



## The Consequence of Psychological Imbalances in O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night

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### ABSTRACT

*Long Day's Journey into Night is an autobiographical drama with strong Freudian overtone. The story revolves around four characters; Father James Tyrone, Mother Mary and the two sons Jamie and Edmund. The members of the family are under the firm grip of their subconscious mind. The Psychoanalytical formulations of Freud in the drama are made apparent in the article. The Oedipus complex, the repercussion of a repressive psyche within each character is highlighted. The dramatist finds himself in the character of Edmund, who is suffering from Tuberculosis and is admitted in a sanatorium. The intransigence in the family leads to constant blameworthiness, anger, depression and repression. An attempt is made to analyze the psychic state of the characters. The author has made an effort to integrate his subconscious and the conscious self. He has tried to relive his past through this play as an act of self-psychoanalyzing.*

**KEYWORDS : Psychoanalysis, Repression, Oedipus Complex**

The current article evidences the blend of Literature and Psychology. Eugene O'Neill, was the only American playwright to have won the Nobel prize for literature and also to win the prestigious Pulitzer prize four times. He introduced psychological and social realism into the American stage and was among the earliest to use the American vernacular to focus on characters marginalized by the society. O'Neill was much interested in Greek Tragedies and Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytical concepts of Sigmund Freud and C.G Jung caught O'Neill's interest. Tragedy was an integral part of O'Neill's life, which was the underlying force throughout his dramaturgy. Long Day's Journey into Night is an autobiographical drama by the author who came from a very turbulent past. A brief insight into the drama makes it pertinent for the audience to know who Eugene O'Neill was and why tragedy was inbred within him. He had dedicated this drama to his wife Charlotte, as the "play of old sorrow written in tears and blood" (O'Neill, Long Day's Journey into Night, 1984).

Eugene O'Neill's exceptional Long Day's Journey into Night had accredited him with fame and eminence. This tragic story line has neither gaudy display nor elite characterization and nor does it have any intimidating plot in it. Yet, it has gained the appreciation and acknowledgment of the entire realm of dramatic world as well the world of literature. The entire play is wrapped in a length of about 18 hours on a summer day in 1912. One of the most significant reason for such an acclaim is O'Neill's depiction to the audience about the tragic story of day to day occurrences of a common man and his family, showing the sorrow and difficulty in every day circumstances of existential survival.

The emotional and psychic equilibrium is disrupted within all the members of the family. Under the psychological lens, The Tyrone family is suffering from what Freud called as the Pleasure Principle – the idea that if necessity did not dictate the working of human, then they would simply do things for their own gratification. Freud's segregated the human mind into three parts. The first being The Id -the part of the mind that demands immediate gratification. It is unaffected by any logic or reasoning. Second, the Ego- it acts in contrary to The Id, because it is the part of the mind which acts of reasoning and the reality principle. Third, The Superego -It is the part of the mind that incorporates the values and morals of the society. Its main function is to control the Id's impulses. The Superego consists attributes like conscience, ideal self, etc. These constitute the behavior and the attitude of a person towards himself and towards his society. Any anarchy within the working of these constituents of the human psyche as proposed by Freud would cause tumult within an individual, as it has been the case with the characters of Long Day's Journey into Night

The members of the family are not happy within their respected slots. Long Days Journey can be regarded as a play of fate, where the family is encompassed by forces of resentment, lust, blame and remorse. The bewailing attitude of the family members hardly allows them to recognize their love for each other. For any family to be happy it is imperative that the roots remain strong in order to strengthen the entire

family, but here we have a family where the mother finds contentment in relapsing into her past through her morphine addiction. She blames her husband for her present unhappy condition. Mary always thinks of her blooming youth when she got married to a handsome Shakespearean actor, giving up her intense ambition of being a nun to serve the divinity. Psychologically, she is under the firm grip of her subconscious that doesn't allow her to come out of her past blooming youth. Mary feels that her ambition is not fulfilled and desires to roll back from her present life. This sense of sacrifice ruined her family relationships. There is disproportionate Ego (her reality) and Id (the world of her own) within Mary. It is also seen in the drama that her innate state of denial doesn't allow her to accept the fact that Edmund was suffering from tuberculosis. Mary, a product of Electra Complex, knew within herself that confiding to the fact would put her in a similar state as before, when she witnessed her father's death due to the same disease. Desperately trying to escape the similar pain for the second time, she deliberately chooses not to accept the disease of Edmund as being Tuberculosis, but terms it as a normal cold. She is happy to live in a fake world of denial rather than facing the painful reality.

The father of the family is eager to save money in every way possible. He is positioned in a precarious situation within the family. Trying to balance his attitude of money saving with the needs of his family, James is driven by the so called American Dream. It was his childhood desire to become super rich within a very short span of time. Such a penny pinching attitude of the father, leads to many complications within the Tyrone family. His wife Mary is addicted to drugs, courtesy of the cheap doctor that was hired by James during Mary's pregnancy, who prescribed her to inject morphine for the temporary relief of her labor pain, which then became a lifelong habit. The character of James Tyrone was suffering from a dual – personality disorder. On one hand, he is desperate to understand the feelings and emotions within his family, by comforting everyone, despite continuous blame and regret. On the other hand, he is a penny pincher. He intends to admit Edmund into a cheap sanatorium for his cure from Tuberculosis. He also hired a cheap doctor for his pregnant wife who had injected morphine as a curative relief from the pain. He is materialistic in action, but contrary through his intention. James Tyrone can be termed as a character with a shade of Schizophrenia. The Psychological imbalance of "Id" and "Ego" within his psyche is evident. The unconscious impulse of the characters is unsuccessful in negotiating with their present situation, due to the unconscious repositories that are actively functioning within their psyches.

The elder son, Jamie Tyrone is a product of the Oedipus complex. His acute oedipal repression searches leeway in the form of incestuous relations, with mistress's of his mother's age. He tries to corrupt his younger brother, by trying to lead him in his immoral ways, because he senses his mother's affection for Edmund which becomes intolerable to him. Jamie says to Edmund, "But don't get me wrong, kid. I love you more than I hate you" (O'Neill, Long Day's Journey into Night, 1984, p. 166) such a statement calls for psychological help. It is seen

that the family members intrinsically love each other, but still hate each other, which shows a deep psychological imbalance and clash, within their psyche for power emotions of love and hate. Long Day's Journey is a play of addictions as all the members of the family are into intoxicants; morphine and alcohols. These addictions play a vital role as they drag the characters in a world where they can fulfil their suppressed desires without any hesitation. Addictions drag characters away from reality to accomplish their desires.

The Author had found his character in the character of Edmund. He is the only character, seen with a ray of hope within the Tyrone family. O'Neill had desires for his mother and his intense oedipal complex searched for the love of his mother in his three wives. The author sub-consciously yearned for his mother's love, which is portrayed through his characters in all his major plays like Mourning Becomes Electra, Desire Under the Elms, Strange Interlude, and many others. One can say that O'Neill was trying to relive his emotional frustration through his dramas unintentionally. Doris Alexander in his O'Neill last plays, Separating Art from Autobiography, (2005) states that "It is their fight for the dream, doomed to failure by the "something within "that gives tremendous significance and exaltation of O'Neill's family play, and by way of recreating struggle, O'Neill was able to face and resolve the pain of his own life" (p. 68). This act of self-psychoanalyzing led him to align his conscious and subconscious so that he could sense and gauge the depth of his tragic character beyond the realm of any convention. Morton Richard Jr (1991) in his 11: The Author as Oedipus in Mourning Becomes Electra and Long Day's Journey into Night in " Eugene O'Neill's Century: Centennial Views on America's Foremost Tragic Dramatist" considers Long Day's Journey into Night can be considered as the play where O'Neill "faithfully presents these truths as they had been exposed by his own reflection and his experience of psychoanalysis" (p183). This autobiographical masterpiece had gathered great fame and was tremendously successful. Eugene O'Neill Won Pulitzer Prize for the drama in 1957 posthumously.

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