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Tragic flaws in Eugene O'Neill's play "Long Day's Journey into Night"

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Abstract: This paper titled 'Tragic flaws in Eugene O'Neill's play "Long Days Journey into Night" deals with the tragic flaws of Characters. This play seems to be intended to identify the most with Edmund. Because Eugene has represented himself as Edmund. The tone of the play toward the other characters is quite a forgiving, which is consistent with Edmund's overall disposition. This comparison makes a lot of sense, when we think about the fact that Edmund is O'Neill's fictional recreation of himself. This play is not a fairytale or an imaginative story. It is Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical play. It has autobiographical element that shows the problems are really faced by common people in the society. The problems which are highlighted through their tragic flaws are very common in all the societies. Each of the Tyrone has at least one tragic flaw with which they're slowly destroying themselves. James is miserly and an alcoholic, Jamie is a gambler and an alcoholic, Edmund has consumption and is an alcoholic, and Mary is addicted to morphine. All these tragic flaws are dealt with the problems of modern society.

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Addiction to Drugs: Alcohol and morphine function (as drugs often do in literature) as symbols of retreat. Basically, no one in the family has anywhere to go – literally or metaphorically – so they have two options: fight or flight. They fight often (especially the male characters), but they also spend a whole lot of time fleeing, turning to drugs and alcohol to hide from reality. We talk about Mary's particular dependence on morphine in her "Character Analysis," so let's get specific with what the Tyrone men are up to.

Mary Tyrone. Mary Tyrone the mother of two sons and the heroine of the play produces more pathos in the play. She is unable to endure the loneliness, which makes her to become a drug addict, she would be glad if her children and husband enter the home. Her reactions were pathetically relieved and eagerness remains. When she is alone, frightened and whispers to herself, "It is so lonely here. You're lying to yourself again. You wanted to get rid of them. Their contempt and disgust were not of pleasant company. You're glad they're gone. (She gives a little despairing laugh). Then mother of God, why do I feel so lonely".

She will be happy if she is get rid of loneliness. In her words "Oh! I'm so glad they've come! I've been so horribly lonely!"

Jamie. Jamie, the first son of the family is not regarded as an addiction by the family but only as a factor of his lifestyle. Jamie started drinking very early in his life, he got rejected from school and obviously his drinking was one of the reasons: "Even after he had begun to drink and they had to expel him, they wrote us how sorry they were, because he was so likable and such a brilliant student". Although Jamie seems to take the news of his mother's relapse quite good, he definitely tries to forget about the family's problems by driving to town and get drunk. Throughout the play, Jamie, unlike the other characters, does not give a reason for his drinking.

Jamie could be using his alcoholism to take away the attention from his mother's addiction and to take away the burden of being in the center of refusal from her.

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James Tyrone. James Tyrone the father of the family used to be a very famous actor who was often touring through the country. Out of Mary's memories one learns that Tyrone always used to drink: "Always a bottle on the bureau in the cheap hotel rooms!" It is evident that with Tyrone, drinking had at the time of his young actor life, when he was just married to Mary, a social function. He used to go out with his "barroom friends" as Mary calls them and to return to drunk to find his way to the "ugly hotel rooms" by himself.

Now, in his older days, Tyrone usually has a drink before lunch as an appetizer: "It's before a meal and I've always found that good whiskey, taken in moderation as an appetizer, is the best of tonics." At the end of the play, Tyrone is drunk and from Mary's remark it becomes obvious that this is probably quite likely to happen oft: "I know what to expect. You will be drunk tonight. Well it won't be the first time, will it - or the thousandth?"

According to psychologist's judgments, denial is an often reported sign of addiction which has become the tragic flaw of his character.

According to her, alcohol in the context of barrooms often has the function of creating a feeling of unity and togetherness, so that personal and hierarchical differences can be forgotten for the time being drunk.

The play is all the more tragic because it leaves little hope for the future; indeed, the future for the Tyrones can only be seen as one long cycle of a repeated past bound in by alcohol and morphine. This play was awarded the Pulitzer Prize when it was first published, and it has remained one of the most admired plays of the 20th century. Perhaps most importantly, it has achieved commercial success because nearly every family can see itself reflected in at least some parts of the play. The Tyrone family is not a unique family, and it is easy to identify with many of the conflicts and characters. The play has a unique appeal to both the individual audience member and to scholars of American drama, which explains its popularity and enduring acclaim.

Edmund (with bitter misery) the hardest thing to take is the blank wall she builds around her. Or it's more like a blank of 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!

Jamie longs for the mother's love, but Mary did not care him. She devoted herself to Edmund and always loved and cared him. Throughout the play Jamie tries to reach for his mother who draws away from him. His love for mother and his need for her affection feed his jealousy of the younger Edmund, 'Mama's baby', as Jamie calls him. This jealousy caused Jamie to corrupt his brother, as his confession to Edmund makes clear.

With painful sincerity, brought on by his advanced state of drunkenness and his sure knowledge of his mother's return to drugs, he warns his brother against himself.

'Mama and Papa are right. I've been a rotten influence. And worst of it is, I did it on purpose'. His confession, like the play, is filled with hatred and love.

"And it was your being born that started Mama dope. I know that's not your fault, but all the same, God damn you; I can't help hating your guts! Then the immediate qualification." But don't get me wrong, kid. I love you more than I hate you. My saying what I'm telling you now proves it. I run the risk you'll hate me-and you're all I've got left"! Declaring that he cannot help himself and that he hates himself, Jamie tells Edmund he will continue to try to make him fail, so watch out – 'get me out of your life'.

Long Day's Journey Into Night exhibits most of these characteristics of modern tragedy; and it goes beyond other plays of the modern American theater in two major respects: first, it involves four tragic characters whose lives are inextricably bound but who are nonetheless decided individuals, complexly and completely depicted and explored; and second, rather than offering only heredity and environment as the partial—and uncontrollable—elements in the destinies of these figures, O'Neill offers a far more profound and abstract additional factor—love. Love binds together the four Tyrones; but love is also at the basis of their tragedy. Were there not love between the members of the family, Jamie and Edmund could leave, James could detach himself from his wife's illness and his sons' problems, and Mary could, in a sense, return to the safety of her girlhood. But, as in Sartre's No Exit, hell for the Tyrones is other people, each other.

All of them in the course of the play express, either explicitly or implicitly or both, a yearning for an isolated existence. The most overt examples of this are Edmund's speeches at the beginning of Act IV in which he admits that all he wants is "to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself." For him, the sea is the epitome of this condition and in his long reminiscence about his experiences at sea he expresses total satisfaction with an existence in which he was alone with nature, with "none of the crew in sight," a time when he belonged "to a fulfillment beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams."

Jamie's continual state of drunkenness is an expression of his longing for isolation; just as Mary's drug addiction implies the same sort of desire to escape the real world and envelop herself in a protective fog. James' escapes are more subtle. In one respect, his refuge is *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the "big money-maker" on which he has squandered his talents. It has enabled him to stop living creatively. His pose as a patrician land-owner also provides him with an escape from his true heritage as a shanty Irishman and makes it possible for him often to dissociate himself from his contemporaries.

But at the same time that he Tyrone seeks escape, they see that it is impossible; they realize that they are hopelessly tied to one another for life. This realization, combined with the desire to escape, produces what is perhaps the major tension in the play, a tension which is expressed primarily in a continual series of expressions of love and hatred on the part of each character. Throughout the play, each Tyrone says and does many things deliberately to hurt another. They strike out at each other like the caged animals that they are; but, in virtually the next breath, they profess deep and genuine affection. This ambivalence provides *Long Day's Journey into Night* with one of its most complex elements.

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