Chapter II

O’Neill’s Concept of Men

O’Neill is a critic of the American society of this kind, and also of society as a whole. He thinks of man in relation to his social system. It is not man as an individual alone that concerns him but man in his social order—tortured, starved, disillusioned, disappointed and driven to disaster by the forces of system which cares nothing for the jungle welfare of this society. He treats man not as an individual in relation to a few characters, but as a person against the background of social forces. It is the social implication that makes O’Neill’s plays lively in the minds of the audience. His importance as a social critic lies modern and social set up. He points out the disease of America’s acquisitive society. He does not merely stress the fact that workers are exploited to create wealth for the few, but shows how in our modern, machine-made world they are deprived of the sense of harmony and mental well-being. Man’s work is a necessary part of his personality; it is an expression of his ego and makes him feel that he is a necessary part of the life of the world in which he lives. Modern industry tends to destroy this psychological counterpart of work, and leaves the worker a nervous, irritable and dissatisfying Outfit in the society. A firm of firm conviction, O’Neill never feels shy of discussing American society in a free and frank manner. According to O’Neill man has lost the sense of harmony in nature, and is unable to establish harmony with his fellowmen.

O’Neill’s vision of life is essentially tragic. The human predicament is the theme of his plays, which are all, with one exception, tragedies. But basically and essentially O’Neill’s tragedies are the embodiments of a comic anguish. As he himself said, he has studied man not in relation to man, but man in relation to God. Man has lost faith in the god of old religions and has yet found no new faith. Living in an
impersonal, mechanical, urbanised and industrialised social environment, man is constantly on the rack. He suffers from inner emptiness, isolation and a feeling of insecurity. As John Gassner rightly says, “His major theme was man’s disorientation, man’s bedevilment from within and from without.”

O’Neill’s concept of men is pictured through his portrayal of the characters. Mainly, the male characters in the plays of O’Neill are forced to live in a self-estranged state. According to O’Neill, man has lost the sense of harmony in nature, and is unable to establish harmony with his fellowmen. Naturally, his plays expose the mechanical life of man; which led him to the loss of human identity. O’Neill’s characters constantly search for identity and belongingness, and when they fail to achieve their identity, they disintegrated and decay as in Desire Under the Elms and Mourning Becomes Electra and so on.

O’Neill’s social perspective covers an aspect of modern American society, in particular, and his plays embody the ideas and conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century and deal with the social and economic issues of our time—materialism, industrialization, human-relation, employer-employee conflicts, ignorance, brutality, selfishness, greed, hatred, etc.

This chapter is devoted to bring out O’Neill’s concept of men by analysing man’s loneliness from the major plays of Eugene O’Neill, written during the last phase of his career; they are: The Iceman Cometh (1939), Long Day’s Journey into Night (1941), A Touch of the Poet (1942) and A Moon for the Misbegotten (1942). In these highly autobiographical plays O’Neill portrays the most agonized picture of man. They deal with the characters, who sustain their survival on their broken dreams which breed a sense of isolation and loneliness — the most dangerous pest,
consuming mankind. All these plays are the results of the personal anguish and desperation of the dramatist. As Doris V. Falk observes:

“O’Neill returned in these last plays to acceptance of struggle and flight as inseparable from and intrinsic to life process. Now there is no way out but death. The struggle in these plays is essentially the same as it had always been in his work: the conscious intellect at war with the unconscious drives, the jaceration of love and hate in every close human relationship, and the desperate search for self among the masks” (Doris V. Falk, Eugene O’Neill and the Tragic Tension, 157).

These beautiful pieces of dramatic art are, born out of agony and ecstasy that mark the culmination of O’Neill’s dramatic career.

One of the most striking qualities of all these plays is the huge quantity of alcohol consumed by the characters in each of them. Liquor in these plays serves a double function. It permits the playwright to show the contrast between a man when he is sober with his defences up and when he is drunk making his subconscious drives overt. The playwright allows the rapid juxtaposition of contradictory moods and impulses. It is a device through which O’Neill exposes the real motives of his characters.

_The Iceman Cometh_ (1939) depicts the story of man’s rootlessness and isolation in the modern world. It presents before us the intensely human and vital drama of the tragic and deadly struggle between man’s illusions and the naked brutal realities of life. O’Neill personally considers that the play “is one of the best things I’ve ever done. In some way, perhaps the best” (Travis Bogard, Selected Letters of Eugene O’Neill, p. 511). Throughout his life O’Neill has tried to achieve dramatic unity between form and feeling, between thought and technique. His endeavour in this direction bears a nice fruit in this play. Analyzing the play, Rosamond Gilder opines:

“_The Iceman Cometh_ is made of good theatre substance — meaty material for actors, racy dialogue, variety of character, suspense and passion — all within the strait-jacket of a rigid pattern. It is also primarily an allegory of man’s pitiful estate, a parable of his search for
redemption” (Rosamond Gilder, “The Iceman Cometh”, O’Neill and His Plays, 203).

The play deals simply and grandly with the illusion and disillusion of a group of men in an archetypal bar and their tragic suffering from separation.

The action of the play takes place in Harry Saloon and rooming-house in Westside, New York. The Saloon is occupied by a number of derelicts who indulge themselves and each other in dreams of former and future glory. Life becomes bearable for them only because each of them has his own illusion or pipe-dream either about the past or the future.

In this way, each of the ‘bums’ lives in a golden yesterday or a golden tomorrow, forgetful of his wretched present. Among them is the testy but soft-hearted owner himself who has not set his foot outdoors for twenty years. He lives under the illusion that he loved his wife, and that her death, twenty years ago, robbed life of all its charms. His two permanent roomers and friends are Pat McClain, an ex-police officer who hopes to get back his job some day, and Ed Mosher, an ex-circus man, who thinks that he can go back to his job any day he likes. There are also General Wetjeon, a Dutch, and Captain Lewis, an Englishman, who had fought on opposite sides in the Boer War. Both of them believe that they will work, save enough, and go back to their respective countries. Joe Mott, a Negro, the ex-owner of a gambling house, hopes to start a new gambling-house in near future. Hugo and Larry are the two ex-anarchists. Hugo is never sober and talks constantly about the Revolution which will enable him to drink champagne under the willow tree. Larry’s illusion is that since he gave up the Movement, he has been a disinterested observer of life, quietly waiting for death. He is disturbed by the arrival of young Don Parritt, whose mother has recently been denounced, and arrested by other anarchists. Parritt insists on telling his problems to Larry, who gets increasingly uneasy and does not want to
become involved with Parritt. Jimmy Tomorrow, the ex-news-reporter, always plans to give up drinking, and hopes to get his old job tomorrow. Willie Oban, a Harvard dreams of becoming a successful lawyer one day. There are also Chuck and Rocky the bartenders, who think that they are not pimps; and the three street-walkers, Cora, Pearl and Margie, who confess to be tarts, but not whores.

All the characters are guilt-ridden due to their ruined lives, and all cling to pipe-dreams about their condition and the future. They are eagerly awaiting the entertaining and generous Hickey, a travelling salesman, who periodically treats them in a lavish manner. When Hickey finally arrives in time for Harry’s birth day, they are shocked to find him greatly changed. He announces that he has finally had the courage to face himself and to lay his pipe-dreams to rest. Further, he intends to help others do the same for their own happiness. But to his anticipation, he finds that his gospel of disillusionment does not work. He is forced to explain the cause of his reform in order to prove his statements. He narrates the story of his life, his relations with his innocent wife, Evelyn, who for all the years of their marriage had invariably forgiven his drinking and infidelities. He tells that in order to free her from the torment of his presence, he killed her. But soon he realizes that this too was an illusion because he killed her out of hatred. Parritt also admits that he betrayed his mother out of hatred. Both, in effect, destroyed their lives: Hickey by summoning police, Parritt by committing suicide. The idea that Hickey is insane gradually develops as a new pipe-dream, allowing the others to resume their old relationships and illusions; and only Larry, who perceives Hickey as the Iceman of Death, remains truly and despairingly in a state of isolation.

All the characters of the play are drawn from the people whom O’Neill had personally known during his New York days. Even the setting is made of details
taken from the places with which O’Neill was personally familiar. The description of Harry Hope’s Saloon at the opening of the play reveals of alienated life of its occupants. The dismal atmosphere with dirty floor and walls with crumbling plaster narrate the desolate condition of the bums. For them, Hope’s Saloon is their ultimate destination, their limitation, from where they cannot go. It is the Saloon which separates them from society, severs them from their deadly past, and forces them to lead a life of isolation. But in a state of illusion, they consider the place as the safest one where they can dream their golden tomorrow. As Larry says to Parritt:

Don’t you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That’s because it’s the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they’re going next; because there is no farther they can go (Eugene O’Neill, Selected Plays of Eugene O’Neill, 631)

The derelicts of the saloon are separated from the normal life of society. Without facing the reality, they have taken shelter in the illusory world of Harry Hope’s Saloon and remain isolated from the outer world. The dreamers have come to Hope’s Saloon in search of security and happiness because what lies outside is a world without values, a hostile society to which they can hardly belong. But this is not the reality; rather it is an escape from the truth. In this connection, Brooks Atkinson remarks:

But beneath them there is nothing more substantial than a void of blackness. These are creatures that once were men — very pungent and picturesque creatures, too, for O’Neill was a good deal of a romantic... Life is bearable, it seems to say, only when men contrive not to look at the truth (Brooks Atkinson, “The Iceman Cometh,” O’Neill and His Plays, 213)

The greatest irony of their lives is that in search of belongingness they are alienated from the reality of life.
With the interference of Hickey, they begin to accept the truth and admit their suffering from isolation. Harry, the generous bar-owner, narrates the story of his lonely life. It begins with the death of his wife. He recalls:

Twenty years, and I’ve never set foot out of this house since the day I buried her. Didn’t have the heart. Once she’d gone, I didn’t give a damn for anything. I lost all my ambition. Without her, nothing seemed worth the trouble (Eugene O’Neill, *Selected Plays of Eugene O’Neill*, 645).

The haunting memory of his wife keeps him apart from the outer world. But Jimmy’s lonely suffering is the result of his wife’s betrayal. His longing for a happy home is shattered by the dishonesty of his wife. In order to mitigate the pain of separation, he prefers to lead a gloomy life taking drinks as his lonely companion.

Their discussion with each other reveals the cause of their suffering. Living a life of tramps in a cheap hotel, they are separated from one another in several ways. Joe, the Negro, hates Rocky because he is a white boy. Living among the white people, he has lost his sense of belongingness and has developed a guilty complex. When he decides to leave the place, he says: “I’s goin’ to my own folks where I belong” (*Ibid.*, 708). Similarly, when Cora and Chuck decide to marry and leave the place, Rocky mocks at him. His mocking is nothing but the jealousy of love towards Chuck. Chuck accuses: “Yuh don’t wanta see me get married and settle down like a reg’lar guy!” (*Ibid.*, 706).

Realizing the reality through Mickey’s speech, the bums decide to leave the place in search of happiness. His gospel has a tremendous impact on them. Even Hugo, who has been searching peace through drinks under the willow tree, finds it difficult to get it. Out of disgust he utters: “Life is a crazy monkey-face! Always there is blood beneath the willow trees! I hate it and I am afraid!” (*Ibid.*, 728). But this realization does not last long. The illusion clouds over the truth when Hickey
confesses his murdering of his wife. The hope of the bums shatters again; they finally return to the Saloon, which would keep them away from the reality of life.

Apart from the secondary characters, the three chief figures of the play, who suffer from the sense of isolation, are Hickey, Larry and Parritt. Hickey becomes the victim of isolation due to his fickle nature and his falsity. Since his childhood he has been restless and reckless, desiring change. His home, his school and his town appear to him like prisons. His father is a clergy whom he admires and from whom he acquires the smoothness in talking to people. But he is separated from his father by choosing the profession of salesmanship. Early in life, he moves in the company of tarts who like him for his entertaining jokes. He is already in love with Evelyn, and when he runs away from home, she promises to wait till he is successful and is in a position to marry her and support the family. To seek his fortune, he leaves home and his father, and is separated himself from his family.

The profession chosen by Hickey causes his separation from his wife and is also responsible for his solitary life. In order to mitigate the pain of separation, he finds consolation in the company of girls and in drinking. As he is devoted to Evelyn, he confesses everything to her, and each time she forgives him. She pardons him even when he catches a venereal disease and transfers it to her. This makes him feel very guilty. In hisanguished soul, he feels that he is doing great wrong to the sweetest innocent that has ever lived, and yearns for some way to make her contented and at peace. He examines various possibilities, such as suicide, running away from home, etc., but comes to the conclusion that in this way he would cause her even greater pain.

He does not give up his periodic drinks, and she cannot help forgiving even his worst sins. She is always in a state of illusion; her loyalty for Hickey is merely a
pipe-dream, which she never avoids. The situation becomes intolerable and a sense of

guilt constantly haunts him. He says:

    God, can you picture all I made her suffer, and all the guilt she made
    me feel, and how I hated myself... (Ibid., 745).

The love-hate relationship between Hickey and Evelyn make Hickey a split

personality, an isolated figure. He expresses his tragic suffering in these words:

    . . . I loved her so, but I began to hate that pipe dream! I began to be
    afraid I was going . . . forgive her for forgiving me . . . and it made me
    hate myself all the more . . . I’d get so damned lonely . . . (Ibid., 746).

In a state of illusion he decides to kill her in order to ease his guilty conscience. But

after killing Evelyn he realizes the truth. Instead of killing her out of love and mercy,

he kills her out of hate.

    As Hickey realizes his failure, he welcomes his doom. Death will be the only

solution of his suffering and pipe-dream. What he has regarded as peace and

contentment is nothing but an illusion and the only cause of his solitary suffering.

After his confession, Larry remarks: “May the Chair bring him peace at last, the poor

tortured bastard!” (Ibid., 750).

    Larry Slade, the ex-anarchist, the chief exponent of O’Neill’s philosophy of

life in this play, is also a victim of isolation. Throughout the play he pretends

complete detachment and disinterestedness, but he is unable to forget his past. His

pipe-dream is that he has lost all interest in life and is simply waiting for death.

Through him O’Neill suggests the way to achieve happiness. Life is endured only

with the aid of pipe-dream and wine. Deprived of these, men begin to die. But once

they are reconciled to death, it, too, brings peace.

    Being separated from the mainstream of life, Larry takes shelter under the

gloomy atmosphere of Harry Hope’s Saloon, and considers it as his last resort. As an

ex-anarchist, once he had great faith in the Movement, but he left it because he
quarrelled with Rosa Parritt, the woman whom he loved so dearly. Rosa Parritt was always a strong supporter of the Movement. On the other hand Larry realized that the Movement was a futile search, a mere pipe-dream for him. He was disillusioned with the human material with which he had to work.

Separated from Rosa Parritt, he emerges with another pipe-dream — viz., he has forgotten the past. In a way, he is alienated from the reality because he does not care for the truth. He says:

To hell with the truth! . . . the truth has no bearing on anything. It's irrelevant and immaterial... The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober (Ibid., 623).

In order to avoid the truth, he keeps himself apart from the reality and prefers to stay in a state of illusion. He believes that he does not have any pipe-dreams. He replies to Rocky: “Mine are all dead and buried behind me” (p. 624). He even denies his previous pipe-dream of anarchist movement that has separated him from his beloved and compelled him to lead a solitary life.

Frustrated and disillusioned, he thinks that he has forgotten the past, but the past confronts him in the person of Don Parritt, the son of Rosa Parritt. At first, he denies his intimacy with her and considers the affair as a common matter. He says to Don Parritt:

I never answered her last letters. I haven’t written her in a couple of years — or anyone else. ’I’ve gotten beyond the desire to communicate with the world — or, what’s more to the point, let it bother me any more with its greedy madness (Ibid., 633).

It clearly shows how he is separated from the outer world, having no relation with others. The reason of Larry’s alien life is his separation from the Movement, and he reveals it:

If I don’t believe in the Movement, I don’t believe in anything else either, especially not the state. I’ve refused to become a useful member of its society (Ibid., 634).
His concept begins to change, and he reveals that he still loves Rosa and has some faith in the great cause. This faith is finally shattered when Parritt commits suicide, and he becomes a real convert to death. He pathetically confesses:

   Be God, there is no hope! I'll never be a success in the grand stand — or anywhere else! Life is too much for me! I'll be a weak fool looking with pity at the two sides of everything till the day I die... (Ibid., 757).

The split in his character is the main cause of his tragic suffering emanating from isolation. Larry considers that he is an objectivist — one who sees both sides of the picture — and thus tries to reach the truth. But too much of thinking makes him a paralysed spectator, who is unable to take action in any direction. The two sides he sees are the masks of his own self, and both the selves are illusory, unreal and worthless. As Doris V. Falk opines:

   If Larry had been able to give either of these selves the value of a reality, he would have been drawn toward one or toward the other, would have been able to act either in the direction of his political obligations or in the direction of death by suicide, as Parritt did. Since he is pulled in both directions at once, he can only withdraw from the struggle altogether and become a non-participating observer of himself as well as of life. (Doris V. Falk, Eugene O’Neill and the Tragic Tension, 162.)

Man’s search for security and loss of belongingness in the modern world are projected through the character of Don Parritt in the play. Being detached from the ‘Movement’ and his mother, he comes to Larry in the hope of seeking security. His appearance and manner keep him apart from the other bums of Harry Hope’s Saloon. He does not find the Saloon an interesting place. He likes neither the Saloon, nor does he identify himself with the occupants of the Saloon. Even the birthday party of Harry hardly matters to him. He says: “I don’t belong in this birthday celebration. I don’t know this gang and I don’t want to be mixed up with them” (Eugene O’Neill, Selected Plays of Eugene O’Neill, 683). As he has no father, he becomes insecure and helpless
after the imprisonment of his anarchist mother. He speaks of his lonely childhood as
how he passes a solitary life without the love of a mother and without a friend.

Parritt’s cause of suffering from isolation is his betrayal of nature. He betrays
his own mother and becomes the cause of her imprisonment. He first pretends that he
did so out of patriotism, for he did not want his country to be ruined by a foreign pipe-
dream. But he soon confesses that this was not his real motive. He betrays her because
he wants money to spend somewhere. His motive is mercenary. But this, too, soon
turns out to be a lie. He soon admits that he did not betray her for money. The real
reason was that he did not like her freeways. He says: “She just had to keep on having
lovers to prove to herself how free she was . . . It made home a lousy place. I felt like .
. . it was like living in a whorehouse” (Ibid., 685).

Thus, in order to get rid of the ill-atmosphere of home, he betrayed his mother
out of hate. In this respect his case runs closely parallel to the case of Hickey!
Apropos of thus, Edwin A. Engel opines:

Hickey’s wife and Parritt’s mother represent antithetical aspects of
love — the former an excess of love and forgiveness, the latter a
deficiency. Both generate hate in the men who are closely associated

Indeed, he is the worse sinner of the two, for he has sent his mother to jail. In this
regard, Parritt reminds us of Orin Mannon of Mourning Becomes Electra. Both are
lonely, and are haunted by a sense of guilt. But in the case of Orin, he loves his
mother whereas Parritt hates his.

Like Orin, Parritt suffers from a haunting sense of guilt. It is this guilt-
complex which makes him nervous, shy, reserved and suspicious. The mother-image
constantly haunts him and he feverishly seeks a way out for his spiritual troubles. He
cannot take any decision by himself, for his mother always dominated him and
decided things for him. He wants some guide or mentor, someone to show him the
way out of his troubles. At last, through Larry he finds the way. He commits suicide like that of Orin Mannon to make an end of his lonely suffering.

The play dramatizes the relationship between men’s illusion and their will to live. It deals with one of the most crucial problems of man’s flight from reality into the realm of illusion. The world of reality has nothing to offer to the bums, and there is no place for such shirkers and idlers in it. The world of reality is a symbol of constant terror for them, and they cannot belong to it in an honourable manner. Thus, in a state of illusion they dream for the tomorrow that keeps them isolated from today’s reality of life.

Further, the play deals with the hope of the American dream. The promise of the American Dream, a goal of material prosperity and success, has long been regarded as a crucial element of American culture. For many, it is the possibility of this dream that separates America from other nations. It is the hope of the downtrodden. The faith Americans have in the dream, that, given enough ambition and determination, absolutely anyone can “make it” is almost religious in nature.

For the inhabitants of Harry Hope’s saloon, however, faith has led to despair; the dream has soured. O’Neill populates Hope’s with characters from diverse backgrounds. Some, such as Willie Oban, a Harvard Law School graduate, and Jimmy Tomorrow, a former war correspondent, have come close to success—though it ultimately eluded their grasp. Others, such as Joe Mott, the former proprietor of a black gambling house, and Ed Mosher, a former circus man, have lived on the edge of respectability. Still others, such as the prostitutes, have always lived lives of petty crime. What unites all but Larry and Parritt, however, is a need to retain their dream, for if the dream is attainable, there is no hope for them. Each sees their failure as a personal issue, not a deficiency in the system. Jimmy Tomorrow rationalizes that as
long as he believes that he can quit drinking, get his job back, and resume his former place in society, he can live with his despair.

The former anarchists, however, represent a different perspective. For anarchists, the American Dream is a lie and good can only come when all government is eliminated. Although this too is a dream, it flies in the face of the traditional American belief of individual success within the system. In the early decades of this century, anarchy and socialism were regarded as viable alternatives to an American social system many viewed as flawed. Alternative political beliefs were seen by many as a new hope for America. But in *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill shows that this hope is no more attainable than the roomers’ elusive dreams. Even those who believe that the American dream is an illusion have nothing to offer in its stead.

Death is also another important theme in this play. Harry Hope’s saloon, Larry notes at the beginning of the play, is “harmless as a graveyard.” In a sense, however, Hope’s saloon is a graveyard—“The End of the Line Café,” as Larry calls it. The saloon’s inhabitants cling to their pipe dreams, but their lives are essentially over. Death is the next stop. Larry claims to hope for death. He welcomes it as “a fine long sleep, and I’m damned tired, and it can’t come too soon for me.”

As long as the roomers have their pipe dreams, they believe they can hold death at bay, but Hickey’s arrival brings the reality of death. Hickey first brings a spiritual death, telling the roomers that their pipe dreams are empty. Later, Hickey brings literal death into the world of Hope’s saloon; not only is the news of Evelyn’s murder shattering, it ultimately paves the way for Parritt’s death. Larry, who tells Parritt that his only solution is suicide, becomes Larry’s executioner. After Parritt’s death, Larry says, “By God, I’m the only real convert to death Hickey made here.” No longer is a mere observer, Larry’s desire for death now a reality.
Numerous critics have pointed out that the “iceman” of O’Neill’s title is in fact Death, the Grim Reaper. It is Death that has come to Evelyn, sent by Hickey into the arms of the iceman at last. And it is Death that Hickey brings to Hope’s saloon. However, as the play ends, the roomers are able to resume their pipe dreams, denying Death access. Even Parritt’s suicide is unnoticed by all but Larry. Hickey is able to return to his own pipe dream, to deny his hatred of Evelyn as well as his responsibility for her death. He believes that he must have been insane. Only Larry realizes that Death has truly come to Hope’s. For him, that has changed everything.

*Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1941) is the most personal of O’Neill’s plays. It is a simple naturalistic family drama without any plot contrivance, but is remarkable for its uncommonly moving revelation of characters and human relations. The elegiac but harrowing portrayal of a family’s love-hate conflicts places this play among O’Neill’s greatest works.

The play deals with the inter-family isolation and shows how an outwardly prosperous and happy family suffers from isolation. O’Neill exhibits unique courage in revealing his personal and private life in it. It really goes to his credit that he has turned autobiography into a play with sufficient objectivity.

The play opens in Tyrone’s fogbound summer house which keeps them apart from the outer world and the present reality of life. It depicts the story of four Tyrone, the money-loving father, James Tyrone his wife Mary, their elder son, Jamie, and the younger son, Edmund. As the play proceeds, it reveals the inner story of the family and the suffering of its members from isolation and separation.

Mary, who has just returned from a mental hospital, makes clear by her attitude that she is not cured. She nostalgically revives her past dreams of becoming a nurse or a pianist, and appears to be an innocent girl once again. She also reveals that
her addiction began when her miserly husband chose a quack-doctor who treated her
treated her sickness in giving birth to Edmund with morphine. Like her mother,
Edmund wants to move away from reality, and prefers to stay alone. Like her, he, too,
shows both love and hate for his family as he confronts his limited future as a
consumptive, realizing that since he is expected to die, his father will send him to the
cheapest state sanatorium. A similar ambivalence is exhibited by the debauched
Jamie, who drunkenly tells Edmund how much he loves him and yet how much he
hates him as he (Edmund) is responsible for their mother’s addiction. Both Edmund
and Jamie accuse their father of the destruction of the family. In defence, James
Tyrone tells the story of his tragic childhood that taught him the value of money. Each
member of the family confronts his own failure and guilt, which end in frustration and
futility. In the end, we witness Mary’s special fascination for the past and her
unhappiness about the present.

The theme of isolation and loneliness is projected through all the major
characters in the play. All of them are suffering from a deep sense of isolation. James
Tyrone leads an estranged life owing to his materialistic attitude and his profession. In
his search for monetary security, he is hated by his wife and sons. The tragic irony of
his life is that he remains a stranger to his family for which he has sacrificed his life.
By choosing the profession of an actor, he has spent most of his time in cheap hotels
and bars, and has never provided a comfortable life to his wife and children. His
indifferent attitude proves too much to his family and separates him from his wife.

Out of disgust, his wife remarks:

Oh, I’m so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You wan’t help
me . . . You don’t know how to act in home! You don’t really want one!
. . . never since the day we were married! You should have remained a
bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in
bar-rooms! (Eugene O’Neill, ‘Long Day’s Journey into Night’ The
Plays of Eugene O’Neill, 58).
He fails to prove himself a worthy husband to his wife. His incapability of providing a real home makes him a stranger. His wife says, “It’s hard for a stranger to tell, but after thirty-five years of marriage” (Ibid., 71). Not only from his wife, has his materialistic attitude also separated him from his sons. His elder son Jamie has the same opinion about him. When James prefers to Edmund to Dr. Hardy, a cheap doctor, for the treatment, Jamie ridicules his father. He says, “Hardy only charges a dollar. That’s what makes you think he’s a fine doctor!” (Ibid., 26). Everybody accuses him, but nobody changes his concept of doctor. As his tragic childhood taught him the worth of a dollar, he always feels insecure by remembering the penniless days of his early life. His wife remarks:

And Mr. Tyrone is never worried about anything, except money and property and the fear he’ll end his days in poverty. I mean, deeply worried. Because he cannot really understand anything else (Ibid., 87). It is his monetary insecurity that keeps him apart from others, and compels him to live a life of stranger in his own family.

Although his search for economic security and his fear of poor house make him stingy, he honours the bond of the home more than any other member of the family. He shoulders the responsibilities of their lives more than any other member of his family. He is capable of love, but is often driven towards hatred. Even then, he never truly hates any of his family members, but lives isolated within the frame of the bond, attempting to love all. His failure as an artist and a husband creates a vacuum within him. He tums from the pain of his life to the local bar-room, and drinks to dope his mind to the point of forgetfulness. He remains a lonely man, free of cynicism and incapable of hatred.

Mary Tyrone is the most unfortunate person who suffers from a deep sense of alienation. In search of happiness, she has married Tyrone, rejecting her dreams and
ambitions of innocent girlhood by becoming a nun or a concert pianist. Her dreams shatter when she falls in love with James. At the time of her marriage, she thinks of herself as the happiest women of the world; but soon she begins to feel that there is no happiness for her. Being an actor’s wife, she has to travel with her husband on his road-tours and stay in cheap hotels. This deprives her of a real home and makes her an alien wife. Her husband prefers to stay in clubs or bar-rooms, and she feels terribly lonely. In the dirty hotels, she has to wait for her husband alone, as she is unable to associate herself with theatre-people and has to spend night in idleness until her husband comes or is brought home from the theatre. Her sense of isolation and loneliness increases when she finds that she cannot communicate with the outer world. She says: “There is no-where I could go. Who would I go to see? I have no friends” (Ibid., 72). For this, she accuses her husband and blames him for his indifferent attitude towards a real home. She feels that she has married beneath her status, and that she is unable to go out and meet people. She cannot invite her friends since she has no permanent home. She never considers the summer-house a real home. Her conception of real home keeps her apart from the outer world and separates her from her family. She expresses her belief to her husband: “In a real home one is never lonely. You forget I know from my experience what a home is like. I gave up one to marry you — my father’s home” (Ibid., 62). Her longing for a real home is marred by the materialistic attitude of her husband, and has compelled her to lead a solitary life.

Being dissatisfied with the present, she moves towards the past in search of peace and security. She passionately remembers her thrilling convent days and her romantic affairs with James. She recollects her tragic experience and the life-and-death-struggle at the time of Edmund’s birth. She cannot forget the cheap quack that
prescribed her morphine to kill her pain, and thus made her a permanent drug-addict. She blames herself for causing the death of Edmund due to her sheer negligence and indifference. She realises that she has been a liar throughout her life, and has been false not only to others but also to herself. Thus, she remains isolated from the present.

Mary is constantly haunted by a sense of guilt. She does not consider herself a worthy mother, and for this she blames her husband. From her experience she knows: “Children should have homes to be born in, if they are to be good children, and women need home, if they are to be good mothers” (Ibid., 76). Also, she blames herself for the cause of Edmund’s ill health. She says, “He was born nervous and too sensitive, and that’s my fault” (Ibid., 76). Her failure as a good mother develops a sense of hatred within herself that keeps her apart from the rest of the family members. Accusing her husband, she says to Edmund:

I know why we wants to send you to a Sanitarium to take you from me! He’s tried to do that. He’s been jealous of every one of my babies. He kept finding ways to make me leave them (Ibid., 103).

Her hatred of Jamie is less ambiguous. She hates his cynicism, turns from him in fear that he will discover her need of the dope-dream, and silently accuses him of murdering the dead child. At the same time, she cannot help herself being in love with them. Her love-hate relationship with her family leaves her in the alternate states of disillusion and illusion.

Her search for happiness through falsity keeps her away from others as well as from herself. Her self-deception and escapism are heightened by her constant reference to her glasses which she can never find. She says, “My eyes are getting so bad and I never can find my glasses” (Ibid., 18). The search for the glasses signifies her search for identity, search for self that does not exist. It indicates her inability to
see herself as she is. Actually, unable to find solace in the present, she moves
backwards and isolates herself from the reality and from her true-self.

Through the character of Mary, O’Neill expresses his firm conviction that we
are what life has made us, and that we are able to know its foul game only when it is
too late to do anything about it. In her words:

None of us can help the things life has done to us. They’re done before
you realize it, and once they’re done they make you do other things
until at last everything comes between you and what you’d like to be,
and you’ve lost your true self forever (Ibid., 53).

Haunted by an utter sense of loneliness and insecurity, she takes more and more of the
drugs so that she may live in the past which is the only reality to her. She loves the
fog since it hides her from the world of reality; but she hates the foghorn which
reminds her of the harsh and nagging realities. At the end of the play, her appearance
in the wedding gown is a symbol of her quest for hope and her longing for happiness
which are never fulfilled.

Jamie, like the other members of his family, suffers from a sense of isolation
and separation. He leads a meaningless life without any goal. He has the potentiality
of becoming a fine actor, but with his perpetual alcoholism and whore-mongering, he
blots out the possibility of becoming some prominent person in life. He becomes a
wastrel and a cynic, sneering at everything but himself. He is a nagging son to his
parents. He has a hostile relation with his father, for whom he is no more than a
vagabond who does not know the value of money. His father blames him for his
repeated failure in the job he does, and has lost his hopes on him. He also accuses him
of the downfall of Edmund. He thinks that it is Jamie who has had a bad influence on
his younger brother. Commenting on his cynical attitude, his father says:

Your mind was so poisoned by your own failure in life, you wanted to
believe every man was a knave with his soul for sale, and every
woman who wasn’t whore was a fool (Ibid., 30).
His mother has the same opinion regarding his failure, but in a tone of consideration she says: “But I suppose life has made him like that, and he can’t help it” (Ibid., 53).

Jamie’s malicious attitude towards Edmund reveals the main cause of his isolation. He hates Edmund because he is the root-cause of their mother’s drug addiction. He thinks that Edmund has stolen the love of his mother and forced him to live a loveless life. Pointing out the cause of Jamie’s failure and solitary suffering,

Travis Bogard opines:

Jamie, like his brother and father, is lost, embittered and cynical, wanting his mother whose rejection of his perhaps reaches farther back than the time when morphine forced her into drugged isolation (Travis Bogard, Contour in Time, 433).

Deprived of mother’s love and father’s affection, he turns into a half-dead person. He feels that a part of himself has long been dead. He warns Edmund to be wary of him:

Because I’ll do my damned to make you fail. Can’t help it. I hate myself. Got to take revenge. On everyone else. Especially you... The dead part of me hopes you won’t get well. May be he’s even glad the game has got Mama again. He wants company; he doesn’t want to be the only corpse around the house.... (Eugene O’Neill, Long Day’s Journey into Night, 146).

Love is the essential truth, a bare necessity for every human being. It helps him to lead a happy life, but when he fails to achieve it, he becomes frustrated and gets isolated. It happens in the life of Jamie. He pleads to Edmund: “Don’t forget love.

What a man without a good woman’s love? A God-damned hollow shell” (Ibid., p. 129). In his search for love, he visits whore-house, but he is not satisfied even there. In this regard, he reminds us of Dion Anthony of The Great God Brown. Both are the seekers of love, but there is a difference between them. In the case of Dion, Cybel is the substitute for his mother’s love, while in the case of Jamie; Mary is not a perfect substitute.
Edmund, the younger son of Tyrones, is a victim of isolation and loss of belongingness. From the autobiographical point of view, he is the self-portrait of Eugene O’Neill. Through him the playwright recalls his own bitter past and the failure of his early years. Like him, O’Neill is also sick and sensitive. Each tries to interpret life from a very personal angle. Edmund is an embittered adolescent like the dramatist. Each suffers from the feeling of being unwanted even in his domestic circle.

Edmund leads a life of utter aimlessness and dissolution because he considers himself a “thankless child” (Ibid., 77) to his parents. His father thinks that it is he who is responsible for his mother’s deterioration. From his mother’s view, he is an unwanted child. His mother says to him: “You were born afraid. Because I was so afraid to bring you into the world” (Ibid., 96). Even his jealous brother, who is the cause of his misery, asks in a defensive manner: “Then who are you blaming Edmund, for being born?” (Ibid., 34). Perhaps, through the voice of Jamie, O’Neill wants to convey his philosophy of life. Man is born to suffer and nobody is particularly responsible for his doom. But in truth, it is the circumstances and his insight into life which force Edmund to lead a solitary life.

His father’s stinginess, his mother’s love-hate attitude, his brother’s envious nature and, above all, his poetic nature are the combined forces behind his lonely suffering. He falls a prey to tuberculosis. His father, however, wants to send him to state-owned Sanatorium so that he may not spend much on his cure. Edmund blames his father, recalling the case of his mother. As he is more attached to his mother, he feels the load of his mother’s dope-addiction, weighing heavy on his heart. Like his mother, he avoids reality and seeks an escape into the fog of unreality:

The fog was where I wanted to be . . . Everything looked and sounded unreal . . . I wanted-to be alone with myself in another world
where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself... I even lost the feeling of being on land... As if I was a ghost belonging to the fog, and the fog was the ghost of the sea. It felt damned peaceful to be nothing more than a ghost within a ghost (Ibid., 113).

Like Mary, he never finds peace in the summer-house and remains a stranger to his family. Actually, the poet within him keeps him apart from others. He does not identify himself with them and loses his sense of belongingness. Therefore, he searches an identity of his own in a world beyond human reach. He expresses his longing for the vision of beauty in a dreamy state:

> It was a great mistake, my being born a man; I would have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish. 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... (Ibid., p. 135).

In this regard, Edmund Tyrone can be compared with Robert Mayo of *Beyond the Horizon*. Both the men are seekers of beauty; both are dissatisfied with the life provided to them and suffer from a sense of isolation. Unable to find any solution, Edmund hopes to find the lost sense of belonging in a state of unreality like Robert’s quest of hope — what lies beyond the horizon. Edmund hopes to find it in his mystic oneness with the sea:

> 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 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 (Ibid., 134).

The theme of alienation is also projected through the title of the play and the symbols used in it. The title, *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, is very suggestive. It signifies the characters’ separation from reality. It is not a forward journey but a journey in the backward direction, especially for Mary. For her, it is a sad journey into the fog of dope and dream which clearly separates her from reality. For Jamie, it is a hopeless journey into the night of cynicism and frustration. For him, it begins and
ends in darkness, offering him nothing to soothe his agitated mind. For James, it is a
tragic journey down the wrong road, away from his earlier commercial triumph. And
for Edmund, it is a journey beyond night in a hopeful state of unreality.

Like the title, the symbols are also suggestive and add much more to expose
the theme. “Home” is the most important symbol that creates the deep sense of
isolation in its inhabitants. Home is normally a place for man’s physical and spiritual
shelter, but in this play it ironically suggests loneliness and alienation. It is a home,
but everyone feels homeless here. Although it is ironically called the “Summer
house,” but there is no sign of summer or sunshine in it. Mary never finds herself
belonging to it. The symbol ‘wedding gown’ signifies her search for happiness that
she has lost since her marriage. The symbols of ‘fog’ and ‘foghorn’ also convey the
same meaning of isolation and separation. ‘Fog’ symbolizes the world of unreality
that separates man from reality and makes him a stranger in the eyes of others. It is a
potential symbol of man’s ignorance about himself and his failure to understand
others in this fog-ridden world. It also stands for oblivion and self-deception. The
constant use of fog signifies the characters’ escapes from a world of reality to a world
of unreality.

The play is a woeful tale of isolation and loneliness. In it O’Neill has painted
the most tragic picture of the shattered dreams in an autobiographical manner. All the
four haunted Tyrones torment themselves and one another, gradually stripping away
every protective illusion until each one faces himself and others without hope. The
driving force among them forces each of the members into his own disintegration, and
causes him to take others with him. Doris V. Falk rightly opines:

All the Tyrones are doomed to destroy and be destroyed, to be
victimized not only by each other but by the dead, for the dead have
willed them a heritage of disease, alcoholism and drug addiction, and
have cursed them with the deeper ills of alienation, conflict, and self-
destructiveness (Doris V. Falk, *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension*, 182)

The plot of *Long Day’s Journey into Night* focuses on a dysfunctional family trying to come to grips with its ambivalent emotions in the face of serious familial problems, including drug addiction, moral degradation, deep-rooted fear and guilt, and life-threatening illness.

Deception is another theme in this play. Deceptive masks are worn early in the play in an effort to evade unpleasant truths. Other members of the family try to keep Mary from knowing that Edmund is seriously ill, and Mary obviously attempts to deceive herself with the comforting belief that Edmund is only suffering from summer cold. Mary also attempts to hide her relapse into drug use with pathetic excuses that simply deepen the family’s disappointment. The deceptions even become trivial, in Jamie’s efforts to deceive his father by watering down the whiskey, for example, or in Tyrone’s efforts to hide his whiskey-fetching forays from the help.

More poignant are the self-deceptions, in which characters mask the truth from themselves. Clearly, the past into which Mary escapes is illusory, a romanticized but comforting distortion of truth. Even Jamie, cynical but honest, deludes himself in his search for personal redemption through alcoholism and whoring.

For Tyrone, a troubling problem is his sons’ rejection of their Catholic faith, a foundation stone in their “shanty Irish” heritage. His complaints about their rejection of religion occasions Jamie’s scoffing observation that Tyrone himself is a truant Catholic, which Tyrone must admit. He insists, though, that he still believes in God, which his sons do not. He is particularly upset with Edmund’s godless and pessimistic view of life, claiming that it has been learned from reading depressing, atheistic poetry and philosophy. Thus, religion has vital place in the play.
Mary’s illusory, drug-induced escape into her youth is partly a flight from guilt into a restored innocence and rediscovered faith. In their own ways, the other Tyrones try to unburden themselves of guilt and shame, either through expiation, as seen in Jamie’s admission of his jealousy of Edmund, or in pleas for understanding, as seen in Tyrone’s attempts to blame his selfish penny-pinching on his early poverty. The play’s tragic theme is that innocence cannot be restored; each character must bear some guilt and pain, even to the grave’s edge.

The readers could find the theme of loyalty. Thus, the loyalty of the three Tyrone men towards Mary has eroded because she has repeatedly dashed their hopes for her recovery, but their anger, hurt, and disappointment are an emotional index of their love for her. It is the common loyalty towards her that keeps the family together and explains why, for example, Jamie and Tyrone even tolerate each other.

Mary is not the only one with regrets about the past. Tyrone is haunted by his impoverished childhood and his father’s abandonment and eventual suicide. In one self-pitying confession, he expresses regrets for having given up the chance of becoming a great Shakespearean actor in order to take a lucrative but artistically unrewarding part in a popular melodrama.

Implicit in the responses to Mary’s drug addiction is the belief that addiction was an indication of a weak moral will. Public disclosure of her behaviour seems to be more threatening to the family than Jamie’s disgraceful drinking, gambling, and whoring. In honest moments, Tyrone recognizes that the morphine is a poison and that Mary cannot control her need, but the moral stigma remains. Jamie’s moral descent, buffered by his affection for his brother and mother, is treated as less of a social embarrassment, even by Tyrone.
The principal searcher in *Long Day's Journey into Night* is Edmund, O’Neill’s alter ego. Both Mary and Tyrone escape to their pasts, Mary to her convent days and Tyrone to a time in his career when he might have resisted trading his talent for wealth. Edmund, having just begun a writing career as a poet and journalist, looks to a future when his drifting ends and he finds an elusive inner peace that he has glimpsed in rare moments at sea. The alternative is to follow Jamie, his dissolute doppelganger, down a self-destructive, unhappy path to a spiritual dead end.

Throughout *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Tyrone confirms the justice of Jamie’s sneering attacks on him as a miser. Old Gaspard, as Jamie calls him, is obsessed with the cost of things, and is always looking for the cheapest alternative. He invariably equates the best with a bargain price, whether he is buying land, cigars, or automobiles, employing servants, or engaging the services of a physician.

On occasion, Tyrone’s penny-pinching habits border on the comic. He cannot resist remarking on the most trivial of his marketplace triumphs, and he launches into diatribes about making the electric company rich while he wanders through the house turning off lights in rooms that others have abandoned. But there is real pathos, too, for some of the family problems have their origin in Tyrone’s misplaced values, which, in an honest moment, even he admits. Jamie never lets him forget that it was his reluctance to seek out a competent physician that led to Mary’s addiction. Jamie fears, too, that Tyrone will attempt to find a bargain sanatorium for Edmund, and repeatedly warns his father against doing so.

Indirectly, Tyrone begs for understanding, even forgiveness, by recounting his hard beginnings in an Irish immigrant family, deserted by his father. His fears of landing in the poorhouse are honest enough, for they relate to that dreadful time, when he had to work twelve hours a day in a machine shop to help his family survive.
Tyrone has little success in engaging his sons’ sympathies, however. Although
Edmund claims to understand his father better, both sons are weary of his stories and
are largely indifferent to his past; their concern is with the end result of Tyrone’s
stinginess, not its cause.

_A Touch of the Poet_ (1942) was published after the death of Eugene O’Neill.
He had finished the writing of this play a decade before his death. Actually, he
planned it for his proposed cycle of plays “The Tale of Possessor’s Self-
Dispossessed,” but the cycle remained incomplete. Although he has written other few
plays, but _A Touch of the Poet_ is the only completed play of the cycle” (Arthur and
Barbara Gelb, _O’Neill, 847_ ). O’Neill intended the cycle to record the rise of an Irish
family in America and its struggle to establish itself in conflict with the hostile and
exploitative Yankees. Though this conflict provides the background for _A Touch of
the Poet_, the play’s real theme is the tragic suffering of a character from isolation and
loneliness, which arise due to the conflict between his proud illusion and shameful
reality.

The play depicts the story of Melody family, particularly of Comelius Melody,
who is unable to harmonize and reconcile the pride of his former glory with the shame
of his present destitution. Con Melody, the aristocratically raised son of an Irish
tavern-keeper, after passing a military career, becomes the owner of Melody’s tavern.
Snubbed by Yankee aristocrats and hated by the Irish because of his contempt for
them, the handsome Melody lives in a dream-world where he is still the refined
Major. He haughtily recites Byron before the mirror and rides his thorough-bred mare.
This indulgence has improvised him and worn out his wife, Nora, whom he dislikes
for her coarse Irish ways and looks. But she forgives and worships him, begs
shopkeepers for credit, and does manual labour to support his illusion. Sara, the
daughter in who are combined his aristocratic and Nora’s peasant characteristics, is torn between pride and bitter hatred of his father, and they fight each other viciously. On his annual celebration of the Battle of Talavera, in which Cornelius distinguished himself with Wellington, Sara swears that this is the last time she will play waitress to him and to his invited guests, and decides to marry Simon Harford, a Yankee capitalist’s son now lying sick upstairs. Sara loves Simon for his poetic quality and dreamy nature.

Though undaunted by a warning visit from Simon’s curiously neutral mother, Deboran, Sara fears that Melody’s bungling interference will ruin her chances of happiness. When old Harford’s lawyer appears with cash offer to prevent his son’s marriage to a lowly bar-keeper’s daughter, Melody’s stiff Irish pride sends him out into the night, determined to mend his wounded honour. In the privacy of Simon’s bedroom, Sara elicits Simon’s vow to marry her, after which Melody returns home, having brawled with the police and Harford’s servant. Thoroughly mortified and disillusioned, Melody gives up his proud dream and ridicules his former pretensions of being Byronic. He reverts to his Irish brogue, and melodramatically shoots his beloved mare — the symbol of what used to be the aristocratic major. The result of Cornelius’ broken dream leaves the family in a bitter state.

Man’s rootlessness and his inability to find a sense of belonging leave him a state of isolation. This happens in the case of Con Melody, the protagonist of the play. His suffering from rootlessness starts from the beginning of his life, when his wealthy Irish father sends him to Dublin in order to make him a gentleman. Unfortunately, he is not accepted by his aristocratic schoolmates. As a result, his life becomes a constant rebellion against his humble Irish origin, on the one hand, and the snobbery of the gentry, on the other. Since then Con Melody tries to exist on his aristocratic
pretensions, detesting the Irish scum, wherein he has his real roots. By rejecting his own origin, he rejects his own self and becomes alien to his true self. In this regard, his self-alienation can be compared with that of Brutus Jones of *The Emperor Jones*, who denies his Negro origin by hating the negroes and becomes isolated from his own people. Like Jones, Con also faces the problem of identity that he has lost due to his false ego of aristocracy.

After leading a poor life of tavern-keeper, he also suffers from the same sense of isolation from self and society that he experienced in Europe. Mickey Melody, one of the associates of Con’s tavern, says:

The damned Yankee gentry won’t let him come near them, and he considers the few Irish around here to be scum beneath his notice


The aristocratic Yankees do not accept him as one of their own, while to the Irish immigrants in America he becomes an alien, an outsider. Thus, he is unable to belong to anywhere. His falsity keeps him apart from both the societies. He knows that he is beyond the pail of the established Boston families, but his self-pretensions do not allow him to identify himself with the Irish immigrants and leave him in a state of illusion.

His approach towards life, based on feudalistic pretensions, makes him a Byronic hero, who recites from Byron’s “Child Harold” in front of mirror and creates a false self-image for himself. Perhaps, through the character of Con Melody, O’Neill tries to recollect his past, as Arthur and Barbara Gelb remarks: “Like Cornelius Melody, the haughty, embittered, self-pitying hero of *A Touch of the Poet*, Eugene enjoyed quoting the lines from Byron’s Child Harold . . .” (Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O’Neill*, 147). O’Neill describes his physical appearance and manner in which one can find the reflection of his age:
It is his face that reveals the ravages of dissipation— a ruined face... There is a look of wrecked distinction about it, of brooding, humiliated pride. His manner is that of a polished gentleman. Too much so, he overdoes it and one soon feels that he is overplaying a role which has become more real than his real self to him (Eugene O’Neill, *A Touch of the Poet*, 27).

Con Melody avoids the present reality by immersing in his glorious past that separates him from the truth. In the midst of bankruptcy, he invites his old associates to mark the occasion of his old victory. He recollects:

> It’s a far cry from this dunghill on which I rot to that glorious day when the Duke of Wellington— Lord Welsely, then — did me the honor before the army to commend my bravery (*Ibid.*, 30).

Though he realizes his own conditions, yet his ego does not permit him to make any compromise. When his wife suggests him to wear the Major’s uniform, he says: “It makes me feel at least the ghost of the man I was then” (*Ibid.*, 31). The real Major in him is dead, but the ghost still lingers; and Melody is perpetually haunted by this invincible spectre. His separation from the present can be exemplified through his own words: “Faith, I was far away in spirit, lost in memories of a glorious battle in Spain, nineteen years ago, “today” (*Ibid.* 45).

Melody’s illusion not only keeps him apart from the present, but also forces him to lead an estranged life within his family. His false aristocratic ego causes a lot of trouble to his wife and daughter, who is never satisfied with him. She cannot bear her father’s gentlemanly pretensions, particularly when they mean the family’s starvation. When Sara learns that the payment of Dickenson’s feed-bill for the mare has been preferred to the payment of the family’s barest needs, she flares up in anger. She sneers at her father’s aristocratic pretensions at the cost of the family’s survival:

> The mare comes first, if she takes the bread out of our mouth. The grand gentleman must have his through bred to ride out in state... (*Ibid.*, 18).
Although his wife suffers a lot to keep his pipe-dream alive, still he does not like her. He considers that she is a woman below his status. But his daughter blames him for his indifferent attitude towards his wife. She says to her mother:

I do hate him for the way he treats you. I heard him again last night, raking up the past, and blaming his ruin on his having to marry you (Ibid., 20).

It clearly shows how he passes his life without any understanding with his daughter and wife. Tuming between reality and illusion, Con Melody realizes the truth for a moment, but soon he denies the truth. He says to himself:

Driven from pillar to post in my own home. Everywhere ignorance — or the scorn of my own daughter. (Then defiantly) But by the Eternal God, no power on earth, nor in hell itself, can break me . . . (Ibid., 51).

The duality in his character is the main cause of his isolation. In this respect, he reminds us of James Tyrone of Long Day's Journey into Night. Melody lives with the memory of a great honour — viz., Wellington's praise after Talavera — just as Tyrone recalls Booth’s praise of his acting. Both have a touch of the peasant as well as the poet in them. Both reject modernity — Melody by hating Jacksonian democracy, and Tyrone by denying modern authors. Due to this duality, both are alienated from their wives and children.

Con Melody’s concept of gentleman shatters when he rushes to the Harford’s home to avenge his pride. Being beaten by the police and humiliated by Harford, he finally returns to his own self. He feels, he is no longer the major but the son of the Irish shebeen-keeper. He kills the mare which is the symbol of his false aristocracy. His pipe-dream vanishes when he comes face to face with his illusion. His killing of mare can be compared with Hickey’s self-surrender; both commit spiritual suicide when they find they can no longer believe in their pipe-dreams. Though by shooting
the mare he shoots his illusion, yet the realization comes after a lot of suffering from isolation and separation.

Nora Melody, the innocent wife of Con, suffers from the same sense of isolation throughout her life. She is a victim of her husband’s indifferent attitude. Her husband dislikes her and hates her, for her Irish peasantry origin. From the day of her marriage Con never provides a happy life to her. Her husband considers the marriage as a forced act by the priest. For this reason, Con hates the priest. He also hates Nora because she has a constant faith in the priest. After her marriage, Con joins army, leaving the pregnant Nora to lead a lonely life. So, Nora is deprived of her husband’s love just after her marriage. Jamie Cregan describes her tragic suffering of separation as follows:

He married her because he’d fallen in love with her, but he was ashamed of her in his pride at the same time because her folks were only ignorant peasants on his estate, as poor as poor... he married her and then went off to the war, and left her alone in the castle to have her child, and never saw her again till he was sent home from Spain (Ibid., 12).

Even after returning from the Army when Con prefers to lead his life in falsity, she remains a stranger to him. Even in the most intimate moment of their relation, Con never hesitates to accuse her: “Why don’t you wash your hair? It turns my stomach with its stink of onions and stew” (Ibid., 33). But he forgets that he is the person who reduces her life to a housemaid. Although the Irish peasant in Con loves her in his way, but the Major despises her. He does not allow her interference in any of his matters. Throughout her life, she remains an alien wife due to her husband’s false ego. She pathetically utters: “Has he ever cared for anyone except himself and his pride?” (Ibid., 105).

Ironically, Nora is the only person who keeps Con’s pipe-dream alive and becomes the worst sufferer for it. Instead of his constant nagging, she always loves
her husband and remains loyal to him at the cost of her happiness. Her daughter bitterly comments on her mother’s loyalty which is the real cause of her suffering. She says: “You bear all his insults as meek as a lamb; You keep on slaving for him when it’s that has made you old before your time” (Ibid., 20). But, in defence, Nora replies: “There’s no slavery in it when you love!” (Ibid., 21). To her, true love means total surrender which is the only pride for a wife; she helplessly requests her daughter not to take away that pride from her. Without that, her life is nothing, but a meaningless existence. This is the reality behind her constant submission and forgiveness to her husband. In this regard, she reminds us of Evelyn, the alien wife of Hickey of The Iceman Cometh. Like Evelyn, Nora forgives her husband and tries to get happiness through illusion. Both the wives fail to get any real happiness, and remain alienated from their husbands.

Sara’s suffering is something different from that of her mother. Nora suffers because of her excessive-love to her husband, and Sara’s dissatisfaction emanates from her hatred for her father. Both the daughter and the mother reveal their respective brands of pride. Sara is proud of her freedom, while Nora is proud of her bondage. Sara is downright earthy and pragmatic in her attitude to her father and the world in general; Nora is reverential and idealistic in her attitude towards her husband. Sara is impatient with her father, but Nora is the very image of monumental patience. Sara suffers along with her mother and is separated from her father physically from the beginning of her childhood. Even when she starts living with her father, she is separated from him mentally. Her relation with her father is somewhat parallel to the relation between James Tyrone and Jamie of Long Day's Journey into Night. Jamie hates his father for his stinginess; but in the case of Sara, she hates her father for his false aristocracy.
Sara does not share her father’s self-delusion in thinking of himself as a gentle¬man. She becomes disgusted with the life provided to her. She says bitterly:

I’ve had need to have, to hold my head up slaving as a waitress and chambermaid so my father can get drunk every night like a gentleman.

(Ibid., 26).

There is a fierce antagonism throughout between Sara and Con Melody. She resents his treatment of her mother; she is continually reminding him that they are poor because of his extravagance and his capacity in business. He oscillates between treating her as a servant, and behaving with an elaborate chill courtesy. Through the mare she attacks her father’s falsity because of his inhuman preference for an animal over the human needs of the family. Out of disgust, she says to her father:

If you ever dared face the truth, you’d hate and despise yourself: (Passionately) All I pray to God is that some day when you’re admiring yourself in the mirror something will make you see at last what you really are. That will be revenge in full for all you’ve done to Mother and me . . . (Ibid., 80).

Although Sara hates her father’s illusion and dislikes her mother’s total surrender, yet she is the real combination of both the qualities. As O’Neill describes her: “There is a curious blending in her of what are commonly considered aristocratic and peasant characteristics” (Ibid., 13). Perhaps this is the reason why she becomes a split personality. She represents both her father’s false aristocracy and her mother’s instincts for selfless love. Her mother’s loyalty forces her to love Simon Harford and her father’s false pride compels her to dream a wealthy life through marriage. In order to fulfill her dream, she loves Simon, but does not want to be a slave like her mother. Motivated by love and ambition, she allows Simon to seduce her. Her act of seduction is the cause of her insecurity. Surrendering herself physically to Simon, she is confident to reach close to her dreams.


After her surrender to Simon, she gradually becomes like her mother. The aristocratic ego, which she has inherited from her father, begins to crumble. She finds: “. . . whatever meant happiness to him (Simon) would be my only ambition” (Ibid. 111). In this context, she reminds us of Abbie Putnam of Desire Under the Elms, who traps herself in the efforts of trapping Eben Cabot. Sara’s dream shatters with final realization; she says to her mother:

Isn’t that a joke on me, with all my crazy dreams of riches and a grand estate and me a haughty lady riding around, in a carriage with Coachman and footman…. (Ibid., 111).

Although the play does not reveal what happens to this alien daughter of Melody after her marriage to Simon Harford, but from her attitude towards life, one can imagine that she may not be able to get any satisfaction from her poetic-natured husband.

The theme of isolation is also projected through the character of Simon Harford, who never appears in the play. So far the stage is concerned; he remains as a shadow figure throughout. We come to know about his isolated life through the discussion of other characters of the play. He is the son of a rich Yankee tradesman, Henry Harford. He “has a touch of the poet in him” (Ibid., 24) that keeps him apart from others. Being separated from his wealthy parents, he leads an isolated life in the tavern of Melody. Like his predecessors, Robert Mayo of Beyond the Horizon and Dion Anthony of The Great God Brown, he is a dreamer and a worshipper of nature. He imagines himself as a poet and a hermit, and this is the real cause behind his estrangement. O’Neill describes the dreams of his ideal hero through Sara:

He wanted to prove his independence by living alone in the wilds, and build his own cabin, and do all the work, and support himself simply and feel one with Nature, and think great thoughts about what life means, and write a book about how the world can be changed so people won’t be greedy to own money and land and get the best of each other but will be content with little and live in peace and freedom together, and it will be like heaven on earth (Ibid., 23-4).
These are dreams only because he fails to write the book. Instead of writing the Utopia, he writes love poems and falls in love with Sara. When a person fails in his attempt, he becomes more limited, finite, depersonalized and thus fragmented and alienated in his limited sphere of existence than ever before. He becomes an object, an isolated thing, which is subjected to diverse forces that externally influence him as a magnetic object. So Simon’s acceptance of Sara is probably the result of that diversion and his long suffering due to isolation. But will he be able to get rid of that after marrying her? This is the question that O’Neill leaves for his audience.

Another character, who is a victim of alienation, is Deborah Harford, the mother of Simon. She has a brief appearance in the play. She comes to the tavern to meet her alien son. Her discussions with Sara reveal the tragic story of her isolated life. She is a withdrawn figure, confined to her house, garden and books. She is alienated from her husband and isolated from the family. She hates the tyrannical attitude of Harfords. She tells Sara: “You can have no idea what revengeful hate the Harford pursuit of freedom imposed upon the women who shared their lives” (Ibid.64). While exposing the characteristics of Harfords, she warns Sara; but at the same time it reveals her own desperation and isolation from life particularly from her husband.

The title and the setting evoke the same sense of detachment. The title, A Touch of the Poet, expresses the isolation of the characters, especially of Con Melody and Simon Harford. Both the characters have the same poetic touch in them, and this is cause of their sufferings. One is middle-aged, backward-looking, selfish, and often cruel; while the other is young, idealistic, forward-looking, aspiring to be a poet and philosopher. Both the men are alienated from their immediate present. Similarly, the description of Melody’s tavern with its deteriorated condition symbolizes the ruined life of Con Melody. He says: “This inn, like myself, has fallen upon unlucky days”
(Ibid., 53). The different sections of the house give a visual equivalent to the inner division of Melody. To some extent, the bar and the dining-room with its drunken associates serve the purpose of Harry Hope's Saloon. For Con, the bar-room and its associates provide an escape. The bar is the only place where he can merge with his dreams without any fear of contradiction.

A Moon for the Misbegotten (1953) is the last completed play by O'Neill. In this play, O'Neill tells the tragic story of his elder brother, Jamie O'Neill, through the character of James Tyrone Jr., one of the doomed protagonists of the play. Through him the dramatist demonstrates man's quest for identity in a world of nothingness and emptiness, marked by the insurmountable barriers of human communication, the perpetual tension between illusion and reality, man's cosmic loneliness, the haunting reality of man's past, and the eternal conflict between life and death. About this play, Arthur and Barbara Gelb opines:

... the play is among O'Neill's greatest, rich in Irish humour and enormously moving in its brutal tragedy — a powerful expression of individualism for a dramatist who wrote to the sound of strange harmonies within his own soul and his disregard for the conventions of Broadway (Arthur and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill, 849).

The play is a sequel to Long Day's Journey into Night, and it begins eleven years after the end of the previous play. As in Long Day's Journey into Night, in this play the playwright uses a single setting and the physical action of the play takes place during a single day that journey through a moonlit night to a new strange dawn.

The play opens in Connecticut at the house of the tenant farmer Phil Hogan on a day in early September: Phil Hogan, the shrewd, garrulous farmer lives with his daughter and younger son. When the play begins, his son Mike is about to leave the home and his father. Like his two elder brothers, he wants to sever from his father because of his rude and indifferent attitude towards them. Josie, his over-sized
daughter, a virgin with the habit of pretending promiscuity, lives in a state of illusion. She hates her father and loves Tyrone, their drunken landlord. Mike, knowing that Josie love Tyrone, tells her that the latter has planned to sell the farm to Harder, their hostile neighbour. This is false, but Mike thinks that it may help to bring Josie and Tyrone together. Keeping the view of his parted son, Hogan plans to play the trick to protect their tenancy. He suggests her that she should persuade Tyrone to sleep with her and then they can force him to marry her. Josie, enraged by Tyrone’s apparent indifference, agrees to the plan. But James, in a drunken mood, rejects her advances because he truly loves her, reassuring her that the farm will not be sold.

When Tyrone comes to visit her in night, she learns more about his state of mind and his lonely suffering due to isolation. The moonlit-night reveals the dark aspects of both the characters. Tyrone confesses his inconsolable grief over his mother’s death and his remorse at his degenerate behaviour on the train while bringing the body back from California. Realizing the unutterable sadness of Tyrone’s life, Josie says goodbye and prays that he may soon find deliverance in the death he longs for, and that he may rest for ever in forgiveness and peace. With the diminishing of moonlit-night, the misbegotten lovers are separated from each other for the rest of their lives.

This powerful drama, which O’Neill wrote in the memory of his brother, mainly deals with the tragic suffering of three isolated persons. They are Phil Hogan, Josie and James Tyrone Jr., who represents O’Neill’s brother, Jamie. All these characters suffer from a sense of alienation, and lead an estranged life. Phil Hogan, the greedy farmer, suffers from inter-family alienation. His coarseness and rough manner keep him apart from his sons and daughter. His two elder sons, Thomas and John, have already left him before the play’s beginning. Now, his younger son plans
to leave him. His love for money and possessiveness reminds us of Ephraim Cabot of

*Desire Under the Elms*. Like the Old Cabot, Phil Hogan also believes in the hard
work which is the main cause of his estrangement within his family. He treats them
like slaves. As Josie says to her brother Hike:

> You can’t stand up to the Old Man, any more than Thomas or John
could, and the old devil would always keep you a slave (O’Neill, *A
Moon for the Misbegotten*, 17)

His materialistic attitude makes him a stranger even in his family. When he comes to
know that Josie has stolen his money and helped Mike, he accuses her: “A fine curse
God put on me when he gave me a daughter as big and strong as a bull, and as vicious
and disrespectful” (*Ibid.*, 24). Expressing his hatred towards his sons, he admits: “To
tell the truth, I never liked him . . . And I never liked Thomas and John, either” (*Ibid.*, 25). Being dissatisfied with his children, he pathetically recollects his dead wife who
was the only person to understand him. He tells that after the death of his wife, he has
lost his faith in God. He says: “I’ve never set foot in a church since and never will”
(*Ibid.*, 26). It clearly indicates that Hogan is separated not only from his family but
also from God. His tragic alienation from his daughter is evident when he says:

> I never thought I’d see the day when a daughter of mine would be such
a coward as to threaten her old father when he’s helpless drunk and
can’t hit back (*Ibid.*, 73).

Although Hogan blames his daughter and scolds her like anything else, yet at the
same time he is worried about her future. His plan of trapping Tyrone through her is
the main reason of it. Undoubtedly, he partly gets success in his scheme by possessing
the farm, but he is not able to provide her a secure life. After the departure of Tyrone,
he reveals to her daughter:

> I wanted you to find happiness — by hook or crook, one way or
another, what did I care now? . . . And if I gave a thought to his money
at all, that was the least of it, and why shouldn’t I want to have you live
in ease and comfort for a change, like you deserve, instead of in this shanty on a lously farm, slaving for me? (Ibid., 154).

His estrangement is the cause of his love-hate relationship with his daughter. It is like that of James Tyrone Sr., of Long Day's Journey into Night and Con Melody of A Touch of the Poet. Like them, Phil Hogan also suffers from isolation and separation.

Josie, the only female character of the play, is also a victim of isolation. Death has separated her from her mother and from her childhood. In place of a loving father, she finds a money-loving farmer, for whom, she is nothing but a maid servant. In this context, she can be compared with Sara Melody, the alien daughter of Con Melody of A Touch of the Poet. All her three brothers have left her one by one, leaving her to suffer with her greedy father. So, leading an isolated life, she becomes more violent and loses the softness of a woman. O'Neill describes her in these words:

She is so oversize for a woman that she is almost a freak . . . She is more powerful than any, but an exceptionally strong man, able to do the manual labour of two ordinary men. But there is no manish quality about her. She is all woman (Ibid., 13).

She is, thus, a woman divided against herself; her physical appearance is at variance with her inner being. Though born an unusual girl, she, longs to be a simple, unpretentious and ordinary in every way. But she fails to achieve that. Her pretension of promiscuity is the result of that failure and bitter experience in life. The mask of the whore, through which she hides the reality, makes her a split person. It is like a pipe-dream, through which she wants to mitigate the pain of isolation in a state of illusion. But her dream shatters when she meets Tyrone. Her pride that she is a slut begins to crumble with the interference of Tyrone, who pleads:

You can take the truth, Josie — from me. Because you and I belong to the same club. We can kid the world but we can’t fool ourselves, like most people, no matter what we do — nor escape ourselves, no matter where we run away . . . We’d find our own ghosts there waiting to greet us.... (Ibid., 121).
It is not a simple suggestion from Tyrone to Josie for facing the truth. Rather, it is the message of the playwright, who wants to convey the ultimate truth of human life that a man cannot escape from the bitter realities of life without facing them. When she refuses to admit the truth, Tyrone replies: “Pride is the sin by which the angels fell. Are you going to keep that up-with me?” (Ibid., 121).

Josie’s acceptance of Tyrone’s love is the result of her shattered illusion. When she fails to suppress and call of her inner being, she falls in love with him. It is a kind of love that arises out of the intensely human need of two persons to communicate with each other, and to understand their relationship with life itself. But their love defies all categorization in terms of a definite social relationship. With their final realization, they feel that they would fulfil each other’s need. But, ultimately, it is only Tyrone who is able to fulfil his need. As Travis Bogard says: “. . . whatever, there is of tribute in Jamie’s love creates for, her, a solace, not unlike that, which she brings to him( Travis Bogard, Contour in Times, 450).

As for Josie, her desire is doomed to failure, for she cannot love a man who is already dead. She tries to reveal the nature of her tragic fate when she tells her father in the morning that she is like a “Virgin who bears a dead child in the night and the drawn finds her still a virgin” (Eugene O’Neill, A Moon for the Misbegotten, 140-141). In spite of all the difficulties and dissatisfactions, she must live to face the problems of life through the haze of sadness and frustration that hangs over her.

The most important figure, the fated hero of the play, James Tyrone, is the tragic victim of isolation and loneliness. He is haunted by the feeling of guilt that he committed at the time of his mother’s death. After her death, he becomes more helpless and insecure. Early in the play, the characters drop hints about Tyrone being a dead and doomed person. Phil Hogan says about him: “He’ll suddenly turn strange,
and look sad, and stare at nothing as if he was mourning over some ghost inside him” (Ibid. p. 39). But Josie’s description of him, when she compares him to “a dead man walking slow behind his own coffin” (Ibid., 41), is more telling. The fact that Tyrone is no more than a corpse is brought out when Josie, after kissing him, says, “It’s like kissing a corpse” (Ibid., 54).

He is a lonely man, haunted by his own ghosts, trying desperately to exorcise them. But the shadows of his past will not let him breathe in freedom. For him, there is no hope but oblivion. He is probably the least dramatic of any of O’Neill’s protagonists; his role in the play is a long self-analysis, an endless case history of self-hatred and alienation. He, like Jamie in Long Day's Journey into Night, wears two masks. O’Neill describes him as follows:

. . . his face a certain Mephistophelean quality which accentuated by his habitually cynical expression. But when he smiles without sneering, he still has the ghost of a former youthful irresponsible Irish charm — that of the beguiling ne’er-do-well, sentimental and romantic (Ibid., 42).

With this duality, when he talks about his tragic suffering to Josie, he alternates between his two selves. Expansive at one moment, submissive at another, he does not know his real identity and withdraws from both the selves. One mask reveals his disintegration with the self, and another exposes his self-hatred. Oscillating between both the masks, he becomes an alien to his present reality. He himself admits: “There is no present or future — only the past happening over and over again — now. You can’t get away from it” (Ibid., 115-16).

Tyrone himself accepts the fact that he has been virtually dead since his mother died. He expresses his guilt to Josie in terms of his life-long hatred of his father, love, and guilty, longing for his mother. About his relationship with his father, he speaks to Josie: “. . . I hated him, anyway — as much as he hated me” (Ibid.,116).
After the death of his father, he stopped drinking for the sake of his mother because she did not like it at all. But when she became ill, James again started drinking. To his ill-luck, his mother discovered it before her death, and this filled him with a sense of guilt. James tries to forget the incident, but he always fails in his attempt. He expresses his tragic agony by remembering his mother at the time of her death in those words:

But there are things I can never forget — the Arthur Hobson Quinn undertakers, and her body in a coffin with her face made up. I couldn’t hardly recognize her . . . practically a stranger. To whom I was a stranger. Cold and indifferent. Not worried about any more. Free at last. Free from worry. From pain. From me (Ibid., 131).

For James, this is the beginning of his misery. The final realization comes after his physical involvement with the whore in the train while carrying the body of his mother. After this incident, he is tortured by a sense of guilt constantly. He never finds any peace. Life becomes meaningless to him.

Tyrone’s passionate attachment with Josie under the moonlit night is nothing but the result of his love for his mother. Although, for a night he is able to achieve his lost mother’s love through Josie, but he realizes that it is almost impossible to achieve it permanently. It is the fulfillment of his desire of lost mother’s love in a state of illusion, which is never possible in reality. So, he must leave Josie, and must live to face the bitter consequences of the life in a state of solitude.

The theme of isolation and loneliness is well projected through the dramatic technique used by O’Neill. Like almost all his other plays, the setting of the play is both realistic-and symbolic. The action of the play takes place in a farmhouse. The playwright describes it thus:

The House is not, to speak mildly, a fine example of New England architecture, placed so perfectly in its setting that it appears a harmonious part of the landscape, rooted in the earth. It has been moved to its present site, and looks it (Ibid., 11).
The house is symbolic of man’s desolation and alienation from nature. The central conflict in James — between his youthful, irresponsible charm and his middle-aged self-destructiveness — is paralleled by the tension in the contrasting element of the setting. The window panes of the house are missing. The setting, on the whole, is an image of Tyrone’s helplessness and is withdrawal from the mainstream of life. Another significant part of the setting is provided by a big boulder with a flat-top, close to the house under the window next to Josie’s bedroom. The boulder is a complex symbol, suggesting many different things. On the one hand, it is a symbol of Josie, on the other; it suggests the hard life of Hogans. Like the boulder, Josie is destined to stay in the farm house, separated from the outer world that lies beyond the house.

Characteristic of many, if not all, of Eugene O’Neill’s plays is his portrayal of neurotic or self-divided individuals, people who cannot approach wholeness until they first learn self-acceptance. In this respect, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is typical, for both James Tyrone and Josie Hogan discover through each other that they possess within themselves the means for achieving such acceptance.

In an earlier play about the Tyrones, *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, Mary Tyrone, mother and morphine addict, says to her younger son, “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.” Elsewhere she expresses such fatalism when talking about her elder son, James Tyrone, Jr., when she says, “He can’t help being what the past has made him.” Mary herself is haunted and consumed by her past, just as her elder son James is in this later play; thus it is not surprising when Tyrone says to Josie, “There is no present or future—only the past happening over and over again—now. You can’t get away from it.” Whereas his mother used morphine to escape herself and her present life, Tyrone
uses alcohol and sex to kill all thoughts about how he failed his mother. He failed her by becoming an alcoholic, by not crying over her death, by attempting to forget the loss through drunkenness and whoring, and by blaming her for dying and leaving him alone. In other words, for Tyrone there is no present or future because he is being consumed by his feelings of guilt about the past. He is impelled into Josie’s arms because he needs to forgive and be forgiven, and because Josie is, he says, “like her [his mother] deep in your heart.”

Although Josie is strong and maternal, she is also self-consciously large and—she thinks—unattractive as a woman. To compensate for her appearance, she has affected a hard, bawdy, and promiscuous self-image; she pretends to have gone to bed with numerous local men, none of whom contradicts her tales for fear of losing face among other men who supposedly have been to bed with her. She knows that Tyrone is accustomed to being with prostitutes, and she mistakenly thinks that she must seem like one of them to get him to desire her as a woman. Only gradually—after he has revealed his great grief and guilt regarding his mother—does Josie come to understand that Tyrone does not need her as a woman, but in a nonsexual way. Indeed, not only does she confess to him that she is a virgin, but she also realizes that the love he needs from her is, because it demands she subordinate her own personal desire for him, “the greatest of all—because it costs so much.” Josie proves herself equal to such a selfless love’s demands; she listens to Tyrone’s tortured confession and as his mother’s surrogate forgives him: “As she forgives, do you hear me!” Josie says to Tyrone. “As she loves and understands and forgives!”

Like its setting, the title, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, is also aptly suggestive. So far as the word ‘misbegotten’ is concerned, it refers to the person at the bottom of the society and can rightly be applicable to Josie and James. Their conditions clearly
convey that they are no or better than the misbegotten. The moon, throwing its soft
light over the two misbegotten creatures, symbolizes the world of human values, of
understanding, pity, love and forgiveness, required to save life from utter despair and
emptiness. In spite of all the glooms and frustrations that surround them, they find a
glimpse of meaning in their strange love and understanding of each other. But the
irony is that the moon, which has united the misbegotten lovers, separates them with
its disappearance.