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**Eugene O'Neill. *Long Day's Journey into Night* (2nd edn.). Ed. Harold Bloom. Yale University: Yale University Press. 2002. pp. 179. ISBN 9780300094107.**

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**O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* A Bleak Journey to the Author's life**

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill's (1888-1953) *Long Day's Journey into Night* (written in 1941-42 but published in 1956) is strictly autobiographical drama. Many critics claim that this drama is the best and finest creation of O'Neill, similarly, other claim the drama to be the masterpiece of the author. The play has been published posthumously, and it represents O'Neill's last words to the horizon of the literary world. From all 32 full-length plays of O'Neill, three plays are there, namely *The Iceman Cometh* (1939), *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1943), *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941), where O'Neill adds and mingles his personal life, family and experiences.

Among these three plays, *Long Day's Journey into Night* is powerfully attached to the life of O'Neill; whereas, the rest of the two plays' characters and events are roughly corresponding to his own family and life. *Long Day's Journey into Night* bears a strong resemblance to O'Neill's life in many phases and parts. He himself appears in the character of Edmund in the very play. As in the reality, O'Neill suffers from consumption; likewise, in the drama Edmund, the younger son of Tyrone, suffers from consumption. Undeniably, some of the matches between O'Neill's life and this drama are remarkable and impressive enough to arrest our attention. Like Tyrone, O'Neill's father was an Irish Catholic at the same time he was a prominent actor and an alcoholic too. Like the character of Mary in the drama, O'Neill's mother was a morphine addicted lady. Identical to Jamie, O'Neill's older brother had not taken his life earnestly rather he chose to lead a random life full of whores and alcohol.

As a final point, O'Neill's older brother died in infancy; in the drama too, Edmund had an older brother named O'Neill who died in the initial stage of his life. Except these very foremost similarities, there are some minor issues, which are similar to O'Neill's life, appeared in the drama as well.

In spite of being autobiographical, in the passage of time, the drama has been proved immortal and one of the masterpieces in the field of literature and art at large. Since *Long Day's Journey into Night* has been staged on the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm in 1956, it has arrested wider popularity throughout the world. Five decades have passed already since the drama had been written in 1941; the drama is still being applauded and honored by

the audience not because of its association with the life of the author but because of the psychological, artistic, and superb dramatic techniques applied by the author.

For the time being, if we perceive the dramatic as something beyond the life of the author, just as a drama written in some imagined characters, we will still discover the drama as a worthy piece of literature. Eventually, it can undoubtedly be claimed that the drama, going beyond the horizon of self-dramatization of the author, has achieved a timeless value in world literature.

Reading this drama is a kind of exploration to the world of few peoples' lives who are imprisoned in the shackle of past experiences and events. For a reader, the drama deserves re-reading and re-exploring the tragic life of the author without having the scene of bloodshed, physical fight or death. Reading the drama will be an understanding of the deep unhappiness, gloom, and pain of the author's life; simultaneously, the reader will also discover O'Neill's profound insight in the world of drama.

The drama is a mysterious mixture of low comedy with high tragedy. As a reader, I have found the drama to be both entertaining and educative. It shows the vague destiny of the four Tyrone who were trying to escape from the factual reality and tortured past experiences. Yet, they were anticipating a beautiful family life; in the long run, things have been fallen and parted. It lets me remember one dialogue made by Mary Tyrone to her son Edmund Tyrone in the very drama. She says; "None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it...". This drama is entirely the display of destiny's role on human beings' lives. Something we do out of our evil desire, later on the mistakes run after us and we run after it to fix them.

The plots of the drama are rotating in the three main issues of the four Tyrone's lives; these three matters are also the sole reason for all the dissatisfaction, unhappiness, chaos and above all the catastrophes of the drama. The issues focused in the drama are; Mary's drug addiction, Jamie and Edmund's alcoholism and Tyrone's stinginess. In the very first act, we witness a very happy start. All the four Tyrone seem to be joyful and delighted. As time moves, the anguish and disaster are becoming apparent before our eyes.

In the first act, the discontent starts with the disease of Edmund and it ends with the doubt on Mary Tyrone concerning the addiction to a pain killer medicine called Morphine. Act two introduces us to alcohol, one of the important motifs in the drama. The debate between Edmund and Mary is also remarkable. Edmund complains against his father and shows a fatalistic view on life; in response to Edmund, Mary talks in the support of her husband and advises her son not to undermine Tyrone. About doctor, there is also a strong debate among all the family members; everybody blames Tyrone for choosing unskilled D. Hardy for the treatment of Edmund.

Act three mainly centers on the past of Mary and her dreams and desire. We experience a more fully advanced idea of Mary's desire for a home what she has been dreaming of since she married to Tyrone. In the fourth and final act, we view for the first time, the real communication between Tyrone and Edmund. Tyrone shares his bitter and struggling childhood experiences that makes him a miser, and promises Edmund that he will bring him in a good sanatorium. Still the crisis of Tyrone's family is not solved; rather, it has turned to the worst form in the ending part of the drama.

There are number of basic themes of the drama. The pivotal and crucial themes are; prison of the past, abuse of drugs, faithless present generation, unhappiness and dissatisfaction to life, and threat to 'American Dream'. Throughout the drama we experience that all four Tyrone, living under a single roof, are being haunted and tortured by the bitter and unpleasant past. Mary wanted to be a pianist in a church or a nun, but after being married to James Tyrone her dream shattered into pieces. More specifically she thought that it was a wrong decision of her life to be married to Tyrone.

In the same way, Tyrone too had high expectations and dreams for his elder son Jamie who in reality has not been successful; rather, he ruined his life in frustration and dissolution. All the encounters and clashes inside the Tyrone's family have been begotten from the nerve-racking past experiences. They tried but could not come out of the prison of the past. However, it is significant to note that *Long Day's Journey into Night* is not merely marching forward to the time ahead; nonetheless, it is a journey back into the upsetting past of all four lives. It is a horrible involvement for a reader to realize that the family is not building improvement or progress in a least degree; on the contrary, as the time moves on, it continually sliding into the depth of despair and devastation.

Nobody in the family is in the mood of forgiving or forgetting the past. Another striking thing about the drama is; the very word 'American Dream' has been questioned and threatened by it. We will see a well-established famous American citizen is fully failed to make himself and his family happy. More utterly, abuse of drugs will also capture the audience's eye. Everybody doubts on Mary concerning her addiction to a drug named Morphine that she has been taking frequently since she has been addicted. Indeed, all the discontents and dissatisfactions actually originated from this drug addiction of Mary Tyrone. Additionally, the rest of the three family members of the family are also addicted to alcohol. We see that father and sons are drinking wine together; further, Jamie encourages Edmund to drink wine.

Though the play was awarded the Pulitzer Prize once it was first published, and it has been admired as one of the most popular and successful plays of the 20th century, but there are limitations and criticism as well. Some critics claimed that the drama has aroused the greatest antagonism in the family life. Tyrone's family is certainly not a unique family in America; rather, it represents a typical American family life. Every single family can get itself reflected in at least one of the tiniest parts of the play. It passes the message of the nihilistic kind of approach towards life. This may affect millions of lives beyond the boundary of America.

Besides, the young generation's portrayal by O'Neill is also not welcomed agreeably by some scholars. Going through the drama, one may find an over-generalized idea of the new generation of O'Neill's time. O'Neill depicts the young's beliefs as atheistic, lives as frustrated, thinking as mean, characters as nasty, and morality as degraded. What I believe personally is; the young generation was not as vicious and frustrated as O'Neill depicts in his drama, *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Leaving little optimism and expectation for the future, the drama brings tragedy in all four Tyrone's lives.

Besides all these antagonistic claims on this drama, there are positive things, which have surpassed the drawbacks. Thus, the drama has become one of the finest and celebrated plays of the 20th century. The drama, with big commercial success, achieved the Pulitzer Prize in 1956. It is another achievement for this drama, and it also carries the mark of excellence of O'Neill. The drama has not only arrested the individuals but also has

powerfully been acclaimed by the literary scholars of American drama and numerous literary scholars in English at large. Confidently, I believe that the drama will be a message and moral lessons of life for all individual readers of the 21st century which holds millions of Jamie and Edmund Tyrones. There are many positive things to study, share, explore and absorb from the drama, which has become immortal in its excellence of art and perfection.