

## Eugene O'Neill's Wavering Estimation of Dreams and Illusions in *The Hairy Ape*, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*

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**Abstract:** Eugene O'Neill seems to have fostered a wavering estimation about the self-annihilating dreams and illusions of his characters. This particular characteristic of O'Neill has changed significantly during the progress of his career as a dramatist. The present study intends to show how far this attitude of O'Neill has changed. The study will examine three of O'Neill's masterpieces and will try to trace the degree of change observable in his view of dreams and illusions of his characters. In *The Hairy Ape* O'Neill has handled the issue of dreams and illusions with a view to bringing the characters back to reality. In *The Iceman Cometh* his approach to dreams changes and this play portrays his characters as more inclined towards such dreams and it also marks the beginning form where O'Neill has changed his strategy. Finally, in *Long Day's Journey into Night* O'Neill deals with the issue of dreams and illusions differently. At the beginning of his career his attitude towards such illusions and 'pipe dreams' was one of disapproval but towards the end of his career we notice that his understanding has changed and he acknowledges the necessity of such dreams and illusions as props and crutches in the lives of ordinary human beings.

Eugene O'Neill's estimation of the self betrayal of his characters has significantly shifted from denouncing the self betrayals towards a kind of tragic understanding of it during the gradual progression of his kaleidoscopic career as a dramatist. In some cases he has shown perhaps even a forgiving attitude towards such self betrayals. Observing only his earlier works, it will not be improper to conclude that O'Neill had a sort of conclusive conjecture about those characters who nourished dreams and illusions. In his earlier works these characters are often portrayed as do-littles; they are the low living, bottom-feeding freaks of the society. They are destitute of the motivation essential to survive in the real world, and by deciding to reside in their worlds of dreams they betray their real lives and plunge into the abysmal depths of illusions and fantasies. Their lives lose the vital impetus to survive in the capitalistic world of 'a hundred visions and revisions'. They no longer remain valid and active players in the continuous flux which we call life. However, with the gradual development of O'Neill both as a human and as a dramatist, he seems to foster a more humane attitude towards these people. He sees these self betrayals as a sort of asylum for the people who have taken refuge in them. For these disillusioned characters, their apparently awe-inspiring self betrayals function as their last conceivable connection with life, even if it is not plausible.

A number of O'Neill's characters are portrayed as people with an apprehension of themselves that was far from being true, in a sense they lived a life that was observably inconsistent and mutually exclusive with their true self. They very often live in castles built in the air, and to further worsen their situation they try to convince themselves that their chimerical 'pipe dreams' are achievable. Repeatedly, they return to drunkenness and hope comes for them through drunkenness. They seek fulfillment in self-annihilation through alcoholism and in getting paralyzed. With his powerful imagination, O'Neill has created some of his immortal characters keeping "the presentation of man's self-destructive struggle to be expressed in the Life-Force" (Bradley, 1962, p. 1116) as one of his major objectives as a dramatist.

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In his plays O'Neill has created a very wide range of characters with varying degree of hope and aspirations towards life. Among this wide band of characters there are people who make an existentialist choice to live in the realm of their fantasy leaving their monochromatic life behind. The choices they make dictate their lives and the world of their fantasy is always deviating from the seamy side of their existence. Here we are confronted by the inevitable question whether or not the characters find it convenient to maintain a sensible and happy life more through their self betrayals and illusive dreams, or are more at ease once they give up their world of fantasy and decide to root their lives firmly on reality as it is manifested with all its unfathomable perplexities and mysteries. An effort to find an answer to this question leads us towards O'Neill's estimation of the self betrayals of his characters. We will notice with some elements of surprise that O'Neill's view of these dreams and illusions of his characters waver significantly. An investigation starting with *The Hairy Ape* and proceeding through *The Iceman Cometh* and ending with an assessment of *Long Day's Journey into Night* will offer a sort of graphical and precise demonstration of O'Neill's wavering estimation of the self betrayals of his characters through their adherence to fanciful and illusory dreams.

*The Hairy Ape* was written in 1921 featuring O'Neill's initial view on the question of the self betrayals of his characters. In this early play he tackles the question of dreams and illusions of his characters steadfastly with the conviction of an idealist. He disapproves of the idea of his characters wearing masks through his attempt to unmask them even if their happiness, in the process, is compromised. As Travis Bogard observes, "*The Hairy Ape* studies man's attempt to come into harmony with his world, to find to whom, to what he can belong." (Bogard, 1988, p. 242). He wants to convince himself into believing that his characters can lead their lives peacefully without betraying themselves by wearing any masks to protect themselves from the threat posed by reality. This impulsive response towards the question of dreams and illusions can very well be attributed to the exuberance of O'Neill as a young playwright. His comprehension of life at this stage of his career was perhaps somewhat similar to one who wants to confront the substratum of reality as it unfolds itself without distorting it with the help of dreams and illusions. He strongly disagrees at this point with the idea that one may deliberately distort one's unadulterated neural responses towards reality simply to make life more palatable. O'Neill at this phase of his dramatic career was perhaps engaged "in the quest to find the ultimate meaning of life, to discover the mysterious behind-life force that lies just beyond the horizon." (Floyd, 1985, p. 141)

The characteristic structure of *The Hairy Ape* is developed and expressed around a symbolic movement of the principal character toward awakening from self-inflicted sedative dreams and illusions. This movement is also a movement of the principal character towards discovery of the stance he must choose against the fundamental problems of existence. Yank, the principal character of the play, undertakes a retrogressive movement in his quest for self-realization and happiness. His self betraying dream is his sense of belonging to his society. He finds himself cornered like an animal in a miserable present which lacks any causal relation to his dignified past. His encounter with Mildred snatches his dream and thereby his sense of belonging.

"I belong and she don't, see! I move and she's dead! Twenty five knots an hour, dat's me! Dat Carries her but I make dat. She's on'y bagge." (*The Hairy Ape*, Scene VI)

As Doris Falk observes, "Since Mildred has stripped away the ideal which dignified the body and the slow mind within it, the body has become the only symbol of the self, and constitutes a prison. From this point onward, Yank devotes himself to an attempt to escape the prison in which he cannot be content to belong but every effort to escape only makes him more aware to the

strength of the barrier, and the more hopeless it is for him to attempt to tear it down.” (Falk, 1958, p. 30-31)

This tragic sense of not belonging and being out of essential harmony in a belligerent social milieu leads Yank to a growing tension and internal conflict which makes him pass through a progressive decline. From this point onwards the play becomes a process of reversion, a backward journey to the most primitive state as a reaction to his rejection by civilized society. Only the protagonist’s strong urge to make people around him know that he is at the very centre of that power which makes the ships and machines go would satisfy him. Unfortunately for Yank, they fail to understand his language; they do not even recognize his identity as a human being. This in turn terrifies Yank and isolates him utterly with a sense of not belonging. At this point his dream is still to see himself as the centre and nucleus of things.

Propelled by his dream, Yank discovers himself in the middle of a whirlpool of materialistic activities. With his limited vocabulary he fails to comprehend the jumbled linguistics of the world around him. His failure to communicate with this society makes him ever increasingly alien. In prison, the empty rhetoric of the senator’s words, not spoken directly but quoted from a newspaper article, further alienates him. He is pushed by his self betraying dreams like an elemental force of nature. His quest finally traces the malady to a conclusion:

“I was born, see? Sure, dat’s the charge.” (*The Hairy Ape*, Scene VII)

Yank’s malady of alienation is so deep-rooted that it goes much deeper into his existence. “It’s way down—at de bottom. Yuh can’t grab it, and yuh can’t stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops. Dat’s me now.” (*The Hairy Ape*, Scene VII). His illusive dream in its actual effect gives him the status of an absurd figure, suddenly dimly aware of the unbridgeable gulf between his simply understood aspirations for harmony and order and the refusal of the nonchalant world to exhibit it. He is left alone in a world which he fails to comprehend to the least degree. Only at the end of his life when he slips to the floor, O’Neill’s stage direction indicates that, “perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs.” (*The Hairy Ape*, Scene VIII)

The way of handling dreams and illusions changes in *The Iceman Cometh* where the line between dream and reality is much clearer. In fact, the entire play has correctly been identified by many as evolving around the character’s need for dreams and illusions. The thin line between illusion and reality gives O’Neill the vital point of view from where he could probe into the matter more intensely. In *Iceman Cometh* we find O’Neill moving across this thin line between the realms of illusion and reality. The dreams of the characters are no longer seen as something that the characters could do without. This wonderful work presents a distinctive change in O’Neill’s attitude towards the dreams and illusions of his characters. The characters are no longer seized by their neck for having such illusions and ‘pipe dreams’ as O’Neill has frequently called them throughout the play. Unlike *The Hairy Ape*, here the character’s adherence to illusions and the having of a ‘pipe dream’ is not treated as a fatal flaw. The substantiality of this claim emerges clearly when we come to realize the full significance of Joe Mott’s speech in Act II of the play: “Listen to me, you white boys! Don’t you get it in your heads I’s pretendin’ to be what I ain’t, or dat I ain’t proud to be what I is, get me? Or you and me’s goin’ to have trouble!” (*The Iceman Cometh*, Act II)

The writing of *The Iceman Cometh* took place during the beginning and the first few months of the Second World War. The cataclysmic spirit and events of the war moved O’Neill immensely and its accompanying pessimism and uncertainty inevitably found their way into the play. O’Neill

later commented in 1946, "The war has thrown me completely off base." (Gelb, 1965, p. 488). Frustrated with the prospects of a future, he turned to the past and sought for themes to work with. As Arthur and Barbara Gelb put it, "Regarding the future as a blank, O'Neill had become more and more immersed in his own past. He set the play in 1912, the year of his attempted suicide. His early analytical sense of identification with the pipe-dreamers is [...] transmuted into a final and explicit expression of his philosophy of hopeless hope." (Gelb, 1965, p. 466). *The Iceman Cometh* epitomizes this philosophy. In *The Iceman Cometh* O'Neill most dramatically illustrates the change in his view of reality and dreams from the beginning of his career to the end of it. The general resolution that can be reached through this play is that human beings need to have dreams and illusions to survive and to remain happy and sane. As R. R. Khare observes,

[...] Harry Hope's saloon was the play's setting, where the derelicts who drank themselves insensibly every night became symbols of O'Neill's own unattainable dreams- dreams whose bitter frustration he need never have known had he succeeded in killing himself with sleeping pills and whisky twenty-five years earlier. [...] (Khare, 1992, p. 150)

*The Iceman Cometh* outlines 'the hopeless hope' of securing sanity and happiness in human life as it is taking shape under the impact of materialism. Failing to secure these values in real life, the characters seek an escape into the world of dreams and drink in order to benumb their faculties so that a complete extinction of the sense of reality is made possible. This does not bring a resolution and their first encounter with reality under Hickey's influence knocks the bottom out of their existence. Disillusioned, they revert to their old day-dreaming, only waiting to be finally rid of life by the Iceman, Death. The pattern observable in this play thus is dreams-reality-dreams, degeneration or insanity waiting at the end. R. R. Khare puts it as,

[...] O'Neill's imagination becomes obsessed with the basic pattern of dreams and death. In this scheme the basic value which contributes to life-love-is being eclipsed by negative elements and to that extent the positive vision of the dramatist gives way to a negative vision. That is why the plays written immediately after 1937 reveal more and more of the negative vision which was becoming O'Neill's characteristic view of life. *The Iceman Cometh* has all the air of a final statement of the human condition. [...] (Khare, 1992, p. 151)

O'Neill writes *The Iceman Cometh* with a remarkably modified understanding of the human condition that cannot be found in his earlier plays where he recommends living in conformity with reality. In this particular play O'Neill deviates from his earlier conviction and allows his characters to indulge themselves in the realm of their dreams and fantasies. As Bigsby observes, "... Virtually all the inhabitants of Harry Hope's bar are betrayers. They have failed the causes which they had served, the people they had loved, the world which they had perceived in their youth as opportunity but see now as a lost cause. Their drunkenness, their retreat into self, into unreality, is a protection against knowledge of that imperfection. They are all committed to sustaining their own innocence." (Bigsby, 1982, p. 88)

All the seventeen characters of the play are perfect specimens of 'the misbegotten mad lot' of humanity. There is a queer bond among them- their common attempt to escape from reality into a world of hopeless dreams and illusions. As Larry, the impartial onlooker, the dramatic equivalent of O'Neill himself in the play says, "The lie of a pipe-dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober." (*The Iceman Cometh*, Act II). Life is not portrayed as a creative process or a significant routine of exercising supreme human values, rather it has been demonstrated as only an antidote against death and insanity. It also yields a temporary happiness

which is illusory and lasts only as long as the 'pipe-dreams' about their happy yesterdays and uncertain tomorrows can be propped upright with the help of alcohol.

Without any notable exception the characters of *The Iceman Cometh*, each one of them individually, cherishes a personal 'pipe-dream' which he sustains with the help of alcohol. In their constant need of 'booze' there is something strained and unreal in their attempt to escape from reality. In the midst of this, Hickey urges them to come out of their dream worlds and face reality to gain an inner harmony leading to peace and happiness. He indicates the reason behind his own transformation: "The only reason I've quit is- well, I finally had the guts to face myself and throw overboard the damned lying pipe dream that'd been making me miserable and do what I had to do for the happiness of all concerned and then all at once I found I was at peace with myself and I didn't need booze any more." (*The Iceman Cometh*, Act II)

Though the immediate excitement of this doctrine of acceptance of reality is tremendous, the aftermath is in no way within the vicinity of happiness. Hickey reassures them, "You've done what you had to do to kill your nagging pipe-dreams. Oh, I know it knocks you cold. But only for a minute. Then see it was the only possible way to peace. And you feel happy. Like I did [...]" (*The Iceman Cometh*, Act III). In spite of this assurance, life is now meaningless to them in so much as they have lost their dreams and are not able to accept reality as it is manifested with its complexities and disadvantages. It is only Death, the Iceman, who can rid them of such a distressed existence. There seems to be no possible prospect of happiness in sight after the loss of their 'pipe-dreams'.

The happiness which Hickey promises to bring is never materialized because as soon as the pipe-dreamers decide to face reality, they experience vehement recoil and are brought back to their original dreams. About this tragic vision of O'Neill of the ultimate human predicament, John Gassner rightly remarks, "O'Neill expressed no hope for man at all, and therefore considered illusion to be the necessary anodyne and death a welcome release for bedeviled mankind. The death of illusion is the end of life, death 'The Iceman', being the sole possible release," (Gassner, 1964, p. 38). In a letter to Lawrence Langer, O'Neill wrote, "We must live in that pipe dream – or die- (as I believe I've said in this play). Love remains (one in a while); friendship remains (and that is rare, too). The rest is ashes in the Wind! We have friendship, so what the hell." (Floyd, 1985, p. 508). This belief of O'Neill was not only about the suffering characters of Harry Hope's saloon, but a general belief applicable for all of humanity. His cardinal statement in *The Iceman Cometh* is similar to that. There is no reason to doubt, man needs the shelter of dreams to escape from reality.

O'Neill's attitude towards dreams becomes even softened in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Diverging reasons can very well be attributed as working behind this change in attitude. Arthur and Barbara Gelb explained this change as, "O'Neill's poor health and his crowding memories of the past had brought him to a low point by the spring of 1940. The European war depressed him still further. Out of his gloomy introspection now came another play concerned with his own beginnings." (Gelb, 1965, p. 466)

Symbolic effects surround the atmosphere of *Long Day's Journey into Night* from the very beginning when Mary appears on the scene complaining of the 'foghorn going all night long'. Mysteriously foggy environment envelopes the entire plot of the play. Sunshine is presented as only a transitory interval. Since the action of the play encompasses only a single day and night, it is the atmosphere of uncertainty created by the ominous presence of the fog which lends the play its subtle variety and significance. Joy and understanding are as brief as sunshine, the rest is sheer uncertainty in moral and spiritual plains coupled with a lack of understanding among the

characters. The fog reinforces this and conditions the reactions of the characters. They move in a spiritual haze and seem to be dissociated from each other and cut off as in a fog. The four individual characters of the play together constitute a lonely crowd. The troublesome outcome of this event is isolation, hopelessness and misery. They seem to be accursed, haunted by instincts which drive them away from each other and in this process of drifting apart they suffer and also inflict much pain upon themselves and their companions. They seek frantically to ease the tension and find an escape through dreams or drug or drink or illusions. The helplessness of the individual in the inevitable drift of circumstances appears as pre-ordained. There is no question of freewill in such an existence. And it leads a human being to plunge into the realm of dreams and illusions.

For Mary the tension caused by reality is too much to bear and under her compelling circumstances she seeks refuge from it in two different ways. She wants to forget by avoiding the company of those who remind her of her past and she induces self-inflicted oblivion by taking dope. For her, happiness lies only in hiding in her past. When she wakes up in her present reality it is as blurred and vague as a landscape enveloped in fog and she reprimands the sound of the fog-horn which brings her back to this sense of reality. O'Neill also uses the sound of the fog-horn expressionistically to intensify the sorrow and the tragic sense inherent in this state of affairs. Here they intensify Mary's desire to escape in order to find peace and happiness. She repeatedly resorts to dope, "Mary is paler than before and her eyes shine with unnatural brilliance. She has hidden deeper within herself and found refuge and release in a dream whose present reality is but an appearance to be accepted and dismissed unfeelingly- even with hard cynicism- or entirely ignored. There is at times an uncanny gay, free youthfulness in her manner, as if in spirit she were released to become again, simply and without consciousness, the naïve, happy, chattering schoolgirl of her convent days." (*Long Day's Journey into Night*, Act III). This transformation into a temporary bliss is again set against the moan of the fog-horn.

Once she has escaped from reality Mary does not mind the fog-horn any more. "I don't mind it tonight. Last night it drove me crazy. I lay awake worrying until I couldn't stand it any more." (*Long Day's Journey into Night*, Act III). In the blurred mental state which gives her a kind of joy she feels that the fog is a positive thing: "I really love fog. [...] It hides you from the world and the world 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 fog-horn I hate. It won't let you alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning you, and calling you back. (She smiles strangely). But it can't tonight. It's just an ugly sound. It doesn't remind me of anything." (*Long Day's Journey into Night*, Act III)

The fog helps her to escape by putting reality as far back in the abyss of forgetfulness as possible. The escape into the past of her girlhood provides the only happiness she can feel. A part of the state of innocence is still within her. There is also the love which she gave first to religion and then to James. This love and the quality of innocence are the only positive values revived in the present which counter disintegration and apathy. As Khare puts it:

This happiness is real even though it is a pipe-dream like that of the derelicts in *The Iceman Cometh*. The change in O'Neill's attitude to such day-dreaming is remarkable. He does not condemn such indulgence any more. With Mary pipe-dreams are given a validity which they did not have in the earlier play. What is more, this sense of innocence and purity recalled from the past serves not only as a contrast but also has a redeeming effect on the present. Mary had, in a way, dispossessed herself of her past in order to marry James Tyrone. Now after years of bitter disillusionment, she repossesses the past in a waking dream and for a

time, all those virtues down to her girlish air are regained. Thus she effects a resolution in the present in the absence of which she might have preferred death. [...] The only moments of happiness for this accursed family are to participate in her recreated joy. Hence it could be said that in the sequence of plays which show the main characters as dreamers and escapist, the reality of dream gradually acquires a validity and a recognition as against the hard reality of daylight. (Khare, 1992, p. 175-6)

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the validity of dreams is challenged by skepticism but subsequently they are accepted as a positive force. In other words, they are first presented in the light of a negative vision and then by a complex process they emerge in the light of a positive outlook. The escape of Edmund who represents O'Neill in the play is an example of this transformation of the negative outlook towards dreams into a positive attitude. Out of the present oppressive prison-like isolation of the fog, he escapes into the freedom and bliss of being in the thick of the fog in his sailing days:

The fog was where I wanted to be. Halfway down the path you can't see this house. You'd never know it was here. Or any of the other places down by the avenue. I couldn't see but a few feet ahead. I didn't meet a soul. Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is. That's what I wanted – to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself. Out beyond the harbor where the road runs along the beach, I even lost the feeling of being on land. The fog and the sea seemed part of each other. It was like walking on the bottom of the sea. As if I had drowned long ago. 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. (*Long Day's Journey into Night*, Act IV)

The choice between reality and dream could hardly be put so explicitly with a self-justifying cause: "I'm talking sense. Who wants to see life as it is, if they can help it? It's the three Gorgons in one. You look in their faces and turn to stone. Or it's Pan. You see him and you die – that is, inside you – and have to go on living as a ghost." In this regard Raleigh observes,

*Long Day's Journey into Night* exists precisely in a split world, so full of gross reality, on the one hand, so ghostly, foggy, nebulous, on the other. For there is real life aplenty: whisky, curses, whores, laughter, poetry, card games, work, arguments, laughter, confessions, disease, doctors, drugstores, servants, food, electric light bulbs, trolley cars, the sea, the foghorn, the ships, the house itself in all its substantiality. On the other hand, and increasingly so as the play goes on and as the fog closes in, the characters, the mother the most, the father the least, tend to move, psychologically speaking, into a shadowy realm in which, as the fog has blurred all distinctions between night and day and land and sea, human memory and human hurt blur the distinctions between the past and the present and the living and the dead. Marry Tyrone's white hair, so much remarked upon, is emblematic of that white, somnambulist world which finally engulfs all the characters. (Raleigh, 1965, p. 151)

There is thus a kind of revelation of the ultimate reality of life in *The Long Day's Journey into Night*. It is also a moment of integration when physical and spiritual consciousnesses merge into each other. It can also be identified as a moment of ecstasy, as 'the end of the quest'. *The Long*

*Day's Journey into Night* marks the climactic point in O'Neill's exploration of the possibilities of happiness in human experience through dreams and illusions.

O'Neill in *The Long Day's Journey into Night* dramatizes his own family, and simultaneously life in general. This play is O'Neill's eventual statement regarding dreams and illusions. We are given two definitive choices; we can make compromises with reality in order to avoid it, and protect ourselves from the truth, or lose our mind. Edmund in *The Long Day's Journey into Night* who is often regarded to be the voice of O'Neill himself is the pivotal character of the play. He never fails to recognize the flaws present in his family members, and he also sees the dreams and illusions that they are adhering to themselves, but more like Larry Slade of *The Iceman Cometh* than like Hickey, he also recognizes the need for such dreams. O'Neill had completed his quest as a dramatist and found his own consummation among his characters.

Even though Edmund does things which demonstrate his apparent rejection of the pipe-dreamers, at the hour of crisis and frustration he retreats behind the safety of dreams and illusions. His confrontation with his own father on the question of his cheapness and his efforts to restrict his mother from using dope are evidences of his rejections of dreams and illusions. He does it and then immediately gives up in a sort of assent of the way his family members naturally are. He never fails to realize that his father has an acute drinking problem, as does his brother Jamie, but says to Tyrone, "Well what's wrong with being drunk? It's what we're after isn't it? Let's not try to kid each other, Papa. Not tonight. We know what we're trying to forget. (*Long Day's Journey into Night*, Act IV) Edmund is aware of what is going on within his mother, and with the desire to deal with it, he considers drunkenness to be an acceptable state, at least for tonight, the night when Mary Tyrone slipped away from the rest of her family members. He does not fully comprehend his mother's addiction, but realizes that something in her does it "deliberately, that's the hell of it! [...] 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!" (*Long Day's Journey into Night*, Act IV) He does not understand the process of conscious decision making which leads his mother towards the desire to be so far removed from them as to shut them out in such a deliberate fog. Edmund has a kind of compassion and pity for his mother and feels sorry for her when he comes to realize what she feels like she has to push them away from her.

In *Long Day's Journey into Night* O'Neill is making an explicit statement which is that people desperately need their shields from the unbearable harshness of reality, and at the same time they need the active presence of other people to share in their dreams and illusions. Their mutual trust and participation in the dreams and fantasies of each other work as a kind of bondage among themselves which keeps them alive. He acknowledges the urgent need for escape from the immediate danger posed by the crudeness of reality, even when he understands that sometimes living in reality with all its complexities would make life easier for the characters, and he also finds the sinister presence of hell within the horizon of the sight that everyone has gone through, and gone through as lonely human beings.

Eugene O'Neill in the beginning of his career as a dramatist, in plays like *The Hairy Ape*, expressed the conviction that one has to root one's life very firmly in the soil of reality or one has to suffer the agonies of life. Among his characters the people who do not live in union with their true self are not in any way better off than those who do are. Gradually O'Neill begins to come closer to the realization that sometimes people need their dreams and illusions to keep themselves apart from a truth that they do not intend to face. By the time he wrote the *Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, he had reached the end of his quest as a dramatist to explore the possibilities of happiness under the human condition. He could thus assert with certitude that



people need their dreams and illusions to survive in this world of indifference. No matter whether a dream is realistic or not, it can establish a link between the suffering characters and life, though it might not be a very convincing link. Dreams are the last conceivable connection between these characters and the world they live in. In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill expresses a tragic understanding of why Mary and James Tyrone do the very things they continue to do. The autobiographical nature of the play and the resulting closeness of O'Neill to the subject matter would have made it difficult for him to be indifferent to the dreams and illusions that the characters function under, as he had first hand knowledge of how living with those dreams and illusions was for the people around him. He understands, at the time when he writes *Long Day's Journey into Night* with conviction how necessary the dreams and illusions are for happiness and peace of mind.

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