CHAPTER VI
LONG DAY’S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT.

As Eugene O’Neill had already mentioned that the play is of old sorrow written in tears and blood. Every character bleeds rather suffers in the play. It is interesting to observe the various predicaments in the play which ultimately turn into a tragedy. In the play O’Neill has presented extraordinarily vital characters with equal sharpness.

*Long Day’s Journey Into Night* is one of Eugene O’Neill’s later play. He wrote it for his wife on the occasion of their 12th wedding anniversary in 1940. The play was written in part as a way for O’Neill to show the world what his family was like and in what sort of environment he was raised. O’Neill wanted to create a play that would clay forth his own background in a forgiving nature, which is why he strove not to bias the play against any one character. The drama is very similar to O’Neill’s family situation as a young man, but more importantly it has become a universal play representing the problems of a family that cannot live in the present, mired in the dark recesses of a bitter, troubled past. Because of its deeply personal nature, O’Neill requested that the play be published posthumously, which meant that the play was not revealed to the world until O’Neill’s death.
Eugene O’Neill has always been seen as one of the greatest American playwrights. He was the only American dramatist to be awarded the Nobel Prize, an honor not bestowed upon either Arthur Miller or Tennessee Williams, two other American playwrights. He won the Pulitzer Prize for four plays including *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*. His other best known plays are *The Iceman Cometh*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Ah! Wilderness! Strange Interlude*, and *The Hairy Ape*. O’Neill was a huge Broadway success during his own life.

In *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* O’Neill at last faces the truth of reality, which had not only alienated him from the family and the world, but had also initiated him into art’s secret ways possessing the world. There is nothing lachrymose about the play which is bitter as a tear. If he had written it a decade earlier (it was actually completed in 1941) he would most probably have employed masks, asides and elaborate mythic devices to hide his injury and mitigate the muted anguish of self-punishment. That he had spiritually mellowed since *Days Without End* is indicated by the quality of mercy which softens the near nihilistic outlook of *The Iceman*, and by the increasingly common perception and acceptance of life’s foibles, as demonstrated by *A Moon* and *A Touch of The Poet*. The predominant tone of his spiritual autobiography is one of compassion tempered with understanding and of forgiveness for all the benighted “Tyrones”. In making the play a gift rather than a dedication, of the play to his wife, he writes:
Dearest: I give you the original script of this play of old sorrow, written in tears and blood. A sadly inappropriate gift, it would seem, for a day celebrating happiness. But you will understand. I mean it as a tribute to your love and tenderness which gave me faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play---write it with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones.

These twelve years, Beloved One, has been a Journey onto Night—into Love (7)

With new courage released by his faith in love, O’Neill finally strips his human beings to their naked selves, and makes them confront chaos and old night. By the deployment of symbols of pure primitive power, and the dramatic concentration of action into a telescoped dimension of historical space-time, he transcends the simple realism of domestic tragedy. The four Tyrone’s recede into a single harrowing night, enclosed outwardly by the dimly lit mid-region of two fixed doorways, thus participating the strange interlude of all life, which lies between birth and death, and in the dialogue of the present between the past and the future.

Outside is the fog, “of a mournful whale in labor,” with its heart-beat, the fog-horn, like an Eternity bound by the clanging chains of Time. And the language of these fog-children, coming in drifting reverberations of the same pointless accusations stated over and over again, is altogether
appropriate to their character and situation. Living in a house that is no longer a home, the members of the family are strangers among themselves. One’s failures are blamed on the others, and when the chorus of the fog-horn and harbor-bell calls attention to their double responsibility, the blames of all are guiltily accepted by each one in turn. As Mary tells Cathleen:

MARY: I really love fog……it hides you from the world and the word from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you any more… it’s the foghorn I hate. It won’t let you alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning you, and calling you back. (87)

All have a past, but none any future except as an extension of the disquieting memory of a guilty past.

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. (88)

The march of time has for each one become a retreat in spirit; and when illusion induced by alcohol or narcotics, is removed, they suffer a total loss of self and will. The father’s wallet and the mothers wedding gown are reminders of those fixed points, at which life has held them as it thralls. The mother has lost her glasses, her very vision; the younger son his health; the elder son has run to seed before his time. As the long day advances into he still vexed heart of night, the precarious hegemony of the family breaks down beyond recovery.
All identity is lost, all communication throttled. The dreaded climax they have tried to avoid comes with an avenging, accusing fury:

The hardest thing to take is the blank wall she builds around her. Or it’s more like a blank fog in which she hides and loses herself. Deliberately, that’s the hell of it! You know something in her does it deliberately—to get beyond our reach, to be rid of us, to forget we’re alive! It’s as if in spite of loving us she hated us! (91)

Running throughout the play as a repetitive pattern, is the dialogue between recrimination and exculpation. The familial resentments become confessions, and the excuses become self-accusations. Love and hate become so dangerously subversive of each other, that finally all the improvisations of a functional relationship among themselves as family are frustrated. The house becomes a bridge to cross over, rather than a dwelling-place. There are apparently no resting places in O’Neill’s dark journey; and at the end is a fog.

The portentous calm at the opening scene of the play is disturbed by the prospect of Edmund’s having to enter a sanatorium, and by the more dreadful possibility of the mother’s relapse into drug addiction as a consequence. The doctor’s pronouncement whose nature everybody
anticipates with a foreboding lucidity of instinct, but is afraid to face, releases a chain of bitter, agonizing pronouncements against one another.

The location of responsibility is always sought outside oneself. Mary blames her husband’s bohemian life for making the house a boarding house, herself a physical wreck, James a wastrel and Edmund an invalid. His stinginess has made him irresponsible at home, and an innocent abroad. At the same time she unconsciously attributes the family misfortune to Edmund’s birth, which has brought about her rheumatism, to alleviate which she has had to take drugs. The father is of a more durable substance, not without a certain craggy grace of character; and yet he blames the false pipe dream of his wife, and the Broadway philosophy of his Jamie, and the Baudelairean morbidity of Edmund, for the ills of the family:

When you deny God, you deny hope. That’s the trouble with you. (39)

Edmund blames the father for running away from himself:

Yes, facts don’t mean a thing, do they? What you want to believe, that’s the only truth! (47)

Tyrone accuses Jamie:

The worst he can suspect is the only truth for him. (31)
Jamie interprets the father’s unusual generosity to the sick boy as a guilty, calculated coup de grace. Thus, endlessly, they get into the same vicious circles they are trying to avoid. Inevitably, the family is fated to ruin, and be ruined.

The accusations recoil against the accusers, who become explosively guilty, and seek reprieve for each other by exonerating the family, and shifting the blame to forces and events in a universe beyond their power or understanding. Mary tells her husband:

MARY: James! We’ve loved each other! We always will! Let’s remember only that, and not try to understand what we cannot understand, or help things that cannot be helped---the things that life has done to us we cannot excuse or explain. (58)

She can forgive for everything, but she cannot forget; the strength of love is defeated by the power of time. She, however, admonishes her sons for sneering at their father, and reminds them of the bleak past he had himself come through.

*Long Day’s journey into Night* is O’Neill’s autobiographical masterpiece with the longest gestation period of any of his works; it was the
play he unconsciously, was aching to write when he first turned playwright in 1912. What *Long Day’s journey into Night* meant to him can be summarized in the lines a play, “of old sorrow, written in tears and blood” meant to its creator may be guessed at from his wife’s Carlotta’s account of the work’s genesis:

The night he told me he was going to write the play about his family. It was the thing that haunted him. He was bedeviled into writing it… He had to get it out of his system, he had to forgive whatever it was that caused this tragedy between himself and his mother and his father…. When he started *Long Day’s journey into Night* it was the most strange experience to watch a man being tortured everyday by his own writing. [1947:50]

Arguably, many of the playwright’s earlier works, from his first full length play, the crudely autobiographical *Bread and Butter* through *Beyond the Horizon, All God’s Chillun Got Wings, Desire Under the elms, The Great God Brown* and *Mourning becomes Electra* can be seen in retrospect as works of apprenticeship for the profound exploration of the relationship between himself and his parents found in *Long Day’s journey into Night*.

At the heart of both playwrights’ obsession with the family is the relation between father and son, although it must be quickly added that for O’Neill relation between mother and son is at least significant.
Travis Bogard has a point to make about the play being autobiographical:

O’Neill used the stage as his mirror, and the sum of his work comprises an autobiography. [1972:26]

By the time he wrote *Long Day’s journey into Night*, O’Neill’s vision of his father was tempered with the perspective of time and his father’s death. Despite Mary’s recriminations concerning Tyrone’s drinking, selfishness and parsimony, his confession in the play’s harrowing fourth act reveals him as a victim of his own poverty-filled past, rather than as a tyrant: Yes, maybe life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake ruined my carrier as a fine actor. I’ve never admitted this to anyone before, lad, but tonight I’m so heartsick I feel at the end of everything.

Although, Tyrone blames for their failures, they are unable to renounce it. Pleading the helplessness against necessity, they all try to direct it to a purpose, whether it leads to self-willed catastrophe, or provide an escape from the obligations of human freedom.

It is this conflict between the absolutism of a neutral, indifferent universe, and the human need for attaching to it to an identifying role, which
gives a convincing tragic dimension to the biographical theme. When the hopeless hope of the mother’s recovery is shattered, and the fiction of a last chance is pricked, life turns on these lost souls with an elemental clarity, kindling in each a contrary awareness of oneself. And as each character reveals and recognizes a sphere of individual responsibility in the general disaster, a shade of personal blackness in the gathering night of all, a last confession flickers forth, making the darkness a little visible.

The writer’s achieved aloofness from his memories and the audience’s foreknowledge about the outcome of the tale assure it a continuity of human action beyond the narrative present, and also give the play an added dimension of overall dramatic irony. The tragic vision of inseparability of damnation and salvation in human destiny is sharpened by the concreteness of actuality; for out of such travail of life had the proven hero-as-artist finally emerged. When the last judgment in the play ends, a spiritual identity begins to take shape, a new insight, of the old sorrow. As confession after confession is made by the Tyrones, all the haunted heroes and heroines of the writer’s dramatic work appear in a synoptic recall and explore and recognize their origins. *Long Day’s journey into Night* is O’Neill’s book of genesis; yet it is also an epitaph. As Doris Faulk Observes:

It is an epilogue---a subdued, heart-rending coda sounding the themes of the entire canon. [1958:63]
Young Edmund’s resolve to cross the fog and reach forth light is the first moment of O’Neill’s self-question voyage, in looking backward upon which he saw warmth and tenderness, but no trace of self-pity. The identifying images of the parents and sons are reduced to their essences, demonized and angelized by turns, and then shuffled with each other and further differentiated in flash of self-revelation upon flash of self-recognition, until, the cumulative impact of illuminations, there emerges a complex fable of ma’s search of his lost soul. In the process, O’Neill’s own family life assumes it’s own proper mythic eminence.

In this universalized personal myth, Mary Tyrone is the composite image of the two generic types of womanhood presented throughout O’Neill’s work. She is the suffering, enduring Mother-Earth, the mother of all O’Neill mothers. But she is not at peace with herself to be able to give the peace and comfort her son’s long for in her. Her hair—which used to be the symbol of the pre-natal warmth and security—has now turned grey with age and guilt; and her return to narcotics deprives them of their own power to face the reality. As James laments:

JAMES: I suppose I can’t forgive her---yet. It meant so much. I’d begun to hope, if she’d beaten the game, I could too. (162)
And Edmund who has needed her love so much, must now roam in the realm of fancy, for he utters:

EDMUND: Yes she moves above and beyond us, a ghost haunting the past, and here we sit pretending to forget, but straining our ears listening for the slightest sound, of a rundown crazy lock---or like the dreary tears of a trollop, spattering in puddle of stale beer on a honey –tonk table top (152)

She is also the eternal Girl-Woman, whose ego-ideal is drawn from her original state of childhood innocence and premarital virginity. Her purity has been offended by marriage, and her zest for life smothered by motherhood. In her passage from a sheltered girlhood to sheltered invalidism, she has lost herself. As she tells her maid:

MARY: How could you believe me –when I can’t believe myself? I’ve become such a lair. I never lied about anything once upon a time, now I have to lie, especially to myself. But how can you understand when I don’t myself. I’ve never understood anything about it’ except that one day long ago I found I could no longer call my soul my own. (93)

At the end of her regressive plunge into the past, she unconsciously, rejects her marriage, and relapses into that irrevocable moment of ecstasy
when she had seen the vision of the Blessed Virgin “on the little island in the lake”. But her return to faith has been a drug induced retreat from life; and in the mean time she has left her family a heritage of guilt fear and alienation, and an excruciating sensitivity which wavers between idealism and despair:

MARY: None of us can help things life has done to us. They’re done before you realize it, and once they’re done they make you do other things till at last everything comes between you and what you’d like to be, and you’ve lost your true self forever. (61)

The father James Tyrone the ancestor of the proud, power hungry and tyrannical father of O’Neill’s drama, is similarly a complex figure. He too, has lost his true self in the optical illusion. In trying to establish his identity in an alien culture, he has, like Emperor Jones outdone the Yankees in the ambitious pursuit of success, wealth and real estate. In doing so he has ruined his art and his family; he is reduced to a matinee idol, and a penurious patriarch. In trying to hold life where he wants. He resorts to alcohol in trying to overcome his guilt and shame. He too at the end of the day rejects his genteel mediocrity and says thus:

JAMES: I’d be willing to have no home but the poor house in my old age if I could look back now on having been the fine artist I might have been. (151)
But, then, he has already transmitted to his children the burdens of egotism and humiliation, sin and guilt and self-pity and remorse.

The first born, Jamie, is an especially doomed victim of duality, for he has no pipe dream to cherish, no value to project the gloomy side of life. With no regrets for the past, and no cares for futurity, he is entirely a creature of the moment, so self-denuded of human aspiration as to become a complete cynic. Yet some obscure inner craving for justice and integrity makes him confess to his brother and warn is him:

JAMIE: But you’d better be on your guard. Because I’ll do my damnedest to make you fail. Can’t help it. I hate myself. Got to take revenge. On everyone else. Especially you….. the man was dead and so he had to kill the thing he loved. That’s what it ought to be. The dead part of me hopes you won’t get well. Maybe 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. (173)

Jamie is O’Neill’s archetypal demon-hero, and is the germ of all the serpent-tongued, life-denying characters, and all the self abrasive necromantic masks of O’Neill’s plays. Edmund, the future artist, has had his own intimations of nothingness too. As he tells his father:
EDMUND: It was a great mistake, my being born a man. I would have been much more successful as a sea-gull or a fish! (132)

But, because he has faced it’s penultimate death, and experienced its power, he absorbs the compounded pain of all the Tyrones, whose collective “Frankenstein” his imaginative work is ordained to be. There is no way to pluck out these rooted memories, except to accept them as material for artistic presence. Beauty is indeed a parallel catastrophe; for like a dream drunkenness and death art is also pre-planned with infinite sorrow. And how despairing and agonizing for the soul the torment of artistic vision can be stated by Edmund himself:

EDMUND: I dissolved in the sea became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moon-light and the ship and the dim-starred sky! I belonged without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life of man, to Life! (148)

Given his nature and circumstance, the vision of radiance and harmony must be an inevitable love-hate affair with his own agony: and to be an artist is to experience a double alienation; from the family and from the society. And there is too the possible expense of vision in the expressive dilemma of having to tell so much by so little:
I just stammered that’s the best I’ll ever do. I mean, if I must live. Well, it will be faithful realism at least. Stammering is the native eloquence of the fog people.(148)

*Long Day’s journey into Night* is a tragedy of irony in a sense that it combines fated reality with self-willed illusion, self conscious guilt with the destructive mentality of the self. It is a tragedy of memory rather than a tragedy of action; for the characters have already reaped the fruits of their actions before the play opens; and their fall and consequent guilt are presented not as a result of violating any structure of law, but as an unavoidable association of their “human being” Classical tragedy rests on the cruciality of choice made by the protagonist, so that his fate is determined by his act of foreswearing the rest of the vitalitie of life.

The concept of choice necessarily presupposes the categories of value, and the tragedies of the Greeks and the Elizabethans center on the stated of implicit values attached to nature, the universe and the being. Freedom in a controlled universe has for them a recognizable allegorical or sociological configuration of the tragic paradox. But the modern world as presented by O’Neill is characterized by the absence of values; and hence the preclusion of meaningful choices. Conflict in the old sense of the term , as applied in the modern context, can only mean the unedifying stalemate of “ignorant hosts clashing by night.” O’Neill’s tragedy is not so much a tragedy of human disproportion as it is one of “no proportions at all.”
Hamlet ever lost sight of his true self; he is rather caught between two opposing selves clearly defined in the consciousness. On the contrary, the Tyrone’s have lost their true selves, and there is really no possibility of conflict since the two selves never occur or exist together. Their tragic outcry is the voice of “the absent brother” as Edmund remarks. They are too dimly aware of their deep traumas to realize the limit and extent of their responsibility without drifting away from the reality. They remember when they are asleep, but they forget when they are awake.

In Long Day’s journey into Night there are no victims nor villains, but only dreamers all waking to reality in the sublunar moments that glimmer between dreamless sleeps and sleepless dreams. Their proper element is illusion, which is a proper negation of truth nor a surrender to a falsehood, but rather a composite awareness of two planes of reality. Their tortuous repetitions, which acquire progressive depths in meaning dramatically, are, from the point of self-knowledge, ineffective excursions into the shallows of meaninglessness.

The mounting tension of ragged emotions and piled up angers, culminating in ominous pauses of silence and apathy, is quite in character with their plunge into the night of nothingness. A shift in O’Neill’s understanding of life is indicated by the difference between the climatic scenes of Strange Interlude and Long Day’s journey into Night. While Nina
claims her three men, Mary renounces hers. Nina’s exhaustion is the triumph of romantic agony; Mary’s its defeat. Nina’s self-recognition is the poignant awareness of a biological terminus in the process of fulfilling herself; Mary’s is the deeper acknowledgement of a spiritual ultimate, in which one’s self is nothing or ceases to exist.

Once again, as in The Iceman, O’Neill is led in Long Day’s journey into Night to validate the puritan assumption of man born to sin, and his forever standing in the need of grace. Although Mary herself cannot have any sustaining remedy for her ills other than an elusive vision of the Virgin she longs to be O’Neill’s imaginative identification of mother’s beatitude which had proved to be fruitful in his art. In presenting the inner core of the family tragedy as solitude and nullity, O’Neill dramatizes in the genesis of his own career the possibility of value. For, the encounter with nothingness makes him the artist he had come to be; the pattern of a crucial period of life as Weissman writes, The pattern of a life time.

Long Day’s journey into Night is a play within a play enveloped by an almost numinous irony, confessing a failure that had produced the success, the dark journey that had proved the journey into light. Ever denial of its inner drama is counteracted by the affirming voice of the accomplished. The sensation of being in enclosed place, felt in Edmund’s anguished desire to dwell as a pair of ragged claws in the seas bottom, is offset by the Icarian sensations of horizons, quickening O’Neill’s
speculative and technical restlessness and experimentation, which serves as an implicit thematic premise in the play.

If man is the slave of duality; he has the freedom of irony; if he is born to doubt his very capacity to question becomes an expression of positive side of his humanity. Without it, man had rather be the performing seal, whose honesty to earn its daily fish is so warmly admired by Jamie. For O’Neill art had not been an escape, but a rebirth, and a renewal of he self. Art had been his grace; and his most intensely felt life-moment had become verily the myth of his art. In so interweaving the two, he is able to sound the deeper depths of universal life. In his search for his lost other, he is also seeking o lost faith; and every time he finds a faith, he reconciles the child to the mother. Two natures blended thus become a creative unity.

*Long Day’s Journey into Night* has a far-reaching significance, because it throws O’Neill entire dramatic output into perspective. The conception of tragedy as flowing from family fate; the thematic assumption that the conflict within the individual rests on the inevitable ambivalence of the transmitted traits of masculine and feminine; the opposition of the mother-identified idealist and the father-identified cynic; and the view of illusion as a subjective transformer of objective reality; these are all deeply rooted in the family drama of the Tyrones.
Indeed the four Tyrones have an impressive genealogy in the O’Neill canon, constituting, as it were, his own enchanted “square deific.” Captain Keeney, Bartlett, Ephraim Cabot, Ezra Mannon, Phil Hogan and Con Melody are all variations on Tyrone, Sr. Emma Crosby, Abbie, Margaret and Cybel, Miriam, Nina, Christine, Mrs. Fyfe, and the feminine deus ex machina of *The Iceman*, and Josie and Nora are all patterned after the synchronic archetypal image of Mary. On the other hand, Robert and Andrew Mayo, Yank, John Loving and Larry and Hickey are studies of the Tyrones brothers, who have so entered each other’s personality as to become completely interchangeably. *Long Day’s Journey into Night* will naturally be subjected to an intensive biographical scrutiny for the critics; and meanings will be read into the author’s omissions and commissions, the truth and distortions in his interpretations of the people in real life. But even more important than mere biography is perhaps its artistic transfiguration; for it is the latter that raises a life-story to the level of myth, and gives it its universal validity.

One of the functions of myth is that it furnishes recognition scenes in which we have the thrilling experiences of coming face to face with a disinherited part of ourselves. If O’Neill had been able to verbalize his own agon, and that of his family with retrospective pity, and sympathy and understanding, he had already used his entire dramatic effort as a syntactical projection of the personal mythos. Refusing to deal with the mere surfaces of life, he had constantly endeavored to demonstrate modern ma’s disinheritance. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, his book of the dead, is a
drama of total recognition, unfolding itself through scene after scene of poignant self-recognition. There are troubled acknowledgements of human alienation, loss of values, and breakdown of communication, isolation, and nothingness.

Cast as prophecy for the young O’Neill, it is full of premonition for the mature but sick O’Neill with the shades of the final night closing in on him. In spite of the intimately personal nature of the theme, he had achieved an extensive objective correlative, unrivaled in any of his previous work. Because of its rounded perfection, both as a personal testament and as an art, Long Day’s Journey into Night will perhaps remain his most important play, a human document throbbing with the poignancy of life and the intensity of powerful drama.

Man is the forlorn child of creation, thrown upon the rudderless expanse of loneliness. He cannot go back, for he does not have advantage or Brute’s total subservience to natural law. Onward he cannot go for his being is geared to a Time which moves him in “lazy circles.” The retreat into his own psyche is equally terrifying, for it is divided beyond repair. He has no sense of belonging, while the very essence of his humanity is the urge to belong and establish a relationship between himself and the universe. The dregs of society in The Iceman and the lost-souls of Long Day’s Journey into Night re-enact the alienation of The Hairy Ape and Moon of the Caribbees.
But to view these last plays as no more than a repeat performance is to ignore the additional spiritual insight which the writer had acquired during a generation of unsparing soul-searching. O’Neill’s early heroes are victims of outside force which in conspiracy with their inner drives frustrates the sustaining cogency of their particular situation in life. At the bottom of things, they perhaps belong as Yank does.

The characters in the middle period of the dramatist seek to create a sphere of illusion in terms of self-transcendence, self-expansion or a convenient god head, in order to protect themselves against an offending reality. But truth always comes breaking in, until, in Days Without End, it becomes increasingly clear that illusion is powerless against a self-awareness to which man is by his very nature committed. Not for him immorality, even at the price of illusion, which, alas, is too mortal. Whether on the outposts of life, or in the inner depths of psyche man has no escape from essential contrariness of his being.

From Yank’s ruin to Lazarus’s vision, from Emperor Jones fall to Loving’s crucifixion O’Neill has fully dramatized the whole sweep of human duality ranging from the uninformed passion of the man who wants so much but gets so little, but craves so much. Working with the same tragic paradox he moves on from naturalistic to existentialistic premises so that man is now presented more as an understudy of his own tormented being
than as a creature of the stars. Illusion and reality are both subsumed by the neutralizing power of the truth, and man’s redemptive need centers crucially on truth not as law, but as grace.

In *Long Day’s Journey into Night* Eugene O’Neill has presented a family drama—an autobiographical and pitiless exposure of the heart-break house in which he was brought up and conditioned during his youth.

In the revelation that his father, a famed and grandiloquent matinee idol, was a niggardly miser, that his mother was an incorrigible drug addict that his older brother was a dissolute drunkard, and that he himself was a consumptive. It took real courage and genius to overcome such a bleak and destitute environment and win over the Pulitzer Prize for the playwright.

Though our esteem rises for the over-all career and contributions of O’Neill to the world’s dramatic Literature it dives below expectations when we examine his last document as it has been said of the play *Long Day’s Journey into Night* that is harrowing and savagely written as a study of an embittered family, is a play that will not rank with “*Mourning Becomes Electra*”, *Strange Interlude*, and some of the dramatists other plays.
Perhaps it is the very nature of the work that preludes trenchant and compact elevation, and that prevents it from evoking the feeling of catharsis of exaltation of the manner of the great Greek Tragedies. O’Neill is writing of his own family and every time one of the characters flays the other’s, or causes a scar, he or she penitently softens the sting by begging to be forgiven. This continuous interplay of wounding and healing, of hate and affection reveals O’Neill’s compassion and understanding for his mother and father and brother but at the same time it detracts from the tensions that are inherent in the play and that are developed only in the final of the four marathon acts.

Structurally, the play seems to be loose and dismays the auditor with its tendency towards repeating and elaborating salient facts already established. But there is greatness in the waiting too, and flashes of the O’Neill before illness brought his wonderful career to an end. The heart to heart talk between the father and the young son, explaining the fathers beginnings in extreme poverty and the need for parsimony which became habitual, is one of the most touching scenes in the play. The confrontations between the two brothers and the mental surgery, the older one performs on the younger one’s heart in exposing his motivations provides another affecting scene. The Ophelia-like episode when the mother, in a narcotic trance, drags her weddings dress just exhumed from attic trunks also sends an emotional tremor through an on-looker.
In all the scenes of bickering and recrimination, there is the saving grace of love affection. But these familial miseries add up to an evening of gloom, which is not saved by any purgative emotional excitement. The appeal of *Long Day's Journey into Night* is mainly owing to the depiction of the inner conflicts of the protagonists in an effective manner. In the words of Dorris Faulk:

The conflict of the forces which the characters must attempt to reconcile or escape is that between the conscious mind and the unconscious---the modern equivalent of fate. The protagonists inevitable failure to control the unconscious mind ultimately makes them the victim of destiny, not triumphant victor like their predecessors. Their struggle is not less heroic; in fact it is more in the tradition of classic tragedy and they approach more closely in the dignity of the classic tragedy hero than do the finders, for they act their symbolic celebration of life they do not see a vision of it or preach it [1958:66]

Dorris Falk has explained the peculiar conception of tragedy that underlines *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. The dramatist has depicted an endless struggle between opposite images of the self and he has suggested the futility of the struggle and the importance of pity and forgiveness. Man is not even endowed with dignity by virtue of his struggle, he is a bare, forked animal, unredeemed by heroism, who spends his life trying to live up to a
lie, trying to perpetuate an illusory conception of himself. All values are equal; neither the self nor its conception has any real existence of importance and all we can ask of each other is pity and forgiveness.

So ends the life long day that dawned with O’Neill searches in the fog children of his mother, Mary Tyrone proceeded with the mad extremists led by his father James Tryone soared to the ecstatic noon with the young Edmund and the finders---before the afternoon Fog settled upon the trapped victims of the family Fate. Hope in religion and in family love briefly shone through in days without end.