

HAMARTIA AND RECOGNITION: PATTERNS OF AMBIVALENCE

IN LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

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PREFACE

Long Day's Journey Into Night is generally recognized as Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece. Much critical treatment of the play, however, has been superficial at best. With respect to James Tyrone, the central figure of the drama, I find that many O'Neill scholars tend to sentimentalize his character. In this paper I have endeavored to prove that the function of James is that of the tragic protagonist in the Aristotelian sense and that this function is revealed through the patterns of ambivalence which occur in the play. By examining these ambivalences and relating them to two of the qualities (i.e., the hamartia and the recognition) which Aristotle says the ideal tragic protagonist should possess, I believe I have succeeded in demonstrating my thesis.

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HAMARTIA AND RECOGNITION: PATTERNS OF AMBIVALENCE

IN LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

From the time that Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night received its first production, it has been acknowledged as perhaps the most significant contribution yet made to the American theatre. Many critics recognize James as the dominant member of the Tyrone family, and as such the central figure in the play. Beyond this obvious relationship, James serves as the agent of the action, which reveals a pattern of ambivalence which all the characters share in their relationships with one another. James originates and sustains this pattern. The plot line leads directly to James's recognition of this ambivalence and of his final responsibility for this pattern in the family.

An analysis of the relationships between the characters reveals that all the Tyrones have ambivalent feelings not only toward themselves but toward the other family members as well. Mary, Jamie, and Edmund are aware of these ambivalences; James is not. In Act IV, however, James's recognition scene occurs, and during this scene James comes to a full realization of the emotional bonds between himself and the others. An examination of the structure of the play in regard to two of the qualities--the hamartia and the recognition--which Aristotle imputes to the tragic protagonist reveals that the events lead to James's recognition of his miserliness which leads to the recognition of his ambivalences and of his culpability for the situations in which

the other Tyrones find themselves. James does indeed function as a tragic protagonist in the Aristotelian sense.

Critical interpretations of James and of the play itself exist on two levels. Most of the character analyses are either superficial or sentimental, while those which deal with his function tend to over-emphasize a psychological approach and to neglect dramatic structure. In describing James, Travis Bogard writes, "For Edmund he demonstrates little close feeling. A generalized, somewhat distant affection is the most he reveals for his younger son."¹ Bogard fails to note James's ambivalence. While James may often treat Edmund coldly, at one point O'Neill describes them in a stage direction as chuckling "with real, if alcoholic, affection."² Bogard continues by stating that James has the ability to love, even though at times he may approach hatred for his family; he also says that James is not cynical. Bogard follows these statements by describing Jamie as, like Edmund and James, "lost, embittered and cynical."³ Though Bogard does note the ambivalences here, he does not explain their significance. The blatant contradiction found in Bogard's last statement further undermines his previous contentions.

Rolf Scheibler says that James's negative qualities are simply defense mechanisms, intimating that they are not actual personality traits.⁴ But throughout the play there is concrete evidence of his miserliness, his self-centeredness, and his hypocrisy. Far from being a pretense, the flaws in James's character are all too real. Scheibler continues:

Here is a man who, in spite of his shortcomings and many disappointments, has tried to give his wife a real, if poor home, his sons a proper education, and who in his clumsy way tries to provide them with financial security. This man knows more about love than the 'hyper-sensitive'

romantics, whose actions are so far from being an expression of affection. . . . For one acquainted with O'Neill's life and the bitter hatred of his father, it is perhaps the most touching thing in this play to find O'Neill striving to do his father justice.⁵

Scheibler neglects the fact that sending Jamie and Edmund away to school is a direct manifestation of James's ambivalences; it is one of his ploys to keep Mary to himself, for she tells Edmund that James has always been jealous of their children. Scheibler's last comment is factually inaccurate. For many years O'Neill did feel an intense hatred for his father; however, they were reconciled in 1920, shortly before his father's death, and O'Neill had even begun to refer to him as a "pal."⁶ Since O'Neill wrote Long Day's Journey in 1941, twenty-one years after this reconciliation, it seems only consistent that he should "strive to do his father justice."

In a review of Long Day's Journey's first New York production, Marya Mannes claims that before the first hour of the play has passed, the audience knows all there is to know about the four Tyrones and that the rest of the play contains "very slight variations in content."⁷ In this implication that there is no progression in character development, Mannes has neglected to examine carefully the dramatic structure of Act IV in terms of recognition and to note the alterations in James's character which occur in that act.

Sophus Keith Winther groups James with fathers from other O'Neill plays, such as Strange Interlude and Anna Christie, and describes these characters in this manner: "The father represents the life force corrupted into death, and the death wish takes over with a compelling force which clothes all the action in futility and despair."⁸ While psychological statements such as Winther's are quite appropriate for

analyzing characters, a reference to the action of a play should include some consideration of dramatic structure, which he fails to do. Winther also fails to note James's self-recognition and his resultant behavioral changes.

Egil Tornqvist, commenting on the scene in Act IV when James turns off the chandelier supposedly because the glare is hurting his eyes, claims that James's actions contradict his words and that this contradiction reveals his urge "to assert himself at the expense of others, even those who are close to him; and so he plunges his family into darkness."⁹ Tornqvist fails to note that James's recognition scene has already taken place (see pp. 146-49) and that the audience must therefore see his actions differently from that point on.

Doris Falk briefly mentions James's recognition scene and his realization that "the real self has been lost."¹⁰ However, Falk neglects to mention the significance of James's recognition scene. Any reference to self-recognition on the part of a character should include some statement about the effects of this recognition, and Falk's study is lacking on this point.

Robert B. Heilman acknowledges that occasionally one of the Tyrones receives a glimpse of the truth about himself but also states: "at no time is there a painfully earned self-knowledge which then becomes a determinant of action and a molder of personality. Occasionally the truth breaks in as if by accident--in vino veritas, perhaps, or under some emotional stress--but it makes an essentially unwelcome intrusion, after which it is ignored, fled from, or rejected by the host whose defenses have been unexpectedly breached."¹¹ But though James's recognition scene occurs in Act IV, it is not instantaneous; the

groundwork for it has been laid in the painful incidents of the first three acts and in the action which precedes the play proper. Heilman also fails to realize the changes that occur after this recognition. As for the truth being discovered by accident, "under some emotional stress," this is the case in many tragedies (note Oedipus Rex, Creon in Antigone, Phèdre, and Othello, to name only a few).

Aristotle says that the ideal protagonist for a tragedy is "a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty [hamartia]. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous."¹² A necessary element of Aristotelian tragedy is the recognition, or the "change from ignorance to knowledge."¹³

There is great critical disagreement concerning the exact meaning of Aristotle's passage in Chapter 13, particularly the phrase containing hamartia. Is the hamartia a character trait or is it a specific erroneous action by the protagonist? The majority of recent critics hold the latter view. For example, Humphrey House says that the hamartia "is not a moral state; but a specific error which a man makes or commits."¹⁴ Similarly, J. W. H. Atkins translates hamartia as "some error of judgment" and says that the concept of hamartia as a character trait is incorrect.¹⁵ D. W. Lucas also contends that hamartia refers to a specific mistake, and he states that Aristotle seldom uses the word to mean "anything like 'flaw' or 'defect' of character."¹⁶

The majority view is that hamartia is an act. However, another school of interpretation of the meaning of hamartia exists. Butcher, for example, believes that "the word may denote a defect of character, distinct on the one hand from an isolated error or fault, and, on the

other, from the vice which has its seat in a depraved will."¹⁷ One also finds this view in critics as early as Lane Cooper¹⁸ (1913) and in those as recent as Gerald F. Else¹⁹ (1957). The thrust of Hardison's commentary is to arrive at an interpretation that synthesizes both the "error" and the "trait" interpretations.²⁰

The approach taken by F. L. Lucas is concerned primarily with bringing Aristotle's theories to bear on modern tragedy. Though his work is not a commentary on the Poetics, he is a post-Aristotelian theorist of tragedy, and he incorporates many Aristotelian elements into his discussion. In his treatment of hamartia, Lucas also covers the relation between plot and character. Though he says that "an intellectual mistake is all that the word need mean,"²¹ he also relates hamartia to "that natural human weakness which is unable to foresee the future."²² Lucas offers a concise definition of what he considers to be Aristotle's ideal tragedy: "one in which the destruction of hero or heroine is caused by some false step taken in blindness."²³ Again, Lucas relates action ("some false step") to character ("blindness").

Aristotle stresses that the ideal protagonist should be neither excessively good nor exceedingly evil. James certainly meets this qualification. He is miserly, self-centered, and hypocritical, but no more so than many fictional characters. Aristotle also states that the tragic protagonist should be "renowned and prosperous." Examples are Oedipus and Creon, rulers of Thebes, and Orestes, son of the king of Mycenae. James Tyrone, of course, is not a king. However, one must examine Long Day's Journey in relation to the time during which it takes place, 1912, and consider how greatly matinee idols were revered then. James is also a fairly wealthy man for that era and owns a

great deal of property. Though much of his property is mortgaged, for a while as an actor he was earning "thirty-five to forty thousand net profit a season" (p. 150).

Aristotle also says that tragedy deals with men "as better than in actual life."²⁴ In what sense is James Tyrone "better than" the average man? Again, F. L. Lucas offers some incisive comments. The characters of a tragedy cannot be expected to be good in the Christian sense. Lucas says, "Aristotle is clearly insisting that the dramatis personae of tragedy shall be as fine in character as the plot permits. . . . [The audience must consider] the different pagan idea of virtue, demanding strength and intensity of character rather than purity of soul."²⁵ James is as fine as the plot permits. He is also the strongest character in the play. Mary and Jamie are too drugged, Edmund too naive, to be the focal point. As will be seen later, the family's current problems are due mainly to James's decisions, and thus James should serve as the agent if a change is to be wrought.

Mitchell A. Leaska says that the tragic protagonist should be "sufficiently sensitive to the world around him to realize that he lives in a climate of catastrophe . . . [and this realization should be expressed] in either thought or activity."²⁶ James is certainly cognizant of the situation of the Tyrone family, though at first he may not be aware of the causes of this situation. Heilman credits the tragic protagonist with a type of sensitivity or perceptiveness that he says is "a potential which is made actual in the course of the drama."²⁷ This statement can also be applied to James. The opening stage directions tell us that James possesses "rare flashes of intuitive sensibility" (p. 14), and this potential is fully realized during his recog-

nition scene. Dorothea Krook suggests that one distinction of the tragic protagonist is that he possesses courage, a quality which she defines as "practical, applied, active, characteristically expressing itself in immediate responses to concrete moral situations."²⁸ James does make responses to the situations in which he is placed, though his responses may not always be the correct or the most desired ones. When Mary is ill, for example, he does hire a doctor. But he hires a cheap quack rather than one who is truly qualified to help Mary.

These incorrect responses of James are related to the hamartia. Aristotle says that the protagonist should fall through some "error or frailty." From this statement is derived the notion of the protagonist's culpability. Though the concept of fate may play a significant role in the life of the tragic protagonist, he himself must ultimately accept the responsibility for his fall. Citing Agamemnon as a victim of Clytemnestra²⁹ and Othello as being "undone by his own will,"³⁰ Oscar Mandel further develops Aristotle's theory by maintaining that tragic protagonists should come to defeat not simply as victims but partly through their own doing, presumably because of some hamartia. James's hamartia is his miserliness. As a young man he has the potential to become one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of his day. Because of his poverty-stricken childhood, however, he cannot resist the opportunity to guarantee himself a steady income. Thus he purchases the production rights to a certain romantic melodrama, an action which ruins his career. The public continues to identify him with that one role, and his talent diminishes, until the reader sees him as he is in 1912-- a broken man trying to earn a living with real estate investments that somehow never work out the way he plans. A more complete discussion of

other manifestations of James's hamartia and of their effects on the Tyrone's lives will appear later.

Linked to the hamartia is the concept of the recognition scene, the change "from ignorance to knowledge," and the effects wrought by this change. Maxwell Anderson, using many elements from Aristotle's theory, says that "the essence of a tragedy . . . is the spiritual awakening, or regeneration of his [the playwright's] hero."³¹ Krook expands this theory by adding that if self-knowledge on the part of the tragic protagonist is not present, it is the audience who receives the knowledge.³²

James's hamartia arises from the pattern of ambivalence which is present in the drama. Though James sees the ambivalences in the others, he does not at first realize that he, too, shares in the pattern. Because of this lack of recognition, he also fails to realize the extent to which the others suffer. Throughout the day on which the play occurs, James is repeatedly bombarded with the proofs of his errors in judgment. These events--Mary's increasing drug use, Jamie's alcoholism, Edmund's consumption--inevitably force James, during his recognition scene, to realize that his miserliness has caused the others' ambivalences.

Mary's ambivalences toward herself are revealed throughout the play. She dreams of her happy days in the convent, when she met a dashing, handsome young actor, when she "fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time" (p. 176). Time is the key word in this speech, for with time have come the death of a child, her gnarled and crippled hands, her morphine addiction, and the loss of her faith in the Blessed Virgin. Mary tells Edmund that "some day when the Blessed

Virgin Mary forgives me and gives me back the faith in her love and pity I used to have in my convent days, and I can pray to her again . . . I will be so sure of myself" (p. 94). But when she tries to pray, she realizes that she cannot "expect the Blessed Virgin to be fooled by a lying dope fiend reciting words!" (p. 107). In Act IV she describes the faith she has lost as "Something I need terribly. . . . I can't have lost it forever, I would die if I thought that. Because then there would be no hope" (p. 173). Her attitude throughout the majority of the play, however, is one of passive resignation: "None of us can help the things life has done to us" (p. 61). Her final speech, the "so happy for a time," contains more than a slight note of despair. By the end of Act IV Mary is completely under the influence of morphine. She is convinced that, regardless of how happy she may have been in her youth, she will never be happy again.

Mary's internal ambivalences are mirrored in her treatment of others. Referring to the death of Eugene, her second child, Mary says, "I was to blame for his death" (p. 87) and "I let him die through my neglect" (p. 109). But she also tells James that had she never left the baby with her mother to travel with James's touring company, since he had written and had asked her to join him, Jamie would not have entered Eugene's room and exposed him to measles. She also says, "I've always believed he did it on purpose. . . . I've never been able to forgive him for that" (p. 87). Though she may believe herself to be partly culpable, she obviously thinks that James and Jamie are also to blame. She also believes that Jamie is responsible for Edmund's lack of ambition. She says that Jamie is jealous of Edmund and that Jamie will "never be content until he makes Edmund as hopeless a failure as

he is" (p. 109). Yet she defends Jamie's alcoholism by telling James, "You brought him up to be a boozer. Since he first opened his eyes, he's seen you drinking" (p. 110). At one point she speaks harshly to Jamie because "He's always sneering at someone else, always looking for the worst weakness in everyone" (p. 61). But when Edmund swears at Jamie she tells her younger son, "It's wrong to blame your brother. He can't help being what the past has made him. Anymore than your father can. Or you. Or I" (p. 64). She accuses Edmund indirectly of being the cause of her morphine addiction by saying "I never knew what rheumatism was before you were born!" (p. 116). However, when Edmund comments on the fact that she has never seemed remorseful about his absences from the family she replies, "You might have guessed, dear, that after I knew you knew--about me--I had to be glad whenever you were where you couldn't see me" (p. 119). Edmund's exposure to her drug addiction is painful not only to her but also to him, so she is willing to do without his presence to make life easier for them both. These ambivalences are also extended toward James. As Mary slips further into her morphine-induced trance, she tells her husband, "I know you still love me, James, in spite of everything. . . . And I love you, dear, in spite of everything" (p. 112). While Mary's statements are declarations of affection, the phrase "in spite of everything" implies not only that she has reason not to love him but also that there may actually be times when she almost hates him. In Act II Mary lashes out at James: "Oh, I'm so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You won't help me! You won't put yourself out the least bit! You don't know how to behave in a home!" (p. 67). She tells Edmund, "It's always seemed to me your father could afford to keep on buying property but

never to give me a home" (p. 73). Yet to her husband she says, "James! We've loved each other! We always will!" (p. 85).

Both Mary's internal and external ambivalences are caused by James. Had James provided her with a real home, she would never have had to leave Eugene and risk his exposure to measles, and this would have alleviated her guilt concerning his death. Mary's addiction to morphine is the direct result of James's failure to send for a good doctor rather than a cheap one who does not know how to treat her. Different responses on James's part in these situations would have produced quite different results.

Like his mother, Jamie also has ambivalent feelings about himself. He remembers the time before Edmund was born and his mother started to take refuge in morphine, when the Tyrones, if not individually at least as a family, were happier than they are at the time of the play. He tells Edmund: "I've known about Mama so much longer than you. Never forget the first time I got wise. Caught her in the act with a hypo. Christ, I'd never dreamed before that any women but whores took dope!" (p. 163). He later refers to whores as "poor, stupid, diseased slobs" (p. 165). Jamie is also haunted by the fact that he is partly responsible for Eugene's death and remembers that with Edmund's birth came Mary's addiction, which facts have caused his mother to move farther away from him. This result, combined with the view of his mother which he now holds, has driven Jamie to alcoholism. Jamie identifies his alcoholism with Mary's addiction. Each time Mary is sent away to be "cured," Jamie hopes that perhaps he will be, too. When he sees Mary's pitiable condition in Act IV he sobbingly tells Edmund, "But I told you how much I'd hoped--" (p. 171). But Jamie's cynicism far outweighs

whatever hope he may possess. In the stage directions which introduce Jamie, O'Neill mentions "his habitual expression of cynicism" (p. 19). Jamie's attitude is also expressed in other stage directions, according to which his speeches are to be delivered "boredly" (p. 21), "dryly" (p. 22), "with a defensive air of weary indifference" (p. 34), and "cynically brutal" (p. 75). With his mournful recitation of Swinburne's "A Leave-taking" in Act IV, he weeps tears of resignation, convinced of what his future will consist.

Jamie is also ambivalent about the other members of his family. He refers to Mary as Ophelia (p. 170) and as "the hophead" (p. 161), but as he tells James earlier, "No pity? I have all the pity in the world for her. I understand what a hard game to beat she's up against" (p. 76). Though Jamie loves Mary, at times he blames her for his present condition: "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" (p. 162). Jamie's identification of his alcoholism with Mary's addiction, coupled with his cynicism, causes him to alternately scorn her and love her. Jamie's ambivalence toward Edmund is revealed in Act IV when he tells Edmund that he has always been envious of his younger brother because he is "Mama's baby, Papa's pet!" (p. 165). He tells Edmund, "And it was your being born that started Mama on dope. . . . God damn you, I can't help hating your guts--!" (p. 166); but this remark is countered by his two previous statements of "I love your guts" (pp. 156, 163). Jamie's most intense hatred is for James. "What a bastard to have for a father!" (p. 157), he tells Edmund. But in Act I, when Jamie and his father are discussing Edmund and Mary (pp. 29-39), Jamie reveals that he really does love James. O'Neill's stage directions read: "[Jamie]

looks at [James], for the first time with an understanding sympathy. It is as if suddenly a deep bond of common feeling existed between them in which their antagonism could be forgotten" (p. 36). Jamie also blames his father for Edmund's sickness, for not sending "him to a real doctor when he first got sick" (p. 30). But Jamie carries his share of guilt, as he reveals to Edmund in Act IV, because his "protection" of Edmund has not been completely altruistic; he has tried to corrupt his younger brother so that Edmund will no longer be the favorite son. Jamie's internal ambivalences cause an inner torment that is manifested in his external ambivalences.

Jamie's ambivalences are also the result of various actions on James's part. The guilt which Jamie feels because of Eugene's death is, like Mary's, caused by James's incorrect response. Jamie is envious of Edmund because of his younger brother's favored position. But this jealousy is caused more by James's frequent criticism of Jamie and praising of Edmund than by any special talent Edmund may have. Edmund himself says that he will never be a genuine poet, only a stammerer. Again, James has been the major contributing factor in the patterns of ambivalence occurring in the Tyrone family.

Edmund's ambivalences toward himself are perhaps revealed more subtly than those of Jamie and Mary. He remembers when he first discovered Mary's condition and how "it made everything in life seem rotten!" (p. 118). He also tells James about his life at sea, when he "belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy . . . to Life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way" (p. 153). But Edmund cannot escape time forever, and the unpleasant events of the past now cause him to feel as though he were "a stranger

. . . who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death!" (pp. 153-54). The repetition of belong in these two antithetical phrases emphasizes his ambivalence. Edmund chastizes James for giving up hope for Mary's recovery by saying that he, at least, will still hope. His optimism is further underscored when he tells Mary, "You've only just started. You can still stop. You've got the will power!" (p. 92). Yet when anyone receives word from Doc Hardy concerning Edmund's illness, Edmund immediately assumes the worst. When James gives him ten dollars to spend in town Edmund says, "Did Doc Hardy tell you I was going to die?" (p. 90). And Edmund is convinced his father wants to send him to a cheap sanatorium because James wouldn't send him to an expensive institution if he were going to die.

The ambivalences which Edmund feels for the other Tyrones are quite evident. He obviously cares a great deal for his brother. When either Mary or James criticizes Jamie for his oafish behavior, Edmund defends him by replying "Oh, for God's sake, Papa! If you're starting that stuff again, I'll beat it" (p. 26) or "For Pete's sake, Mama, why jump on Jamie all of a sudden?" (p. 61). His love for Jamie is clearly evidenced in their scene near the end of Act IV (pp. 154-67). Yet many times Edmund reveals signs of hating Jamie. Whenever Jamie makes derogatory statements about Mary's drug addiction, Edmund either strikes him (pp. 162, 170) or replies with an oath, such as "God damn you!" (p. 63) or "You dirty bastard!" (p. 162). Edmund's great love for Mary is revealed in their scene at the end of Act I (pp. 42-49). Edmund shows his concern for his mother and his futile hope that she has not returned to her morphine addiction. But when Mary refuses to acknowledge the possibility that Edmund may have consumption, he replies,

"I hear you, Mama. I wish to God I didn't! It's pretty hard to take, at times, having a dope fiend for a mother!" (p. 120), a remark which he knows will hurt her more than anything else he could say. Edmund loves his father, too. When Jamie calls James a bastard, Edmund defends him: "Oh, Papa's all right, if you try to understand him--and keep your sense of humor" (p. 157). In Act II, when James gives him the ten dollars, Edmund finally rids himself of his suspicions and "puts an arm around his father impulsively and gives him an affectionate hug" (stage directions--p. 90). But when Edmund discovers James's plan to send him to a cheap sanatorium, he cries, "God Almighty, this last stunt of yours is too much! It makes me want to puke! . . . Jesus, Papa, haven't you any pride or shame?" (p. 145). Edmund also resents James because the only home he has given Mary is their shoddy summer house. He tells his father, "Jesus, when I think of it I hate your guts!" (p. 141). Edmund also accuses Mary of making his birth an excuse for her morphine addiction. But at the same time Edmund feels guilty about his mother's condition. When James in a fit of rage confronts him with "If you hadn't been born she'd never--" (p. 142), Edmund replies, "Sure. I know that's what she feels, Papa" (p. 142).

Edmund's ambivalences toward both Mary and Jamie stem from Mary's drug addiction, which has already been shown to be caused by James's miserliness. His ambivalence toward his father is, of course, also related to some action on James's part. As James fails to provide Mary with adequate medical attention, so he wants to send Edmund to a cheap state institution instead of a more expensive sanatorium which would be better equipped to give Edmund superior treatment.

James also has internal ambivalences. He recalls the time when Ed-

win Booth lauded his portrayal of Othello, the highest compliment an actor could receive, and when he met Mary, who was "bursting with health and high spirits and the love of loving" (p. 138). But his corruption occurs when he purchases the rights to the "god-damned play" (p. 149) which stifles his creativity as an actor. Even though James tells Edmund that he will never again hope for Mary's cure, he still pleads with his wife, "For the love of God, for my sake and the boys' sake and your own, won't you stop now?" (p. 85). For a time he feels that there may be a chance for Mary to be cured. The stage directions at the beginning of Act IV, however, describe him as "a sad, defeated old man, possessed by hopeless resignation" (p. 125). Like the rest of his family, James is undergoing an inner struggle.

James's ambivalences for the others are very clear. The affection he feels for Mary is evident from their first stage entrance: "Tyronne's arm is around his wife's waist as they appear from the back parlor. Entering the living room he gives her a playful hug" (stage directions--p. 14). Yet when James finds that Mary has returned to morphine he tells her, "I understand that I've been a God-damned fool to believe in you!" (p. 69). This statement is one of the strongest condemnations of Mary to be found in the play. James's love for Edmund has been previously noted (see p. 143). But when Edmund accuses him of being a miser and refuses to turn off the chandelier he replies angrily, "You'll obey me and put out that light or, big as you are, I'll give you a thrashing that'll teach you--!" (p. 128). James's dislike for Jamie is perhaps more evident than that for any other Tyronne. Throughout the play his references to his elder son are statements such as "You evil-minded loafer!" (p. 39), "that brother of yours

. . . he'll poison life for you with his damned sneering serpent's tongue!" (p. 109), "that loafer!" (p. 133), and "The dirty blackguard!" (p. 170). But, as has been noted before, there is an obvious emotional bond between James and Jamie in Act I (pp. 29-39). And though in Act IV he tells his son "I'll kick you out in the gutter tomorrow, so help me God" (p. 171), when James realizes how thoroughly defeated Jamie feels because of Mary's condition he forgets his anger and consoles him, pleading "Jamie, for the love of God, stop it!" (p. 171). But even though James loves his family, he still makes accusations against them. He accuses Jamie of being responsible for Edmund's poor constitution, claiming that he has set a bad example for his younger brother: "If you ever gave him advice except in the ways of rottenness, I've never heard of it!" (p. 34). He blames Mary for what she refers to as the absence of a real home. When Mary complains about her lack of friends James tells her, "It's your own fault--" (p. 84). Mary says that their summer house is not a home and James replies, "No, it never can be now. But it was once, before you--" (p. 72). James also feels guilty, however. Whenever one of the others says or does anything to remind him of his culpability, the stage directions describe him as responding "with guilty heartiness" (p. 27), "defensively" (pp. 30, 33), "with guilty resentment" (p. 86), and "with guilty vehemence" (p. 113); in Act IV guilty appears in the stage directions for James seven times before his recognition scene. Though James's awareness of his guilt appears to be functioning subconsciously at this point, he does not become fully cognizant until his recognition scene. An analysis of the structure of the play in regard to James reveals the progression in his character as he becomes aware of his responsibility.

The first two acts deal with the present; there are no detailed reminiscences such as those which appear in Acts III and IV. With respect to James, Acts I and II treat what he considers to be Mary's guilt. The theme of Act I is suspicion. James suspects that Mary either has returned or is about to return to her drug habit, though he has no concrete evidence yet. He knows that Mary spent most of the preceding night in the spare room, which is the room in which she gives herself the injections. But she tells him that she went to the spare room to escape his snoring; and since she has not yet taken an injection, he is content with this explanation. James also suspects that Edmund's sickness is not merely a summer cold, but he has yet to receive word from Doc Hardy about the exact nature of the illness. Jamie says that Doc Hardy is stalling by saying that Edmund may have malaria, but for James this diagnosis is sufficient. When he and Jamie discuss Mary's condition James says, "No one was to blame" (p. 39). His use of the past tense shows that he does not think of her addiction as a current problem.

The theme of Act II is confirmation, and James's views of Mary and of the family's situation are reversed. During Act II Mary takes two injections, and James's suspicions are confirmed: "Tyrone knows now. He suddenly looks a tired, bitterly sad old man" (stage directions-- p. 67). In Act II James also receives the phone call from Doc Hardy saying that Edmund definitely has consumption. These confirmations result in James becoming partly aware of his guilt. Then, James projects this guilt onto Mary. It is her fault that she has no friends. It is her fault that their house is not a real home. James even tells Mary that she is to blame for his excessive drinking: "If I did get drunk

it is not you who should blame me. No man has ever had a better reason" (p. 83). Then in the last two acts James gradually begins to accept the nature of the role he has played in the lives of the Tyrones.

Acts III and IV deal with the past and with James's guilt. The theme of Act III is responsibility, James's effect on Mary's life. From her lengthy reminiscence the audience learns that she was an idealistic young girl and that she had two dreams, to become a nun and to become a concert pianist. Her father had planned to send her to Europe to study music, but Mary's dreams vanished when she met James Tyrone. After Mary describes her and James's first meeting she says, "I forgot all about becoming a nun or a concert pianist. All I wanted was to be his wife" (p. 105). Because of James, Mary leaves the security of her father's home and of the convent for an uncertain life filled with "One-night stands, cheap hotels, dirty trains, leaving children, never having a home--" (p. 104). James is also responsible for Mary's loss of faith. She says, "Before I met Mr. Tyrone I hardly knew there was such a thing as a theater. I was a very pious girl" (p. 102). There is an obvious juxtaposition here, a dichotomy between piety and the type of life which James leads. All of this information about James's guilt is reinforced in the last act.

The theme of Act IV is recognition, as James finally realizes his culpability. Throughout the beginning of Act IV Edmund confronts James with several accusations, both about Mary and about his own illness. These accusations end with Edmund calling his father a "stinking old miser--!" (p. 145). Edmund then has a seizure of coughing, a dramatic reinforcement of the severity of his illness. James now begins his self-recognition. He tells Edmund, "A stinking old miser. Well,

maybe you're right" (p. 146). The recognition is not yet complete, which is revealed by the fact that James begins an argument with Edmund immediately following this statement. But after James relates a detailed account of the hardships he experienced as a youth he says, "It was in those days I learned to be a miser" (p. 148), an unqualified acknowledgement of his error. Later he says, "Yes, maybe life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake ruined my career as a fine actor" (p. 149). James passes from ignorance to knowledge as he recognizes his hamartia. James also realizes that his miserliness has caused his ambivalences and that these ambivalences are the cause of the family's situation.

In the middle of James's recognition scene his attitudes concerning the other three Tyrones and his behavior toward them alters.³³ He tells Edmund that he does not have to go to the state sanatorium; rather he may go "Any place you like--within reason" (p. 148). He tells Edmund of another institution, one which is supported by wealthy factory owners but to which Edmund will be allowed to go because he is a resident. James's ambivalences still exist, of course, as is witnessed by his addition of the phrase "within reason." However, James is now aware of the ambivalences in himself. Edmund realizes that his father has undergone a transformation. When James qualifies his offer to send Edmund to any sanatorium, the stage directions say that "a grin twitches Edmund's lips. His resentment has gone" (p. 149). And when James has finished telling Edmund of his youth Edmund says, "I'm glad you've told me this, Papa. I know you a lot better now" (p. 151). A bond of understanding has been formed between James and Edmund.

During the rest of the play the audience sees James realizing his

mistakes in regard to Jamie and Mary. Throughout the play James has been Jamie's severest critic. Only once, when Mary is speaking of Jamie, do the stage directions say that James "starts to protest" (p. 87), and even then he does not actually defend Jamie because Mary interrupts him. After his recognition scene, however, James tells Edmund that Jamie is "devoted to you. It's the one good thing left in him" (p. 167). And when James attempts to console Jamie, who is broken by Mary's ghost-like appearance at the end of the play, the bond of identity is firmly established between them. The change in James's attitude toward Mary is shown by his treatment of her wedding gown, which O'Neill introduces as a stage device to reveal the extent of James's recognition. In Act IV Mary comes downstairs carrying her wedding gown, which for her symbolizes her happy youth. Though at first James starts to speak harshly to her, he instead gently takes the gown from her, saying "Here, let me take it, dear. You'll only step on it and tear it and get it dirty dragging it on the floor. Then you'd be sorry afterwards" (p. 172). The stage directions later describe James as "holding the wedding gown in his arms with an unconscious clumsy, protective gentleness" (p. 172) and as pouring "a drink without disarranging the wedding gown he holds carefully over his other arm and on his lap" (p. 175). Whereas before James has chastized Mary severely for not being able to overcome her addiction, after his recognition scene he is better able to understand and to sympathize with her. Mary's wedding gown becomes for James a symbol of their love, and his careful treatment of it shows that he has fully realized the common suffering which unites him with his family.

The strength of the character of James Tyrone has not been fully realized by O'Neill scholars. They have failed to note that from the

near-sordidness of the Tyrones' lives James emerges as an Aristotelian tragic protagonist. The patterns of ambivalence in the drama perform a dual function. They not only serve as the mechanism of the action of the play, but they also illustrate James's hamartia. O'Neill's use of the hamartia and the recognition scene indicate that the play belongs to the classical tradition. O'Neill once wrote to Arthur Hobson Quinn that one of his principal goals as a dramatist was "to see the transfiguring nobility of tragedy, in as near the Greek sense as one can grasp it, in seemingly the most ignoble, debased lives."³⁴ O'Neill wanted his audience to realize that, through the tragic viewpoint, it is possible for even the basest man to achieve nobility. In Long Day's Journey Into Night he certainly accomplished his objective.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 430.

² Eugene O'Neill, Long Day's Journey Into Night (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955), p. 142. All references are to this edition and page numbers for subsequent references will appear parenthetically in the text.

³ Bogard, p. 431.

⁴ The Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill, The Cooper Monographs, 15 (Basel, Switzerland: A. Francke AG Verlag Bern, 1970), p. 120.

⁵ Scheibler, p. 125.

⁶ Arthur and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 419.

⁷ "A Dissenting Opinion on the O'Neill Play," The Reporter, 13 Dec. 1956, pp. 38-39.

⁸ "O'Neill's Tragic Themes: Long Day's Journey Into Night," Arizona Quarterly, 13 (1957), 296.

⁹ A Drama of Souls: Studies in O'Neill's Super-naturalistic Technique (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri AB, 1968), p. 101.

¹⁰ Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension: An Interpretive Study of the Plays (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 186-87.

¹¹ The Iceman, the Arsonist, and the Troubled Agent: Tragedy and Melodrama on the Modern Stage (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1973), pp. 107-8.

¹² S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: With a Critical Text and Translation of The Poetics, 4th ed. with additions (1911; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951), p. 45. Butcher's translation is generally accepted as the standard edition of Aristotle's Poetics.

¹³ Butcher, p. 41.

¹⁴ Aristotle's Poetics: A Course of Eight Lectures, revised with a preface by Colin Hardie (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), p. 94.

¹⁵ Literary Criticism in Antiquity: A Sketch of its Development (1934; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1961), p. 95.

¹⁶ Aristotle: Poetics, introduction, commentary and appendixes by D. W. Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 144.

¹⁷ Butcher, p. 319.

¹⁸ Aristotle on the Art of Poetry: An Amplified Version With Supplementary Illustrations, revised ed. (1913; rpt. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1947), p. 40.

¹⁹ Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 378-85.

²⁰ Aristotle's Poetics: A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature, trans. Leon Golden, commentary by O. B. Hardison, Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 183-84.

²¹ Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 120.

- 22 F. L. Lucas, p. 115.
- 23 F. L. Lucas, p. 117.
- 24 Butcher, p. 13.
- 25 F. L. Lucas, p. 126.
- 26 The Voice of Tragedy (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, Publishers, Inc., 1963), pp. 11-12.
- 27 Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1968), p. 155.
- 28 Elements of Tragedy (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1969), p. 41.
- 29 A Definition of Tragedy (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1961), p. 106.
- 30 Mandel, p. 107.
- 31 The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1939), p. 10.
- 32 Krook, pp. 12-13.
- 33 This change which occurs in James's character is similar to Aristotle's concept of the peripeteia. See Butcher, pp. 329-30, n. 2.
- 34 Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama From the Civil War to the Present Day (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1927), p. 199. The letter is not dated, but Quinn indicates that at the time the book was published the letter was a recent one. The Gelbs (p. 4) indicate that the letter was written "fifteen years before beginning Long Day's Journey Into Night."

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