



## Self-Attainment or Self-Delusion? A Study of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*

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**Abstract:** This paper sets out to prove that characters in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* assert themselves, and in the process, disintegrate the family and disrupt social cohesion. It is based on the assumption that O'Neill's characters in this play cannot attain the self without family and societal disintegration. It seems that self-fulfilment and family/social cohesion cannot be achieved simultaneously these characters tend to pay attention to one of these values at a time. Individual frustration precedes instability in the family and societal relationships. The theories adopted as appropriate tools for this paper are Psychoanalytical theory and Deconstruction. This choice is guided by the major preoccupation in the paper. Psychoanalysis helps in analyzing the psychical state of characters in the play before, during, and after the quest. Meanwhile, Deconstruction facilitates the examination of the indeterminacy of the characters' quest for the self in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. One of O'Neill's major concerns is human relationships, especially marriage, and the challenges that usually characterize these relationships. Characters' quest to assert themselves while, intentionally or not, ignoring their family and social responsibilities leads to individualism and self-destruction. O'Neill advocates the harmonization of self questing with unity in the family and social cohesion if self-fulfilment will be achieved.

**Keywords:** Self, self-attainment, self-delusion, O'Neill.

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## INTRODUCTION

Michael Manheim notes in *The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill* that the Post-World-War-Two era was that of despair. Institutions like the family, which this paper analyzes, collapsed (07). Modern men and women became desperate and disoriented because human existence was plagued by meaninglessness. Thus, modern men and women questioned everything including their own values because they felt lost. Consequently, they began to desire a sense of self. Thus, modern American dramatic creations were influenced by this, and dramatists like O'Neill who shared the same sense of loss depicted characters who desperately seek the self for different reasons. Edward. L. Shaughnessy records elements of autobiography found in "Long

Day's Journey into Night" whereby the character of Edmund could be seen as a depiction of O'Neill himself. He confirms that Tyrone, O'Neill's father was an Irish Catholic, an alcoholic, and a Broadway actor. Like Mary, O'Neill's mother was a morphine addict, and she became so around the time O'Neill was born. Likewise, like Jamie in the play, O'Neill's older brother did not take life seriously, choosing to live an alcoholic's life, and the reckless life of Broadway (Bloom, 203). This interweaving between O'Neill's play and personal life accounts for the primordial place of the self in his works. This paper is both interested in the collapse of institutions in the post-World-War years and the quest of the self by modern men and women. It thus brings together these critics' views as it examines O'Neill's ideal of the self which

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reconciles personal achievements with family integrity and social cohesion in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

The problem to be addressed, in this paper, is that characters assert themselves in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and in their quest for this self-attainment, disintegrate the family and society. The paper aims at examining why characters seek the self and how they strive to assert themselves. The article further deconstructs O'Neill's characters' quest in *Long Day's Journey into Night* by showing how this quest hinders family unity and social cohesion. It portrays O'Neill's stance according to which self-attainment is possible only if there is a balance between self-achievement and family/social cohesion. The article seeks to answer the following questions: Why do characters seek the self and to what extent do they achieve their aim in *Long Day's Journey into Night*? How is the striving to construct the self an obstacle to family integrity and social cohesion in this play, and which alternative for self-fulfilment does O'Neill suggest to modern men and women? The paper is based on the hypothesis that characters' attainment of the self is elusive in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* because these characters achieve the self only at the expense of their family's and societal cohesion. That is, it is either one has the self or has the family and the simultaneous achievement of the two is challenging, but utopic to O'Neill.

Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction are the theories appropriate for the analysis of this paper. Psychoanalytical theory enables the chapter to discuss the psyche of the characters as their attempts to become self-made affect their family's cohesion as well as disrupts societal cohesion. Psychoanalysis according to the *Collins English Dictionary*, is a "method of studying the mind treating mental and emotional disorder based on revealing and investigating the role of the unconscious mind" (1245). This theory examines characters and attempts to provide explanations for their observable attitudes and behaviours. Thus, Psychoanalytical view is concerned with the nature of the unconscious investigates the link between an author's work and his emotional characteristics. Thus, it sees a work of art as a revelation of its author's mind and personality. Freud argues that the mind operates both consciously and unconsciously. He locates three types of mental function designated as the id, ego and the superego (1247). He perceived the id as the reservoir of desires, predominantly irrational and the unconscious part of the psyche. He juxtaposes the id and the superego, the part of the psyche that represents the social conventions, parental standards, morality and ethics. The ego is the last part identified by Freud which is the moderator between

the desires of the id and the overbearing force of the superego.

Psychoanalysis came into existence when biographical criticism began to transform into psychological direction. This resulted from the rising interest in the proponents of psychoanalysis. Ian Craib's analyses in *Psychoanalysis and Social Theory* show that Sigmund Freud carried out a scientific research that sought to understand the mind and mental disorder. He was basically concerned with the unconscious aspect of the human psyche (36). Actually, Freud ignited controversies because, no matter the attitude that dominates consciousness, its contrary will turn out to be repressed. And this is what characterizes the functioning of the unconscious. He suggests that the power of motivated men and women lies in the unconscious. Craib quotes Carl Jung's *The Product of the mind* interacts with the situation of his environment to influence his actions. This way, he refers to introversion and extroversion as two opposite attitude types (41). His findings on these two concepts will lead to the understanding of what preoccupies characters in the selected play and the resulting neurosis. Psychoanalytical criticism investigates the link between an author's work and his emotional characteristics. Thus the theory fosters the portrayal of how the behaviour of the fictional characters reflect the author's life.

Besides Freud's Psychoanalytical theory, Deconstruction makes it possible for the paper to examine the undecidability and indeterminacy of O'Neill's characters, in the play, that threatens institutions such as the modern American family and social order. The term deconstruction was coined in 1966 in a paper entitled "Jacques Derrida: Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science." It implies the indeterminacy of meaning while rejecting the idea of the "center." As such, there is no foundation of knowledge on which people base meanings, structures, hierarchies of belief, and understanding (Newton 24). In his, *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida explains that such a "center" allows fixed meaning. For instance, in a structure governed by the centering principle, "truth," everything else is considered falsehood. Derrida further talks about logocentrism which has to do with people's desire for the "center." He avers that people should neither think inside the said "centers," nor out of them. Paul de Man proceeds to discuss the instability of meaning as a component of deconstruction. He notes that, while grammatical language gives the specific meaning of a text, rhetorical language subverts the specific meaning conveyed by the grammar. He thereby distinguishes between "grammar" and "rhetoric" in language. He corroborates his opinion in his *Allegories of Reading* where he observes that writers use tropes to say one

thing, but mean something else (15). So, this provokes ambiguity of meaning in a text. In this paper, the undecidability and indeterminacy of the self-made man archetype as depicted by O'Neill in the play reveal the fact that the concept is partly illusionary.

Many critics have shown interest in the Self. Michael Luntley happens to be one of such critics. In his *Reason, Truth and Self* he affirms that the true modern self is who one is; his characteristics as an individual and his gender. He states that the modern self is therefore not a self that occupies any particular historical, social or cultural milieu. It is rather a possessor of these properties, but it is not constituted by them. The modern self can be understood independent of tradition (152). The modern self that Luntley defines here does not consider one's gender, his beliefs, his social status, or where he comes from. One's essence can thus be felt without the influence of any moral and social institutions and so, he can easily disengage from them. Consequently, this author further specifies that the modern self is a familiar figure which can have crisis of legitimating with regard to its attitude to others. It leads to individualism. It motivates most of the central problems of contemporary society: moral, physical and political predicaments. This self is also interested in the building of attachment to others and the concern for the well-being of something that has to be achieved and justified. Luntley adds that "people's desire for things, people and situations, and the basic emotional strength of these desires are basic facts about the self which are often not subject to reason. This makes the self-possessor of reason and desire" (163). Thus, he proposes the rationality of self which is important in the context of this paper.

Luntley's definition is very important in the context of this paper because it bears on who the characters presented in *Long Day's Journey into Night* are when stripped of accidental circumstances such as social position and historical context. It is the lack of this internal dimension of the self that prompts O'Neill's characters to turn to outward pursuits like the amassing of wealth or the consumption of alcohol for fulfilment. In *O'Neill: Son and Artist*, Sheaffer sheds more light on the external dimension of the self when he refers to it as something that is seldom given; rather it is achieved through frantic efforts made in several domains by someone who feels lost. When these efforts are successful, there is self-attainment. This perception of the self is exemplified in O'Neill's life because he felt he did not belong to the society in which he lived. He therefore tried to be one and indivisible with his wife and family in order to dispel the feeling of being lost. That is probably why Eugene O'Neill, a Twentieth-Century prominent modern American playwright, portrays characters that

wallow in self-delusion, deceiving themselves that self-achievement is possible in individual endeavors that preclude the maintenance of family ties and social cohesion.

### I. The Quest for the Self as an Individual Pursuit

Traditional rationalists think that the quest for the self often emanates from doubts about one's roots which could be provoked by one's family, in particular, and society, in general. Generally, individuals seek the self when they have a problem identifying who they are, their society, cultural community, their family, as well as their profession. The determination to know who one is and to project one's self-image is usually a reaction to discomfort about the way one perceives himself or herself. This subsection of the paper analyzes how characters seek the self. But first, the sub-section looks at characters' motivation for seeking the self.

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Tyrone vividly takes his son, Edmund, and the audience to the past where he developed the zeal to find himself. He confesses that, since he became aware of his responsibility as the "man of the family" at the age of ten, he was never able to believe in his luck (4.1.1353). He first learned the value of a dollar then, and grew into a man haunted all his life by the fear of poverty. The fear of a poor house, of losing his poor mother and siblings to poverty forced him to escape trauma by precipitating his financial independence. Tyrone's adolescence showed him misery that planted distrust in all men and banks, and also taught him the necessity to flee from hunger the moment his mother could not afford food for them and had to say "Glory be to God for once in our lives we'll have enough for each of us!" when some Yank offered her a dollar (4.1.1354). He explains that a dollar was worth so much then. To account for why these experiences had triggered his search for self through financial gain, Tyrone notes that once a lesson is learned; it is difficult to unlearn it. It is therefore tenable to say that men live at the mercy of fate. As Mary puts it, people cannot help being what their past has made them. Hence, the fear of poverty motivates Tyrone to seek the self.

Also, Mary Tyrone is motivated by her past glories to seek self-fulfilment. Aspects of her past such as life in the convent where she had friends, her decent childhood home where friends could visit her and her loving father who offered her a rich life leave her nostalgic. This nostalgia, which is far from reality and her present predicament, urge Mary to find who she is. O'Neill sees in Mary, the modern woman who is completely disappointed at every aspect of her life and how things have turned out to be different from her vision.

Mary's misfortune was that she fell in love with and married an actor. She complains that:

*Oh! I'm so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You (Tyrone) won't help me! You won't put yourself out the least bit! You don't know to act in a home! You don't really want one! Never since the day you were married! You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertain your friends in barrooms! (4.1.1315).*

Mary strongly believes that she would be better as a concert pianist and a nun instead of living with a husband who does not live up to her expectations. At a given point in their marriage, she questions her husband about how many times she was to wait in ugly hotel rooms. According to her, she deserves better than secondhand goods like the automobile which Tyrone got for her as well as a lonely and isolated lifestyle. Besides, she regrets giving birth to Edmund. This is understood when she says that "I never should have borne Edmund" (4.1.1324). Worst of all, her sense of shame, lack of confidence and low self-esteem give her the burning desire to build a new personality. In her own words, she longs to outlive part of her past that has to do with her father's death. Couple with the worries that Edmund is now aware of her drug addiction; she wishes to be someone else without all these thoughts and experiences. Mary is so ashamed of her social status because she lacks a decent flamboyant home in which friends can come, dislikes the town in which they reside as well as the people in it. Consequently, she is cut off from society; without friends, in fact, she states that in a real home one does not feel lonely. All things have turned out to be negative to her greatest dismay. That is why she urgently needs a sense of self.

Again, Mary is unable to come to terms with her body changes –not only does she have rheumatism, but she lives with so much uncontrollable nervousness which attracts attention. As such, she feels humiliated, ugly and inadequate. Meroline Kaka suggests, in "The Self in Modern American Drama: A Study of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and August Wilson's *Fences*. that this physical discomfort gives her the desire to look and live differently, to seek a new self that can restore her self-confidence which she once had. She cannot be a proud mother when Jamie is a drunk and Edmund is living with a fatal illness. This awkward undesired marital situation provokes Mary to want a self that would get the society to see her as a beautiful, confident and fulfilled wife with a husband by her side; a proud mother or better still a pianist or a nun (23). She is a drug addict who is unable to stop her addiction on her own. This makes it impossible for her to love herself. She hopes for a renewed personality that embodies the kind of life situation

which she visualizes- that which is different from the one which is real around her.

In all, Mary's fear concerning Edmund's health; that he probably has the dreaded consumption, her fear that she is constantly watched, and her fear of being left alone with her drug clarifies us about who she is and why she is desperately in search of her true self. She lost her self and worst of all, she can't return to belonging either to her father's house or to the convent where she considers a home and not a house. This Mary's attitude portrays what Sigmund Freud labels the "ego" in psychoanalysis. This theory permits the characters to conceive the need for personality.

It seems, from O'Neill's perspective that nature imposes some difficulties on human beings and when this happens, no one can be blamed for it. In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the death of hope and the pain of loss is a source of suffering for Edmund. This reminds us of naturalistic tendencies that existed in literature and still have a hold on modern men. He persistently complains that he knows how rotten he feels, and the fever chills he gets at night are no joke (4.1.1310).

Mary confirms Edmund's complaint by adding that he "was born nervous and too sensitive. He has never been happy and never will be" (4.1.1324). This sounds like some negative prophecy made by a mother to her son. Thus, there is no need nursing hopes because his health is permanently unstable, if not lost. Edmund feels that he was born in a wrong body and his degenerate need is to walk away from this nightmare. Apart from being a burden to himself, Edmund sees himself as a source of misery for his entire family. He feels responsible for his mother's misfortune; especially when Mary confirms that she never knew what rheumatism was before the birth of Edmund. His illness has seriously contributed to his mother's drug addiction.

The above motivational factors push characters to attain the self. Tyrone actually discovers his talent as an actor. He becomes a matinee idol. Thus, he takes the role of cardboard hero and performs it for decades in a soulless melodrama. He rises from scratch to a point where he pulls crowds. He is virtually worshipped by his fans. He shuns poverty by continuously buying landed property and working on self-improvement. To prove this point, he says that "I worked twelve hours a day in a machine shop learning to make files... I was wild with ambition...I educated myself ...Married your mother. Her love was an added incentive to ambition" (4.1.1354). Tyrone is portrayed at the opening of the play as a loving and caring husband. He does not just love and care for his wife and family for their sakes,

but does this because his family equally defines him as a self-made man who has successfully built a family which he never had. James Tyrone is rich; he owns property valued at “a quarter of a million dollars” (1.4.1321) He does real estate investments. *Long Day's Journey into Night* records, several times, that Tyrone buys a piece of property. He is noted for buying pieces of land to a point where anytime McGuire (Tyrone's friend) has a piece of property on his list, he contacts Tyrone to buy; and his wife and sons state that Tyrone always buys. More to that, Tyrone buys furniture, cars, and pays domestic servants. During an exchange with his father, Edmund tells his father that “Hardy and the specialist know what you're worth” (3.1.1357). Tyrone is recognized as a wealthy man whose pieces of property are all over town. More so, he lifts up the entertainment industry of his time.

Mary's marriage brings her fulfilment above all her initial plans. She explains to her maid servant that “I had a talk with mother Elisabeth... Blessed virgin had smiled and blessed me with her consent. Then... I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time” (3.2.1367). Mary had spoken to mother Elizabeth about her aspirations to become a nun. At the time, she was convinced that she knew what she wanted and she noted that she was very sure of her choice of vocation. Mary thought then that the blessed Virgin Mary had smiled at her, had blessed and had approved her. She had knelt and received her consent. After all her agreement with mother Mary, her plans suddenly changed when she fell in love with James Tyrone and realized that this made her happier than becoming a nun. Mary attains fulfilment through marriage and forsakes any other dream.

Even Mary Tyrone, who eventually becomes his wife, happens to be one of his most dedicated fans. She shares her experience with her servant “Cathleen, you should have seen him when I first met him. He was a great matinee idol then,... You can imagine how excited I was... [She gives a little excited, shy laugh.]... All I wanted was to be his wife” (3.1.1332). Mary testifies that Tyrone was a well-known actor who was famous. This got Mary so excited because, as a famous man, Tyrone was a source of pride. So above everything else, she desired to be his wife. Tyrone, who comes to America as a poor immigrant of obscure origins, achieves upward mobility to a certain status in society. His attempt to become a self-made man gives him social recognition, as well as financial and material ease.

Having married her dream man to become self-made, Mary Tyrone now has the status of a married woman, and is no longer a little convent girl. she shares her memories which reveal the moments

when they complement each other as a couple to Cathleen: “He was a great matinee idol then... I was really very pretty then, Cathleen...he told me afterwards” (3.1.1332). These words reveal the peak of excitement that Mary experiences when she feels that she has attained the ideal. According to her, Tyrone was the most handsome man at that time. Considering that he was a well-known actor, he was famous and the dream man of young girls. Mary was excited because this famous man was a source of pride to her. She was the privileged young lady whom Tyrone picked as his wife amongst all his fans. The attraction was reciprocal because Tyrone also appreciated her beauty. The reciprocity of their love suggests that the passion they share is part of Mary's benefits of self-attainment.

Mary adds that “...my hair...hands! ... they were once one of my good points, along with my hair and eyes, and I had a fine figure, too. They were a musician's hands” (1331). Mary was once at the peak of her beauty. She was as beautiful as a music star. Her bodily features were standard and perfect: from her hair, hands to her smile. Above all, she also had a great figure. As a modern lady, she could not ask for more. As Tyrone's wife, Mary enjoys love and attention. She later becomes the mother of Tyrone's children and they complement each other early in their marriage. He even buys her an automobile. Mary lives with three adult men who are devoted to her. Her sons, just like their father, are proud of her beauty and cherish her gentleness. They get worried when she is ill. Even if the house her husband offers her is just a makeshift summer house, she makes it their home and even keeps a servant. She therefore achieves a certain level of respectability.

Both realize that love is not the only determining factor in marriage. Years later, Mary can still trust that Tyrone is an epitome of fidelity. James Tyrone, who is handsome and popular, undoubtedly faces many temptations. But he never becomes part of the world backstage romances. He remains faithful to his wife. If he had had any, it would definitely be known because of his stardom. This is what Mary says to Cathleen, “...there has never been a breath of scandal about him. I mean, with any other woman. Never since he met me. That made me forgive so many other things” (*Long Day's*, 3.1.1332). Tyrone's steadfast love for his wife, which he has nurtured since they both met, has been strong enough to keep him from going after other women in spite of his exposure. Mary is sensitive enough to this strength to overlook his many other faults. That probably explains why she stays on as his wife despite her disillusionment.

Meanwhile, Mary has always followed and supported Tyrone when he has had to travel around to act, even

against her wish. This gets Tyrone to cherish her company enough to hold on and keep on hoping that she will stop taking morphine and become her old self again. Both make sacrifices to save and sustain their relationship and marriage. Most importantly, Jamie made the educational institution and his parents so proud as a result of his brilliant performance in school. Edmund becomes more accepting of his family, he becomes more understanding and becomes Tyrone's comforter and shows compassion towards his family member's condition.

## II. Self-Attainment as Obstacle to Family Unity and Social Cohesion

Characters in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* quest for the self at the expense of family relationship and social cohesion. As a chauvinist, Tyrone has always put himself and his career ahead of Mary in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. He loves her and depends on her for emotional support, but he has never really considered her feelings. Tyrone forfeits his position as family head because he fails as a provider. He is instrumental in his wife's destruction because he exposes her to addiction. O'Neill cannot understand her complaints, figuring it is the morphine talking when she recounts her disillusionment with her marriage. However, a closer look reveals the shallowness of James Tyrone's love and, conversely, the depth of his love for money. Tyrone is noted for neglecting the environment in which he raises his family. Edmund's criticism says it all: "Jesus, papa, haven't you any pride or shame?" (4.1. 1347).

Due to the urge to hoard money, Tyrone jeopardizes his wife's health by soliciting the services of a "quack." Even though he can afford the bills, he prefers to hoard money instead of getting her duly treated. Therefore Tyrone, and not Mary, should be blamed for the latter's addiction. His dire need to be self-made by breaking the chains of poverty can account for his desire to hoard money. Besides, his desire to save money has not only destroyed his wife by rendering her neurotic, but also causes his children to disrespect him. One can say that O'Neill, in a subtle way, suggests that pride and honour are also derived from one's family. Obviously, the protagonist refuses to sacrifice money, time, attention or any of his precious possessions for his family. He claims he is bankrupt each time he has to take care of his family.

The fact that Edmund can point out his shortcomings as a husband does not only disqualify him, even as a father, but also provokes disregard from his children. Just as he chose a cheap incompetent doctor to treat his sick, pregnant wife, so too does he choose a cheap sanatorium for Edmund because he wants to save money. When Edmund is diagnosed with tuberculosis, Tyrone pays more

attention to the cost of the treatment than to his son's health and, consequently, his life. He schemes to send Edmund to a state's sanatorium. It is clear that this character is so enslaved by his miserliness that he cannot shed it off even when he attempts to. Though he pretends to be concerned only about Edmund's health and interest, and tries to break free from his penny-pinching habit, he does not forget to add that his son's choice of health center should be one which is "within reason" (4.1.1350). In other words, he is asking Edmund to choose another cheap sanatorium. He considers spending money on comfortable hotels, his family members' health or to get a good house as being a waste. Once more he endangers Edmund's life by considering sending him to a cheap sanatorium.

Eugene O'Neill uses a hyperbole to illustrate what a great miser Tyrone is. The latter insistently orders his son to turn out the lights in front of the house at night. To him, leaving the bulbs on is simply "burning up money!" (4.1.1342). It is a waste of money having lights on around the house when it is about bed time. He prefers that they stay in the dark even while they are still awake. When Edmund refuses to turn out one bulb, Tyrone tells him that there is no need to have the house "ablaze with electricity" (ibid). Exaggerating the effect of one lit bulb by equating it to the burning effect of great fire makes the lighting of the bulb undesirable. Of course, the servants of the Tyrone household are not well paid.

Tyrone's family further disintegrates because he also fails as an educator and as a role model. The only education he offers the boys is to initiate them to alcoholism and the loose life of bars and brothels. Because of this, he loses the esteem of his sons and can no longer be their guide and counselor. He totally fails as family head and this makes his family dysfunctional. The disintegration thus ushers in Tyrone's personal degradation. As such, Normand Berlin's says in "The late plays" that it seems that O'Neill uses the play under study to depict the possession and greed which he believed had destroyed the soul of America (Manheim 238).

Tyrone exemplifies the family head who has caused his own family's disintegration. O'Neill gives a detailed description of the family head who is completely shattered. It is significant that he is said to play a card game called "solitaire," the French word for "solitary." The game symbolizes loneliness. This means that Tyrone is a lonely man. He has broken the family bond and thus cannot rely on any of the family members for solace. That is why he turns to alcohol in order to escape from this frustrating situation. Therefore, he gets drunk and stays in a forlorn state. The old dress he has on reveals the height of his frustration. Having sacrificed family ties at the altar

of self-attainment through the hoarding of money, one would expect him to use the money to live well.

Apart from amassing wealth, James Tyrone seeks solace in alcohol. At the end of the play, the stage direction shows that all the three drink too much to calm their individual sense of failure. One of the things he uses his money to get is whiskey which fails to effectively act as an opiate. It does not help him to forget his misery. From the description of Tyrone in the tirade above, he is presented as a confused, exhausted and dejected person. He remains an unhappy, helpless and hopeless old man who has given up on life. Clearly, Tyrone's failure to take proper care of his wife and children as family head because of his individualistic quest for the ideal self has had a boomerang effect on him as he has ruined his chances of being happy as a husband and a father. So, in spite of his wealth, the lack of communion in the family makes him feel lonely.

Meroline Kaka E opines, in "Journey to Self in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*", that the protagonist equally endeavours to attain the self by living through his children. He has been manipulating his children, pushing them into lives they hated in an attempt to bring them the glory he feels he missed. He pushes his sons to make something of their lives to compensate for his inadequacies, but usually in the wrong direction, exploiting rather than assisting them (64). Jamie despises acting, and Edmund sees working on a newspaper as a waste of time. He gets Jamie to be an actor against the latter's wish. The latter remarks that: "I never wanted to be an actor. You forced me on stage" (1.1.1299). Jamie grudgingly submits to his father's choice for him, but he never excels in the theatre. Tyrone is seriously affected by this. It can be stated that, having failed to become the person he would have loved to become, Tyrone attempts to shape his sons' careers in order to rise above his youthful mistakes and consequently form a reputable archetypal self-made image. In many ways, Jamie, named after his father, is a poor shadow of Tyrone. Then since he mostly despises his father for wasting his talent, this leads to even greater self-hatred.

Similarly, in Jamie's quest for the archetypal self-man ideal through self-indulgence, Jamie realizes that, more than sex, he needs company which is lacking in the family. However, this is the way to personal and societal destruction. That is why he does not have sex with Josie Hogan although he pays at the brothel to have her. Yet, there is nothing noble about this relationship. Edmund coins Jamie's selfish striving in these terms: "hunted by himself and whisky, he is hiding in a Broadway hotel room with some fat tart- kidding himself he is superior"

(1.1.1343). It is therefore because he denies the avowed inferiority of his real self that he seeks the company of prostitutes because he feels superior to them. His addiction causes a fragile relationship with his family members because they can barely have an honest conversation. He is always too drunk to show concern for his sick younger brother and his mother. There is no bond between Jamie and his parents and siblings. He attempts to disorientate Edmund by encouraging him to also indulge in a wayward lifestyle. This leaves his parents more disappointed and ashamed of him. So, Jamie's activities create a repulsive feeling in everyone. Consequently, he facilitates family discord.

Alcohol is also an opiate towards which Jamie, like his father and Edmund, turns. At regular intervals, all the male Tyrones scramble over a bottle of whisky. At the end of the play, the three men helplessly sit around a bottle of whisky- drunk and exhausted. If it is only whisky, and opiate that make feelings numb instead of stirring them that brings the Tyrone men together, then it is clear that the family relationship has gone bankrupt. In fact, James is instrumental in causing his younger brother's death at the age of two when he was seven years old. This is known from his mother's accusation that he killed his brother out of jealousy. Jamie likewise misleads Edmund, another act that compromises the family's cohesion.

While the Tyrones hurt each other in an excruciating fashion, it is more from self-defense than any maliciousness, and the saddest aspect, perhaps, is the evident love they hold for each other. O'Neill depicts the Tyrones being gradually encompassed in darkness, as night draws in and their home becomes fogbound. The fog is symbolic of the way in which, not just Mary, but each of them has become isolated and insulated from each other and the outside world. They separate themselves of each other out of embarrassment or disgust, then complain of their loneliness.

Edmund's blame game and unforgiveness fosters personal frustration and hampers family unity. He notes that: "I know damned well she's not to blame! I know who is! You are! Your damned stinginess!" (4.1. 1349). Edmund seriously blames his father for Mary's addiction. He thinks that Mary's addiction could be avoided if Tyrone had not been too greedy to pay for the services of a competent doctor when she fell sick after giving birth to him (Edmund). In as much as this is true he shows no respect by scolding his father outrightly. It appears like name calling when he calls Tyrone a miser and repeatedly tells him that he is to blame. This approach only results in more embarrassment and guilt without any amendment. Hence, the individuals break the family

beyond repair. Mary's drug addiction and her high unfulfilled expectations and Tyrone's greed contribute to the disintegration of their family and society. With Mary's alienation, their marriage is reduced to fragments. They have gradually lost their sense of belonging and commitment to this family that once defined them and made them complete. In despising the natural in her husband and opting for the demented life in which she pushes her children and husband away, she together with Tyrone bring their relationship to a stalemate.

Beyond the family sphere, characters quest for the self in this play disrupts the entertainment industry as well as the religious, medical, and academic institutions. Tyrone and Jamie limit the expansion of the entertainment industry as both discontinue their participation and put their talent to waste. It is noticeable that the acting topic ends, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, as soon as Tyrone quits acting to focus on making money. Tyrone allows the industry to explore his talent until he becomes a matinee idol, but he quits the industry. Later, he brings his son in when it is too late for him to get back. However, Jamie remarks that: "I never wanted to be an actor. You forced me on stage" (1.1.1299). Jamie grudgingly submits to his father's choice for him, but he never excels in the theatre. After failing to promote the entertainment industry with his talent, Tyrone attempts to use his son, yet, to no avail.

Tyrone and his family also fail the religious institution by failing to instruct themselves and raise their children in the Catholic doctrine as much as failing to uphold the moral values. Consequently, they promote waywardness in society through their children's poor standards. The Tyrone's are all addicts to alcohol and morphine instead of feeding their soul with the faith. Tyrone did not train them the right way by going to church and taking them along. While blaming his children for abandoning Irish Catholicism, he claims that "You've both flouted the faith you were born and brought up in- the one true faith of the Catholic Church- and your denial has brought nothing but self-destruction!" After lying about building a christian family, his children proof his dishonesty when Jamie says that "We don't pretend, at this rate...I don't notice you've worn any holes in the knees of your pants going to mass" (4.1.1339). Mary has completely accepted that she disappointed the Virgin Mary and chose to marry Tyrone. She has forsaken her dream to become a nun and the entire doctrine. Even Tyrone who has not shown much faith in Irish Catholicism tells Edmund that "when you deny God, you deny hope" (4.1.1346). In spite of their knowledge of the christian religion, the entire family still lacks moral and spiritual depth.

As if the above were not disruptive enough, Tyrone and his wife damage the reputation of the medical field via drug abuse instead of using drugs to perpetuate a society of mentally healthy individuals. During Mary's illness, Tyrone opts for a fake doctor. It is this doctor who prescribed morphine as an easy solution to Mary's pain and trauma. The drug has numbing effects on Mary as it gives her moments of quietude and this causes her to continuously take it. Edmund laments, saying to Tyrone that: "It never should have gotten a hold on her... you put her in the hands of a hotel quack..." (4.1. 1349). Mary becomes a slave to morphine because of the lapses in the medical field which they encourage. Though the addiction was not her fault, she makes no effort to stop it. The audience only hears the family talking about sending Edmund to a cheap sanatorium, which is another threat to the efficacy of medical science; and it does not even happen. There is no time when a rehabilitation centre is mentioned, in the play, to help Mary out of her addiction.

Jamie, on his own part, suggests the debunking of the academic institution as he drops out of school in spite of his intelligence. Nothing is said about education after Jamie gives it up for alcohol and prostitutes. Since Jamie was initially intelligent, Mary and her husband never expected that he would turn out to be a source of humiliation. Mary states that "after he went to boarding school, we received such glowing reports... All his teachers told us what a fine brain he had, and how easily he learned his lessons... he began to drink and they had to expel him...It's such a pity! (3.1.1335). Though Jamie's good performance at boarding school impressed his teachers for several years, and his teachers praised him to his parents, Jamie's conduct ruined his education and he got dismissed. It is unfortunate that Jamie's character is so dubious at thirty-four and he is without a career. Jamie devalues education in *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the dramatist deconstructs self quest in *Long Day's Journey into Night* because characters search for the self at the expense of the family's unity and social cohesion. Meanwhile, O'Neill portrays characters who, despite the fact that they shut each other out, still express a longing to belong. Tyrone shows his need for his family's attention when he expresses happiness each time they are around. For example, he is happy when Edmund returns home; "I'm glad you've come, lad. I've been damned lonely" (4.1.1342). Mary likewise still believes that their love can survive their challenges. She encourages her husband with these words: "James, We've loved each other! We always will! Let's remember only that..." (2.1.1323). She believes that, if they focus on this love, they will overcome their challenges and save their



marriage. This is a pointer to the fact that O'Neill prescribes the self that includes others. The height of perfection happens when family members make each other happy and bond in the society at large. The characters actually enter O'Neill's promised land, at some point, as examined in the first subsection. This shows that O'Neill is in favour of self- definition within the family and society.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has proven that characters in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* assert themselves, and in the process, disintegrate the family and disrupt social cohesion. The article has given an insight into the conflicting choices that characters make, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, between their ambition, family and society. The contribution of this paper is that, although they sometimes fail the family and other institutions because of their flaws, Tyrone, Mary, Jamie and Edmund have been able to procure the desired self-fulfilment by successfully harmonizing all the three facets of their lives. The characters pursue their personal dreams while bonding with family and integrating the society. It is this brand of self-attainment that O'Neill advocates.

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