he gives her a playful hug."\textsuperscript{40} In presenting the first picture of the family, O'Neill has created not only an image of vitality, but one of physical and emotional closeness. There is contact between the characters and an observable display of spiritual communion.

In contrast, Act II begins in repose. The tempo of the character's actions has been radically slowed and the range of their motions has been restricted to depict the growing isolation of the characters and their diminished consciousness:

*Edmund sits in the armchair at left of table, reading a book. Or rather he is trying to concentrate on it, but cannot. He seems to be listening for some sound from upstairs. His manner is nervously apprehensive and he looks more sickly than in the previous act.*\textsuperscript{41}

The "rites" Cirlot identifies are inextricably combined with O'Neill's manipulation of symbol, what Jung defined as representations of the "unconscious." Act III presses this physical deterioration and the spiritual degeneration it involves, even further. A restriction of contact and a reduced energy level personalifies the family's progression into spiritual darkness. Not only do the characters' movements signal
a slower tempo, their interactions convey an isolation and a reduction in physical space. O'Neill includes a graphic redirection in focus, as the characters begin to avoid not only any physical contact, but any eye contact as well:

Mary is paler than before and her eyes shine with unnatural brilliance. The strange detachment in her manner has intensified. She has hidden deeper within herself and found refuge and release in a dream where present reality is but an appearance to be accepted and dismissed unfeelingly—even with a hard cynicism—or entirely ignored.

O'Neill has minimized the contact between characters to signal their growing isolation. His redirection of focus emphasizes this aspect as a key ingredient establishing the stage environment. Jamie speaks to his mother in Act II, "without looking at her," and "Jamie gets up and goes to the windows at right, glad of an excuse to turn his back." In Act II, Scene ii, we are told:

The family are returning from lunch as the curtain rises. Mary is the first to enter from the back parlor. Her husband follows. He is not with her as he was in the similar entrance after breakfast at the opening of Act One. He avoids touching her or looking at her. There is condemnation in his face, mingled now with the beginning of an old weary, helpless resignation... Edmund sits in a chair by the table, turned half away from his mother so he does not have to watch her.

O'Neill has utilized the family as the optimum vehicle to present this spiritual abyss, believing as sociologist Ruth Nanda Anshen has stated that it is the family which encourages or inhibits the individual's self awareness, his consciousness. It is also the family, as
O'Neill has employed it, which sponsors value systems used by the individual in welding an identity. In his Theatre of Revolt, Robert Brustein comments on the characters' constant bickering, their accusations, their collective illusions, their dependence upon one another. As Brustein states, "No individual character trait is revealed which does not have a bearing on the lives of the entire family." Mary's dependence on drugs is somehow related to Tyrone's excessive thrift and to Edmund's birth, although she must bear a portion of the responsibility for her own life. It is rather, the shoddy, the inauthentic values promoted within the group which aid and abet the Tyrones in sustaining the illusions which ultimately keep them separate. Tyrone's penury is directly related to the drab, unhappy surroundings of the Tyrone home, Mary's and Edmund's shoddy medical care, and Jamie's festering resentment of his father. Tyrone's love of the dollar has also undermined his career as a serious actor, leaving him frustrated and bitter, wondering what life might have been if he had not sold out. Brustein comments upon the family's connection to this search for fulfillment, Edmund's James', and Jamie's sense of failure. "Although less shrouded in illusion than Mary, each nevertheless haunts the past like a ghost seeking consolation for a wasted life." As Jamie confesses to Edmund near the end of the play, "Look in my face. My name is Might-Have-Been; I am also called No More, Too Late, Farewell."

Thomas F. Van Laan comments upon O'Neill's treatment of the family and his joint concern with values in O'Neill's Ah Wilderness Long Day's Journey. In his "Singing in the Wilderness:
The Dark Vision of Eugene O'Neill's Only Mature Comedy," Van Laan addresses the capacity of the Tyrones to alternately praise and belittle one another. The onslaught of bitter recriminations stem from any one member's inability or refusal to adhere to the values fostered within the family group. The hypocrisy of these values is consistently brought to the fore as the root cause of the ambivalence and the bickering undermining the lives of the family members. Jamie is chastised for his philandering, his drinking and his lack of success as an actor. And yet Mary concedes that James has set the example and Jamie has never known "decent people", only barroom chronies and whores. When his father berates him for his lack of success as an actor Jamie reminds Tyrone, "You forced me on the stage."^{50}

James Salem addresses O'Neill's persistent obsession with values in his "Eugene O'Neill and the Sacrament of Marriage." Salem states, "Eugene O'Neill was amoral conservative--the only writer of serious plays in the twenties and thirties to insist upon the established conventions."^{51} Addressing O'Neill's development of theme and characterization in his early plays, Salem comments on the playwright's unique combination of the family and spiritual concerns. In Salem's view, this was readily apparent in O'Neill's _Welded_, in which the playwright joined the institution of marriage with religious imagery to convey a spiritual communion. The same spiritual communion is what is lost and yearned for in O'Neill's _Long Day's Journey_. It is a quest thwarted by the fears, the guilt and the inadequacy of the family members. But this spiritual longing is propelled by the same hypocrisy
and inauthentic values leaving the Tyrone's spiritually bankrupt. Edmund voices this life-long search for fulfillment in an exchange with his father:

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*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—actually lost my life. 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 dimstarred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way.\(^52\)*

In refining his career-long emphasis upon a spiritual quest and the family's involvement in that quest, O'Neill has incorporated the basic tenet of existentialism into his dramatic design in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. He has translated the concepts of consciousness, freedom and responsibility in relation to an individual being, the capacity of relationships to encourage spiritual growth, authentic values, and alienation into concrete dramatic form. He has manipulated the constituents of dramatic form in such a manner that these philosophical ideologies spill over into virtually every facet of the drama. But it is O'Neill's vision of reality, his overt and multifarious reliance upon symbol in *Long Day's Journey* which distinguishes it as a prime example of an emerging American existential-familial dramatic form. The gestalt of these converging ideologies presented in concrete form on the stage evokes an immediate sense of the void outside the Tyrones'
door. The darkness creeping in over the family, the fog rolling in from
the harbor, the warning bells clanging like a death knell outside,
combine to flesh-out an omnipotent threat of non-being. The existential
notion of Angst has been transposed from a philosophical or literary
abstraction to a condition controlling the Tyrone's lives.

Each of the four "haunted" Tyrones thrashes about,
searching for some sense of meaning in life, groping in the encroaching
darkness for some spiritual epiphany to counterbalance the mean
existence of their lives and the void which waits beyond. This
undirected fear of non-being permeating the Tyrones' lives is as tangible
as the bookshelves crammed with volumes of Shakespeare and
Nietzsche, or the wicker chairs set at center stage. It hangs over the
household like a black chameleon taking many shapes. It is the
simultaneous threat of Edmund's consumption, Tyrone's fear of dying
destitute, Jamie's hatred of the bawd of him that is already dead, and
Mary's total withdrawal into a narcotic nightmare. In Lionel Trilling's
words, "In short, O'Neill solves the problem of evil by making explicit
what men have always found to be the essence of tragedy--the
courageous affirmation of life in the face of individual defeat."
NOTES

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 27.
14. Ibid., p. 27.
15. Ibid., p. 29.
16. Ibid., p. 324.
19. Ibid., Act 4, p. 152.
22. Ibid., p. 36.
23. Ibid., p. 155.
27. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
30. Ibid., p. 117.
35. Ibid., act 3, p. 97.
41. Ibid., p. 51.
42. Ibid., p. 97.
43. Ibid., p. 57.
44. Ibid., p. 60.
45. Ibid., p. 61
47. Ibid., p. 354.
49. Ibid., p. 32.

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