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VIOLENCE IN THREE PLAYS BY EUGENE O'NEILL: THE EMPEROR JONES, DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS AND LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT.

By

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ABSTRACT

VIOLENCE IN THREE PLAYS BY EUGENE O'NEILL: EMPEROR JONES, DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS, AND LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT.

By

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Relying on Rene Girard's Violence and the Sacred, this thesis examines violence in Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones, Desire Under the Elms, and Long Day's Journey into Night. Each play is viewed in the light of Girard's concepts of "collective murder," "ambivalence," "mimetic rivalry," "sacrificial victimage," and "generative violence." For O'Neill, Violence is generative only if it leads to a spiritual communion between people. This explains why it is generative only in Long Day's Journey into Night. Violence triggered by selfisheness and materialism cannot be generative, for it leads to the destruction of society. The factor that drew O'Neill's attention to the cyclical nature of violence could be the pattern of failed relationships in his family. The three plays could be seen as attempts to break that vicious circle. Only in the autobiographical play, is his attempt successful.

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When Dr Arthur Athanason asked me why I chose to write on Eugene O'Neill, I anwered vaguely: "he attracts me." After working on this thesis for six months, I have realized that O'Neill speaks aloud what I never dared to confront: my own failed relationships with my mother.

Despite her love for us, the only thing my mother can express is disapproval and criticism. Whenever I am hurt, I seek the solace of morbid poetry and music. My mother hates Laforgue, Al-Moutanabbi, and Jacques Brel as much as James Tyrone hates Edmund's "damned library." In Long Day's Journey into Night, Edmund tells his mother: "I've been away a lot, and I've never noticed it broke your heart !" (119). I have always pretended to be ill to get my mother's attention. I even enjoyed seeing the tears in her eyes at the Carthage airport, on my way to the United States. Thanks to O'Neill, I have learned to understand and accept my mother as she is, for she was born in a culture where emotions are seen as weakness.

I would like to thank especially Dr. Arthur Athanason, the director of my thesis. His love of teaching made me love modern drama, and his encouragement boosted my self-confidence. The course he offered on Tennessee Williams invited me to look to my

own relationships with my parents, and conclude that it is the love of those around us that makes life meaningful.

Among the graduate faculty, I particularly thank Dr. Johnsen, my academic advisor, who helped me to understand Rene Girard's theory. I am also grateful to Dr. Lopez, Dr. Uphaus, and Dr. Matheson for their support during my early graduate work. I express similar gratitude to my professors in Tunisia, especially to Mrs Tarchouna and Mr Belgaroui.

I owe thanks as well to Hichem Ben Youssef, my father, who kindled my love of literature and history, and who, despite my mother's opposition, insisted that I pursue my studies in the United States. I also wish to express a special gratitude to Aisha Ben Youssef, my mother and teacher, who introduced me to French novels and poetry.

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INTRODUCTION

Aggression on a large scale is obviously enough the human problem with which we ought chiefly to be concerned. This issue has always preoccupied the human mind. Greek tragedy was essentially about violence: Euripides's Ajax, Sophocles's Oedipus the King, and Aeschylus's Oresteia bear witness to the bloody nature of Greek tragedy. The plays of Seneca also indicate the interest of the Romans in the problem of human aggression. In Elizabethan times, the blinding of Gloucester and the death of Cordelia in Shakespeare's King Lear point to the irrational nature of human violence. Le Theatre du Grand-Guignol de Paris (which lasted from 1897 till late 1962) was devoted to horror plays and designed to terrorize and amuse its audience. Nowadays, people strive to understand and to obviate the horrors of W.W.I and W.W.II, but there is still disagreement between scientists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts regarding the nature of human aggressiveness.

The first group give biological bases to violence. Whereas some scientists relate it to human genes, others present evidence that aggressive behavior has its origin in brain mechanisms.[1] The second

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[1] For further information on the theories of aggression see David N. Daniels; Marshall.F. Gilula; and Frank Ochberg, Violence and the Struggle for Existence (Boston: Little, Brown & and company, 1970).

group which is composed of psychologists emphasizes the importance of learning upon aggression. In his book Aggression, Scott makes it clear that fighting is a learned behavior based on the principle of recompense. Although it can be stimulated by the pain of an attack, aggression in the strict sense of an unprovoked attack can only be produced by training. He concludes that a "happy child and peaceful environment should automatically produce a child with strong habits of being peaceful."[2]

As for the psychoanalysts, they have relied on instincts as explanatory constructs in human aggressive behavior. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1922), Freud viewed such behavior as a function of frustration. At that time Freud thought that aggression was a primordial reaction against the thwarting of either pleasure seeking or pain avoiding responses. Later, Freud altered this early conception of aggression. In Totem and Taboo (1950), he formulated the problem in terms of two instincts: the Eros, or life instinct and Thanatos, or death instinct. For Freud, "man is impelled not only by attempts to maintain life but also by the search for quiescence."[3] The primary function of the death instinct is to bring man to an inanimate state. Aggression is the manifestation of the Thanatos, or destructive forces. Freud made suggestions regarding the reduction of violent conflicts. Since aggression is a result of energy which must be expressed, it is useless to try to eliminate man's aggressive tendencies directly. Rather, he proposed to bring Eros into play against the antagonistic forces (Thanatos) by encouraging emotional

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[2] P. I. Scott, Aggression (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958),p. 22.

[3] Knud S. Larsen, Aggression Myths and Models (Chicago: Nelson Hall), p. 41.

ties with people. Freud's ideal society would be some form of "benevolent dictatorship, where people have subordinated their instinctual impulses to the dictatorship of reason."[4] Freud's critics argue that the elimination of conflict must begin with the restructuring of societies and the elimination of social rank as the root cause of most conflict between and within nations. They fear that Freud's "benevolent dictatorship" could turn out to be another Nazi or Fascist regime.

Karen Horney, a neo-Freudian psychoanalyst, has proposed that anxiety is the basis of all motivated behavior. For Horney, the genesis of aggression lies in the rejection of the child. "Basic anxiety,"[5] she argues, "is the feeling a child has of being abandoned, isolated, and helpless to cope with a potentially hostile world." The child's response may take three forms: "the child may learn to move toward people, that is, to be open and acceptant of communication; to move against people and show hostile behavior; or to move away from them by avoiding potential conflict altogether." For Storr, another neo-psychoanalyst, aggressive drives serve a biological function in terms of preserving the individual and the species. Aggression is necessary under conditions of competition. Only those with strong aggressive drives will survive. Thus, Storr's theory appears to be in direct contradiction to the death instinct which is fundamental to Freud's aggression theory.[6] Whereas for Freud the purpose of the death instinct is to return the organism to an inanimate stage. Aggression as strivings for survival reflects the Eros and would

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[4] Larsen, p. 42.,

[5] K. Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: Norton, 1945), mentioned by Larsen, p. 213.

[6] Storr, A Human Aggression (New York: Atheneum, 1968), mentioned by Larsen, p. 213.

appear to contradict the death instinct, which is the basis of psychoanalytic theory.

In his book Violence and the Sacred,[7] Rene Girard refutes Freud's instinct theory as an explanation for human behavior, and replaces it with the notion of culture. In his quest of cultural origins, Girard uses a peculiar method of research: it is a marriage of anthropology, psychology, and literary criticism. According to this French thinker, violence has a purgative function which helps to maintain a social order based on the differentiation of classes.

In "The Origins of Myth and Ritual," Girard states that a collective murder is at the origin of all cultural forms. The unanimous violence directed at this victim is generative because "by putting an end to the vicious and destructive cycle of violence, it simultaneously initiates another constructive cycle, that of the sacrificial rite that protects the community from the same violence and allows culture to flourish" (93). In Girard's theory, the pre-cultural state is characterized by an utter lack of distinctions. Human beings are identical to one another, and this identity draws the human mass into a "mimetic strife." In his essay "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism," Girard explains what he means by "mimetic rivalry:"[8]

> If the appropriative gesture of an individual named A is rooted in the imitation of an individual named B, it means that A and B must reach together for one and the same

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[7] Rene Girard, Violence and the Sacred. Trans. Patrick Gregory, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977).

[8] Rene Girard, "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism," Berkshire Review, 14-16 (1979-81): 9-19.

> object. They become rivals for that object. If the tendency to imitate appropriation is present on both sides, imitative rivalry must tend to become reciprocal; it must be subject to the back and forth reinforcement that communication theorists call a positive feedback. In other words, the individual who first acts as a model will experience an increase in his own appropriative urge when he finds himself thwarted by his own imitator. And reciprocally. Each becomes the imitator of his own imitator and the model of his own model. Each tries to put aside the obstacle that the other places in his path. Violence is generated by this process; or rather violence is the process itself when two or more partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical and other means (9).

Mimesis thus engenders a situation of "reciprocal violence." In this process which links violence to the loss of differentiation, incest is viewed as its ultimate goal. Although he agrees with Freud that the son seeks to take the father's place everywhere, even in his conjugal bed, Girard maintains that the "sexual cathexis" toward the mother comes after identification with the father, not before, as Freud suggested.

Violence calms down only through what Girard calls "the scapegoat effect." Through this process, the community unites and transforms its "reciprocal violence" into a "collective violence" directed against this "surrogate victim" or scapegoat. As Thomas L. Jeffers writes, the "community must say that the victim alone was the carrier of violence, and that they were merely expelling it. This community can remember the collective murder which founded their

society only in a religiously 'interpreted' form, whereby the victim is metamorphosed into a god. Since his death restored the community, his advent must be providential. Who but a god would have come to take the guilt of all onto himself, giving himself as a sacrifice so that others might thrive again."[9] For Girard, there is no difference between violence and the sacred. The sacred is nothing but human violence transfigured and hidden from human awareness. The god (the sacred) is the violence which was originally expelled and which sacrificial ritual keeps safely transcendent. The god "digests" the sacrifice, taking the offered violence into himself and thus purifying the celebrants. If men neglect the sacrificial ritual, the god, maddened by hunger, ...will descend among men and lay claim to his nourishment with unexampled cruelty and ferocity. Which is to say, "the exteriorized violence will reveal its true home in men themselves, and once more the community will enter the vicious cycle of reprisals that threatens its very existence."[10]

In his review of Violence and the Sacred, Jeffers notes that the power of this theory "lies in its ability to explain many religious forms and to identify a multiplicity of these forms as the scattered fragments of a single system" (422). Girard's fragments include such diverse ideas and practices as royal incest, animal sacrifice, regicide, myths of dying gods, attitudes towards twins, and rituals. The primary function of the latter, according to Girard, is to maintain social solidarity by diffusing violence and preserving it from running wild as it threatened to do in the past. Girard remarks that myths

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[9] Mentioned by Thomas L. Jeffers, in "*Violence Is Our Property*: the New Work of Rene Girard," Michigan Quarterly Review 19- 20 (1980-1): 422.

[10] Jeffers, p. 422.

and rituals distort the reality that generated them to protect society from guilt by perpetuating the delusion that violence resides beyond its boundaries.

The possibility of this theory for literary criticism first emerges in Girard's view of language. Unlike the post-structuralists (Lacan and Derrida), a literary text has a reference to a reality outside itself. In fact, Girard assumes that "our knowledge in the humanities is neither purely objective, nor purely subjective, but somewhere in between. He agrees with Frederic Jamestown that if "we turn language into a prison house...we ignore its true mystery just as much as when we take it for granted, when we assume it is always perfectly adequate to its task."[11]

The second possibility of this theory for literary criticism emerges in Girard's reading of Greek tragedies especially Oedipus the King. According to Girard, Sophocles understands this myth better than Freud. If the plague which infests Thebes is reciprocal violence itself, then Oedipus, Creon, and Tiresias are in fact struggling to see who can lay the blame on whom. Oedipus loses, and the crimes he is charged with, patricide and incest, represent the extreme confusion of identities which marks a city where everybody imitates the violence of everybody else, where the father is no longer distinct from the son, and both have become "enemy brothers" fighting to the death over the same prize. Girard observes that Sophocles couldn't show any of this directly, first "because the conventions of his theater presuppose distinctions which are lost in the first sacrificial crisis," and second, "because he fears that too strong an intimation of

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[11] Jeffers, p. 424.

that crisis would unleash violence which his audience believes resides in Oedipus, not in themselves."[12] Girard concludes that tragedy, like religion displaces and regulates original violence. But it doesn't function as well as religion, for, in spite of the playwright's caution, it reveals too much of the chaos and turbulence which must have accompanied the first crisis. And "it is this Dionysian aspect in Sophocles's tragedies which alarmed Plato and led him, for the sake of civil order, to put this tragedian on the road with Oedipus and thus to perpetuate the cycle of retribution."[13]

In his book, Girard focuses primarily on the portrayal of violence in Greek drama and devotes little attention to violence in modern drama. The latter issue has become the concern of many contemporary dramatists such as Eugene O'Neill and Samuel Beckett. This thesis is a reading of Eugene O'Neill's plays The Emperor Jones (1920), Desire Under the Elms (1924), and Long Day's Journey into Night (1941) in the light of Girard's theory of violence. In each of these three plays, O'Neill drew upon the model of Greek tragedy, yet he used different modes: the first is expressionistic, the second mainly naturalistic, and the third both realistic and naturalistic. Accordingly, there will be three chapters, one for each play. The first part of each chapter is a textual analysis of the play based upon Girard's theory of violence. The second part will focus on each play as a theatrical experience, and will also examine how the play's form and mode relate to the ideas discussed in the first part of the chapter.

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[12] Jeffers, p. 425.
[13] Jeffers, p. 426.

CHAPTER I

The Emperor Jones

In The Emperor Jones (1921), Eugene O'Neill tells us the story of a Negro who fled to the West Indies after committing two murders in the United States. On a West Indian island, he makes himself Emperor. Exploiting the superstitions of the natives, he tells them that only a silver bullet can kill him. After a while, the natives realize he is milking them and decide to kill him. Although he flees to the forest, hoping to escape onboard a ship to Europe, Jones finds out that he is running in a circle. He is finally killed by a silver bullet the natives have made for that purpose. In this expressionistic play, O'Neill takes us not only to the West Indies, but also to the African jungle. The world that O'Neill depicts is full of fear, violence, and guilt. This chapter will examine The Emperor Jones in view of Girard's theory of violence. In the first part, Jones's breakup with the Baptist Church will be viewed as a deicide. The insuing guilt represents man's guilt toward the killing of the Old God. The second part will show that violence is due to the state of confusion and chaos on the Island. The third part will identify two sacrificial rites in the play. The first occurs when Jones offers himself to the crocodile God to absolve himself of sin, and the second, when the natives unanimously decide to kill Jones. This part will also explain why this

act of unanimous violence fails to restore harmony to the community. The final part will show how the expressionistic mode of the play contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of violence.

On the literal level, Jones is fleeing from the natives who are preparing his death. On a deeper level, this journey through the forest is a psychological one. In the midst of his flight, some "Little Formless Fears creep out from the deeper blackness of the forest"[1] (30). In Scene 3 and 4, he sees the ghosts of two people he has killed in the United States: his fellow convict Jeff, and the prison Guard who had viciously slashed him on the shoulders with his whip. The forest is thus a metaphor for man's struggle with his guilty conscience. In Scene 5, in a voice of agonized pleading, Jones confesses:

> Lawd Jesus, heah my prayer! I'se po' sinner, a po' sinner! I knows I done wrong, I knows it! When I cotches Jeff cheatin' wid loaded dice my anger overcomes me and I kills him dead. Lawd, I done wrong! And down heah whar dese fool bush niggers raises me up to the seat O' de mighty, I steals all I could grab. Lawd, I done wrong! I knows it! I'se sorry! Forgive me, Lawd! Forgive dis po' sinner! (42-43).

From an onomastic point of view, Brutus is originally the name of a white man. Marcus Junius Brutus (85-42 .B.C) is one of the conspirators who assassinated Julius Caesar. In killing the King (here, the white guard), Jones symbolically commits a deicide.[2] This

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[1] Eugene O'Neill, The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, The Hairy Ape (New York: The Modern Library, 1937).

[2] Till the late nineteeenth century, Blacks were portrayed as the children of the white father. Thus, in killing the white guard, Jones is symbolically killing the Great Father. O'Neill seems to be using the Medieval view that kings are God's substitutes on earth.

suggests that the nineteenth century secularism could be viewed as an act of deicide. In breaking away from the church, modern man has killed the Old God. Instead, he is venerating the gods of greed, selfishness, and materialism. In The Emperor Jones, Jones "has foisted himself off as a god incarnate on a band of superstitious savages, relying only on his wits and bravado"[3] (21-22). He has even created the myth of his own invincibility. As Smithers recalls: "You was so strong only a silver bullet could kill yer, you told 'em" (14). In Scene 1, the blazing sunlight, the "dazzling eye-smiting scarlet" (5) with which Jones's throne is painted, and even his red pants lending "something not altogether ridiculous about his grandeur" (9) "implicitly link him with suffering heroes like Prometheus and disguised gods like Apollo, the sun-deity".[4] This suggests that in breaking away from the church, man has condemned himself to eternal suffering and guilt. He is partly responsible for his plight. Jones seems to have forgotten his Baptist Church since he has been on the island: "If I finds out dem niggers believes dat black is white, den I yells it out louder 'n deir loudest...It don't git me nothin' to do missionary work for de Baptist Church. I'se after de coin, an' I lays my Jesus on de shelf for de time bein'" (24).

In Violence and the Sacred, Girard points that it is the loss of distinctions that leads to violence. An overview of the play shows many similarities between O'Neill's characters. These similarities exist not only between people of the same race but also between members of different ethnic groups. First, there is basically no big

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[3] Emil Roy, "Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape* As Mirror Plays," Comparative Drama 2 (1968): 21-31.

[4] Emil Roy, p. 22.

difference between Lem and Jones: besides being black, they both have been Emperors of the West Indies. The antagonistic relation between them exemplifies Girard's concept of "mimetic rivalry." Lem seems to function as a model for Jones. When the latter arrives on the Island, he usurps Lem's throne. By the end of the play, the disciple (Jones) becomes the model of his own model (Lem). Jones has told the bush niggers that he has a strong charm: only a silver bullet can kill him, creating thus the myth of the invincible King. In Scene 8, Lem is trying to regain his throne by using the same charm as Jones's:

> Smithers: [Astonished.] They got silver bullets?
>
> Lem: Lead bullet no kill him. He got um strong charm. I cook um money, make um silver bullet, make um strong charm, too (57).

Second, except for their differing in skin color, Smithers and Jones are the same. And even this difference is minimalized. The stage directions inform us that "the tropics have tanned" Smithers's "naturally pasty face" (6). Both characters have been in prison, and as their names indicate, both are capable of violence. Brutus Jones "brutally" killed Jeff, a Negro fellow-convict because he was cheating at dice. With the same "brutality," he bashed in the skull of the prison Guard who had whipped him. On the Island, he is a source of terror. As he constructs the myth of his own invincibility, the "bush niggers" look up to him as if he were a deity. His revolver, his charm (the silver bullet), and his whip serve as instruments to keep everything under control. Similarly, Smithers's name suggests

violence. "To smither"--which means to smash or blow out into tiny fragments--applies to what this character has been trying to do to the natives, and to Jones in the play. His ill-treatment of the old black woman[5] exemplifies his violent and fearsome nature. The old woman is scared to death when he catches her sneaking out of the palace. "He taps her bundle with his riding whip" (7). He is capable of psychological violence too. It is with ecstatic pleasure that he tells Jones that the Negroes are planning to kill him. In the same scene, and with the same pleasure, he revives Jones's fear of the Whites in the United States:

> Smithers: No, Gawd strike me! I was only thinkin' o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States.
>
> Jones [Angered.]: How come dey're lies?
>
> Smithers: You'd 'ave been in jail if you 'ad, wouldn't yer then? [With Venom.] And from what I've 'eard, It ain't 'ealthy for a black to kill a white man in the States. They burns 'em in oil, don't they? (17).

Throughout Scene 1, Jones and Smithers vacillate between defensiveness and release of restraint. Being afraid of each other, they each try to protect themselves by destroying the mask the other is wearing. As Smithers tries to shatter the mask of security Jones is wearing by reminding him of what awaits him if ever he is extradited to the United States, Jones's tone begins to change slightly. His uneasiness and tension escalate, progressing from suspicion, anger, "cool deadliness," to murderous violence. He tells Smithers:

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[5] In Scene 1, Smithers catches an old black woman running away from the Palace. She tells him that the other Negoes have left for the mountain to join Lem who is preparing Jones's murder.

> You mean lynchin' 'd scare me? Well, I tells you, Smithers, maybe I does kill one white man back dere. Maybe I does. And maybe I kills another right heah 'fore long if he don't look out (17).

Smithers's forced laughter comes in time to relieve the atmosphere of its deadly tension:

> I was on'y spoofin' yer. Can't yer take a joke ? And you was just sayin' you'd never been in jail (17).

Just as Smithers's laughter is a defensive strategy against the Emperor's anger, Jones's laughter at the end of the scene protects him from his own fears of being killed by the "bush niggers":

> Jones: Does you think I'd slink out de back door like a common nigger? I'se Emperor yit, ain't I? And de Emperor Jones leaves de way he comes, and dat black trash don't dare stop him--not yit, leastways. [He stops for a moment in the doorway listening to the far-off but insistent beat of the tom-tom.] Listen to dat roll-call, will you? Must be mighty big drum carry dat far. [Then with a laugh.] Well, if dey ain't no whole brass band to see me off, I sho' got de drum part of it. So long, white man. [He puts his hands in his pockets and with studied carelessness, whistling a tune, he saunters out of the doorway and off to the left.] (26).

Much of the verbal violence and threats in Scene 1 stem from external attempts to break the façade. According to Emil Roy, "Jones's visions, like Lear's storm, project psychic tempests onto the cosmos. At the same time, the progressive stripping away of Jones's uniform, like Lear's symbolic disrobing reveals the 'the poor forked animal'

beneath the egotistical, self-gratifying clothing" (28). In Scene 4, Jones "tears off his coat and flings it away from him, revealing himself stripped to the waist" (37). In stripping off the mask of the civilized Negro, he confronts his nakedness: he is as superstitious and scared as the "bush niggers" he laughs at:

> [With a sudden terror.] Lawd God, don't let me see no more o' dem ha'nts! Dey gits my goat! [Then trying to talk himself into confidence.] You fool nigger, dey ain't no such things! Don't de Baptist parson tell you dat many times? Is you civilized, or is you like dese ign'rent black niggers heah? (38).

Besides vacillating between defensiveness and relief of tension, the two characters work hand in hand like skinflints to dispossess the natives of their wealth. In Scene 1, Jones draws Smithers's attention to the fact that they are both thieves:

> Dere's little stealin' like you does, and dere's big stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' fame when you croaks (13).

Although black himself, Jones nevertheless treats the natives with the same contempt and scorn as Smithers does. He whips them, milks them, and calls them "niggers." In Scene 1, just after his speech about the big and the little stealing, Jones says:

> If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds Emperor in two years" (13).

In trying to mimick the model of the white father, he ends up by having no identity at all. He is a white racist inside a black skin. He is prejudiced against his own race: he calls the blacks on the island "bush niggers" (12) and "black trash" (26). In the forest, in an attempt to reassure the self, he refers to himself as "nigger": "Cheah up, nigger, de worst is yet to come" (28). This way of looking at the self is obviously symptomatic of a fragmented self.

Besides the aforesaid similarities, all differences between man and God, and man and animals are lost. In Scene 1, the old black woman kneels down and "embraces" Smithers's knees in supplication. Later, we are told that Jones is venerated by the "bush niggers." Jones himself tells us: "And dere all dem fool, hush niggers was kneelin' down and bumpin' deir heads on de ground like I was a miracle out of de Bible. Oh Lawd, from dat time on I has dem all eatin' out of my hand. I cracks de whip and dey jumps through" (14). In Scene 7, Jones becomes a reptile. "His voice joins in the incantation, in the cries, he beats time with his hands sways his body to and and from the waist" (54).

In this play, it is Jones who is responsible for the state of chaos and disorder on the Island. At the end of Scene 1, Jones confesses that he has used the natives' superstition to exploit them: "If I finds out dem niggers believes dat black is white, den I yells it out louder 'n deir loudest" (24). Paradoxically, the disorder he has created to take advantage of the natives' ignorance turns against him. In the first forest scene, the white stone under which Jones has hidden his food suddenly multiplies. All the white stones become the same for him. Everything seems chaotic because in the dark everything looks

the same. It is at this moment that his fears begin to become apparent. After scratching a match on his trousers to find the white stone, he is aware that he is in fact revealing his position to the Negroes. But he cannot prevent himself from firing bullets at the ghosts of Jeff, the Guard, the auctioneer, the planter, and the threatening crocodile. This calls to mind Girard's view that violence once triggered becomes irrational. It won't be appeased till it is deflected on somebody.

In this play, Jones offers himself up for sacrifice to find peace. To absolve himself from sin, he subconsciously offers himself to the crocodile God. This animal grotesquery indicates Jones's ambivalent[6] attitude toward the sacrificial scene he is witnessing. It is true that he is afraid of the Congo witch-doctor and the crocodile, but at the same time he is attracted to them and joins in the incantation. In Scene 7, he approaches the altar with ambivalent feelings of fear and fascination. Death to Jones is both scary and attractive. When he sees and listens to the witch-doctor's chants, he "looks up, starts to spring to his feet, reaches a half-kneeling, half-squatting position and remains rigidly fixed there, paralyzed with awed fascination by this new apparition" (52). When the witch-doctor designates him as a sacrifice for the crocodile god, at first he moves back, then he starts moaning and squirming on his belly toward the monster. He ends up by firing the silver bullet at the crocodile. Symbolically, the crocodile represents the evil that is inside Jones himself. In killing the monster, he is in fact killing himself. He is dead a long time before

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[6] Girard defines ambivalence as a circular line of reasoning: "Because the victim is sacred, it is criminal to kill him--but the victim is sacred only because he is to be killed" (1).

the Negroes catch him. Just as Jones has predicted, it is the silver bullet that seals his fate.

Jones's murder is the second sacrificial rite in the play. The ministers, the guards and the entire Island have joined Lem on the hills and initiated the game. Jones like an animal is finally killed by a silver bullet. In this modern play, this former Pullman porter may represent the first victim of the "sarificial crisis" in Girard's theory. Girard observes that there is an ambiguous attitude toward a victim of unanimous violence: on the one hand, he is held responsible for the ills of the community, and on the other hand, he is venerated because only a god can put an end to violence and save the community by offering his life. This ambiguity characterizes the relationship between Jones and Lem's tribe. On the one hand, he is held responsible for the loss of order on the Island: he has ousted the former Emperor and murdered the "nigger old Lem hired to kill" (14) him. On the other hand, he is venerated. In Scene 8, Lem tells Smithers that they made silver bullets in order to counterbalance Jones's "magic power."

In "Sacrificial Substitution," Girard writes that ritual victims are "neither outside nor inside the community, but in the marginal: slaves, children, livestock" (271). In this play too, the victim is neither outside nor inside the community. It is true that he belongs to the same race, but he is not born on the Island. He is a civilized Negro from New York. This leads us to consider first why the community chooses Brutus Jones for sacrifice. In "Sacrifice," Girard observes that sacrifice is primarily an act of violence without risk of vengeance:

> All our sacrificial victims, whether chosen from one of the human categories...or, a fortiori, from the animal realm, are invariably distinguishable from the nonsacrificeable beings by one essential characteristic: between these victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal. Their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance (13).

In this play, Jones is alien to the Island community. He has fled from the United States after committing two murders and sought refuge in the West Indies. So, his death does not entail any kind of reprisal. The whites in America are more likely to lynch him than avenge his death. In Violence and the Sacred, Girard explains that "the purpose of sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric" (8). But does Jones's death restore the community to order? in other words, is this unanimous act of violence generative?

An examination of Scene 8 reveals that the new order is no different from the old one and that history is eternally repeating itself. The play's movement is circular. Jones ousts Lem who finally murders him to regain his throne. Lem's return to power suggests that the new order is worse. Even the noble blacks of the West Indies have been corrupted by the lure of money. In the last scene, Lem has learned to make silver bullets. What he has learned is , in fact, the love of money. He is going to protect his throne at any cost. He won't have one silver bullet (like Jones), but as many as necessary to

protect his throne. Far from being generative, violence leads to the creation of an order that combines primitive aggression with twentieth century materialism. The Island is thus a metaphor for our modern jungle-like world, i.e., a Darwinian world where survival is only for the fittest. No hope is left to redeem man from self-destruction. The suggestion is that human beings sentence themselves to a dead-end alley. In this dungeon, the jailer is the greedy and selfish self. No less relevant is Jones's first name in this respect. In Long Day's Journey into Night, James Tyrone quotes from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings." This quotation suggests that man often causes his own tragedy. Emil Roy rightly observes that "at the end of The Emperor Jones, which is ironic comedy, we recognize the absurdity of society's attempt to define the enemy as a person outside that society" (21). The play can be seen as a parody of the cathartic function of sacrificial violence in primitive societies. Both The Hairy Ape and The Emperor Jones, Roy writes, "demonically parody the tragic ritual pattern which has been defined as a 'transition by which--through the processes of separation, regeneration, and the return to a higher level--both the individual and the community are assured their victory over the forces of chaos which are thereby kept under control"[7] (21). As this play was designed primarily for performance, it would be interesting to see how O'Neill expressionistically presents this chaotic world to his audience.

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[7] Roy is quoting Herbert Weinsinger, "The Myth and Ritual Approach to Shakespearean Tragedy," Myth and Literature (Neb: Lincoln, 1966), p. 151.

In her book, The Absent One Mourning, Ritual, Tragedy, and the Performance of Ambivalence,[8] Susan Letzler Cole writes that the originary impulse of tragedy was that of funerary ritual. "In tragic drama, the text makes present for the reader/ viewer the full enactment of the universal paradox of mourning" (6). Funeral rituals, "in various guises," enact "the desire to reanimate the dead" (9). Thus they extend "the life of the deceased beyond the moment of death by invoking belief in a liminal period during which the mourners' behavior is directed toward controlling the "danger" of transitional states. This dangerous liminality has been transferred onto the Greek stage. She observes that the world of tragedy is the world of liminality in space, time, and feeling. In The Emperor Jones, O'Neill has captured the tragic ambivalence of Greek tragedy, and expressed it through expressionistic techniques

Defining expressionism, Theodore Hatlen[9] writes: "the expressionist is a surrealist. He insists that actuality is within. The true character is marked by conventional behavior. Beneath the social façade, there is a vast jungle of primitive feeling and desires to be explored" (167). In The Emperor Jones, O'Neill flings open the windows of a Negro's mind and allows his audience to have a look at the private world of his character. O'Neill's interest in the dynamics of the psyche explains the fragmentary and episodic structure of the play. Six out of the eight scenes in the play take place in the jungle. Jones's flight from the Negroes is symbolically an internal journey. The forest is a metaphor for Jones's struggle against the past. The

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[8] Susan Letzler Cole, The Absent One/ Mourning, Ritual, Tragedy, and the Performance of Ambivalence (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985)

[9] Theodore W. Hatlen, Orientation to the Theater (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962).

haunting past is dramatized in the appearance of the ghosts of Jeff and the Guard: the two people Jones murdered in the United States. This theatrical technique is similar to the stream of consciousness technique of fiction: for the temporal and spatial boundaries are transcended. On the stage, past and present overlap for O'Neill's audience is taken back not only to the United States but also to the African jungle. The dangers of this temporal liminality are expressed both on the acoustic and kinetic levels.

From the second to the seventh scene, there is a constant contrast between the sound of the tom-tom and the revolver. When he hears the tom-tom, Jones becomes paralyzed by terror. The beat of the drum seems to plunge him in the world of irrationality and chaos. In contrast, the revolver shots are attempts to regain self-control. "These attempts are not just feeble, but self-defeating for each shot alerts the natives to Jones's exact location."[10] The sound patterns of the play dramatize man's inability to escape from his primitive past. When he joins the "monotonous" crooning of the witch-doctor in Scene 7, the present surrenders to the powers of the past. Rather than escaping onboard the ship to Europe, he ends up joining the ghosts of his ancestors.

As early as Scene 2, there is an ambivalence between life and death or motion and stillness. In the forest, the "somber monotone of wind lost in the leaves" sounds like moaning. Yet this sound "serves but to intensify the impression of the forest's relentless immobility to form a backgound throwing into relief its brooding, implacable

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[10] James A Robinson mentions that "the tom-tom indicates the increasing alienation of Jones from the normal civilized world of the ego. The revolver shots, by contrast, represent an attempt to regain the stability of the conscious world by reliance on a product of human technology" (37).

silence" (27). James A. Robinson,[11] observes that the "monotonous moaning establishes its own strange atmosphere by animating lifeless objects, giving the leaves human quality." This sound also foreshadows the appearance of the Little Formless Fears which at the end of the scene emit "a tiny gale of low mocking laughter like a rustling of leaves" (31).

On the kinetic level too, the mechanical motions of the characters expressionistically project the paralyzed reactions of the protagonist onto his environment.[12] In Scene 3, for example, Jeff (representing the past), appears "throwing a pair of dice on the ground before him, picking them up, shaking them, casting them out with the regular, rigid, mechanical movements of an automaton" (34). In Scene 4, furthermore, Jones joins his visions in their mechanical movements. The movements of the convicts "like those of Jeff in the preceding scene, are those of automatons--rigid, slow, and mechanical." Jones takes part in the motion of the dream-characters. "John winces in pain" when the Guard whips him on the shoulder:

> The Guard turns his back on him and walks away contemptuously. Instantly Jones straightens up. With arms upraised as if his shovel were a club in his hands he springs murderously at the unsuspecting Guard. In the act of crashing down his shovel on the white man's skull, Jones suddenly becomes aware that his hands are empty (40).

In Scene 5, "there is something still, rigid, unreal, marionettish about the Southerners at the slave auction" (44). In the next scene,

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[11] James A. Robinson, " O'Neill's Symbolic Sounds," Modern Language Studies 6 (1978-9): 346-45.
[12] Robinson, p. 346.

Jones sees Negroes swaying "slowly forward toward each other and back again in unison, as if they were laxly letting themselves follow the long roll of a ship at sea. At the same time a low, melancholy murmur rises among them, increasing gradually, by rhythmic degrees which seem to be directed and controlled by the throb of the tom-tom in the distance" (48). Later, he "rises to a sitting posture similar to the others, swaying back and forth." His voice reaches the hightest pitch of sorrow, of desolation" (49).

The emotional effect of this scene is reminiscent of the antiphonal lament in Greek tragedy. According to Susan Letzler Cole, there is some evidence of an originally antiphonal tradition in the stichomythic dialogue of Greek tragedy. Greek tragedians, she argues, "used stychomythia as the mode of communication between the living and the dead." (22). In this play, Jones communicates with the dead not only through his mechanical movements and moaning, but also through dance. In Scene 7, there is a ritual dance performed by grotesque characters. The Congo witch-doctor "is wizened and old, naked except for the fur of some small amimal tied about his waist, its busty tail hanging down in from. His body is stained all over a bright red." Then, he "begins to dance and to chant. Jones has become completely hypnotized. His voice joins in the incantation, in the cries, he beats time with his hands and sways his body to and fro from the waist" (51). We are informed that "he has entered the whole spirit and meaning of the dance." In that world of dangerous liminality, he cannot find his way out to the world of the living. In a desperate attempt to find a way out, he shoots the silver bullet at the

crocodile god. This act turns out to be fatal for it has indicated his location to the natives.

Unlike Derrida, Girard argues that literature is referential. An examination of the personal and historical context where this play was written might explain O'Neill's dark vision. On the personal level, this play was written nine years after O'Neill had divorced Kathleen Jenkins, and eight years after he had attempted suicide at Jimmie the Priest's by taking an overdose of veronal. His behavior lends credence to Mary Tyrone's view in Long Day's Journey into Night that "we all are victims of our family inheritance." From his Irish ancestors, the dramatist inherited not only his love of alcohol, but also his death wish. Indeed, after leaving his family and returning to Ireland, O'Neill's paternal grandfather killed himself. This perhaps explains why O'Neill himself views human history as repeating itself.

The Emperor Jones also echoes the failure of the black movements at the beginning of the century. In 1914, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was created to defend Negro rights. As it was governed by the middle-class, the NAACP failed to attract the majority of Negroes. Randolph Owen and the Messenger group were other middle-class intellectuals who failed to defend Negro rights. Although they tried to organize the Pullman porters into a union, their program went unheard among slumdwellers. In 1916, Marcus Garvey, a black West Indian came to the United States and created the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He assured American Negroes that their glorious past is in Africa and gave them a promise of a brilliant future there. Francis L. Broderick writes: "To the urban Negroes, most of whom

were wartime migrants from the South, the dream had potent appeal, for reality was bad housing, scarce jobs, lynching, and race riots. He made black the standard of goodness, and satisfied the yearnings of identity and racial pride"[13] (82). On a more practical level, Garvey espoused economic nationalism. He urged Negroes to support Negro businesses. The UNIA itself undertook commercial enterprises and tried to establish trade between Negroes in America and those in the West Indies and Africa. In The Negro in American Life and History, Robert E. Jenkins[14] writes that Garvey "drained off potential funds, sharpened race distinctions and caused confusion in Negro ranks" (225). Thus, The Emperor Jones is a symbolic account of these historical movements. In this expressionistic play, Jones is a racial archetype. As his visions suggest, his ancestors were taken from the African jungle on board of a slave-ship to the American South where they were sold to the white planters. After the civil war, poverty and fear of the Ku Klux Klan prompted many Negroes to migrate to the North. There, too, they were exploited by the nascent industry. Many of them, like Jones, became Pullman porters. The latter represents all the Negroes who fled from the United States to Africa and to the West Indies for a better future. Ironically, instead of heaven, they created a hell. They started exploiting the native populations. They became as racist as the American whites. For O'Neill, whether white or black, it is greed that governs human action; this explains the predominance of violence in human history.

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[13] Francis L. Broderick, Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merill Company, Inc, 1965).

[14] Robert E. Jenkins, Negro in American Life and History (San Francisco: United School District, 1967).

Thus, Jones represents man in general, not just his race. He is as greedy as Smithers and as brutal as Brutus the Roman who assassinated Julius Caesar.

The date when the play was written also corresponds to the end of W.W.I. More than ten million people were killed by the products of our new technology: guns, bombs, gases, etc... No less significant is the function of the revolver shots in the play. As they indicate Jones's location to his pursuers, they also suggest that modern civilization is destroying itself.

Eventually, we can say that violence has no purgative function in this play. Rather than reinforcing the social fabric and bringing society to a new order, violence is a license for exploiting the other. The outcome of WWI shows this: the more powerful a nation becomes, the more likely it is going to use its military power to its advantage. Thus, it is greed that often leads to world conflicts. As greed cannot be extricated from human beings, this means more and more world catastrophies will befall mankind. Unfortunately, WWII, the Vietnam War, and the recent war in the Persian Gulf give further credence to O'Neill's dark vision of humanity.

CHAPTER II

Desire Under the Elms

In Desire Under the Elms (1924), O'Neill takes his audience to New England in 1850. Suffering from the tyranny of their father Old Ephraim Cabot, Simeon and Peter decide to quit the farm hoping to find gold in California. Their youngest brother Eben decides to stay and fight for the farm his "Paw" took from his "Maw." This puts him in conflict not only with his father but also with his stepmother Abbie. The mutual attraction between Eben and Abbie results in incest and the birth of a baby boy. Fighting with his son, Ephraim unintentionally makes Eben believe that Abbie has used him to produce a heir. Thinking he has been fooled, Eben decides to leave the farm. In a desperate act to retain her lover, Abbie kills the baby to prove her love. The two lovers are taken into custody by the Sheriff, and only Ephraim remains on the farm. In this tragedy, Ephraim's Calvinism and the infanticide are instances of religious and physical violence. The first part of this chapter will demonstrate that violence is due to the similarities between the members of this family. The second part will look at the antagonistic relationship between father and son in view of Girard's concept of "mimetic rivalry." The third part will consider the baby's murder as an act of "unanimous violence": everybody is guilty but not entirely responsible. It will also examine whether the infanticide is generative for the community. The fourth part will focus on the

symbolic pattern of the play. It will suggest that O'Neill's Biblical allusions serve to underscore the cyclical nature of both family and religious violence. The last part will examine the form and mode of the play in view of Girard's theory.

A close reading of the play shows that it is sameness that causes those violent conflicts between the characters. First, all of them are vacillating between love and hate. In Part II, Scene 2, Abbie undergoes a multiplicity of love-hate reactions to Eben, ranging from attachment to jealousy, from revenge to calculated scheming in the course of which she raises Ephraim's hopes to have a son by her. To get revenge on Eben who has ranked her below Minnie the prostitute, she tells Ephraim that his son has tried to seduce her. The same thing could be said of Eben. He feels both attraction and hatred toward the intruder who has taken his mother's place. In their first encounter, he is "obscurely moved, physically attracted to her--in forced stilted tones." Yet, he says to her: "Yew kin go t' the devil!" (68). And fighting "against his growing sympathy," he harshly lets fall that his father has bought her "like a harlot." Likewise, Peter and Simeon have an ambivalent attitude toward Ephraim. In Part I, Scene 2, Peter and Simeon admonish Eben for wishing their father dead:

> Simeon:
> Ye'd oughtn't t' said that, Eben.
>
> Peter:
> 'Twa' n't righteous
>
> Eben:
> What?

> Simeon:
> Ye prayed he'd died (20-1).

In the next scene, they enact a grotesque Indian dance. In a half-serious tone, they threaten not only to scalp their father, but also to rape his wife:

> Simeon:
> We're free as Injuns! Lucky we don't skulp ye!
>
> Peter:
> An' burn yer barn an' kill the stock!
>
> Simeon:
> An' rape yer new woman! Whoop! (63).

Even Ephraim vacillates between softness and hardness. In Part I, Scene 1, he confesses to his new wife that he is growing old and that one day he could warm up to his son Eben:

> I'm gittin' t' feel resigned t' Eben--jest as I got t' feel 'bout his Maw like her'n. I calc'late I c'd a'most take t' him--if he wa'n't sech a dumb fool! [A pause.] I s'pose it's old age a creepin' in my bones (83).

Madness is another similarity between the Cabots. Ephraim accuses all of his sons of being mad, especially Eben. When he informs Abbie who has become his son's mistress that "Eben is queer," she responds "He's the dead spit 'n' image of yew!" (81). During the Indian dance, Simeon and Peter seem mad: Cabot says to them: "Lust for gold--fur the sinful, easy gold O' California! It's made ye mad!" (63). By the end of the play, Abbie's goes mad because of

Eben's decision to leave the farm. She kills the baby to keep her lover:

> [After a pause--with a dreadful cold intensity--slowly.]
> If that's what his comin's done t'me--killin' yewr love--takin' yew away--my on'y joy--the on'y joy I ever knowed--like heaven t' me--purtier' n heaven--then I hate him, too, even if I be his Maw! (141).

The second common feature among the Cabots is greed. Peter L. Hays writes that "*Desire Under the Elms* (1924) is a play about greed and possessiveness, greed for land, wealth, and security"[1] (434). Ephraim, Simeon, Peter, Eben, and Abbie all want to possess the farm they live on. Ephraim wants a son so that he might pass the farm on as an extension of himself, and so still possess it:

> A son is me--my blood--mine. Mine ought t' git mine. An' then it's still mine--even though I be six foot under. D'ye see? (89).

Because she covets the farm, Abbie arouses in Ephraim the desire to have a male heir. She tells her husband: "Would ye will the farm t'me then--t'me on' it?" (91).

Apparently she sacrifices the baby to keep Eben. Thus, it is possessiveness not love that prompts her to commit infanticide.[2]

Similarly, Simeon and Peter are waiting for the old man's death to inherit "two thirds" (24) of the farm. Like his two brothers, Eben wants to get back his "Maw's farm." This explains the dominance of the singular possessive pronouns and adjectives in the

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[1] Peter L. Hays, "Child Murder and Incest in American Drama," Twentieth Century Literature 36 (1990): 341-48.

[2] According to Hays, the infanticide is one of O'Neill's ways to undercut possessiveness.

play; "my farm," "mine," "my crops," "my son," "my room." The last words by the Sheriff underscore this covetousness: "It is a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wished I owned it!" (166).

The only sharing in the play, Hays[3] remarks, is grudgingly between Ephraim and Abbie. As they enter the house, the old man says:

> Har we be t' hum, Abbie.
>
> Abbie:
> [With lust for the word.]
> Hum! [Her eyes gloating on the house without seeming to see the two stiff figures at the gate.] It's purty--purty! I can't b'lieve it's r'ally mine.
>
> Cabot:
> [Sharply.]
> Yewr'n? Mine! [He stares at her penetratingly. She stares back. He adds relentingly.] Our'n--mebbe! It was lonesome too long. I was growin' old in the spring. A hum's got t' her a woman (58).

The search for a home is another common link between the characters. When she first sees the house, Abbie exclaims: "Hum!" Ephraim later reminds her that is his "hum." Then, Eben shows up to remind his stepmother that she has usurped his "Maw's" place. At thirty-nine and thirty-seven, Simeon and Peter have never left their father's farm. They decide to go to California only when Eben has given them money. This suggests that a home for them means material security rather than family warmth or love. Carl E. Jr

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[3] Hays, p. 344.

Rollyson[4] writes that Desire Under the Elms, "embodies [O'Neill's] sense of futility over identifying home with a piece of ground with a single set of family relationships, with what the characters obsessively call mine throughout the play."

As they are trapped by their environment, all the characters behave like animals. Simeon and Peter remind Abbie of "strayed hogs" (59). Eben and Ephraim are two dogs ready to eat each other. The neighbors are "hens" and "hogs" (121). In their first sexual encounter, Abbie and Eben stand panting after a lustful embrace "like two animals" (79). This grotesque imagery indicates the absurdity of our materialistic values and the downfall of modern civilization.

Because they are longing for the same thing, i.e., money, the characters come into conflict with one another. The most antagonistic relationship in the play is that between Ephraim and Eben. This inimical father-son relation perfectly illustrates Girard's concept of "mimetic rivalry." Although soft like his "Maw," Eben has inherited his father's hardness and greed. When he discovers that his father also goes to Minnie the prostitute, he cannot contain his anger any longer. In a violent outburst, he tells his two brothers:

> Eben:
> That's more to it. That grows on it! It 'll burst soon! [Then violently.] I'll go smash my fist in her face! [He pulls open the door in rear violently.]

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[4] Carl E. Jr Rollyson, "Eugene O'Neill: the Drama of Transcendance," Critical Essays on Eugene O'Neill, James J. Martine (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & G, 1984.), p. 125.

His violence reminds his two brothers of their father:

> Simeon:
> [Looking after him.]
> Like his Paw.
>
> Peter:
> Dead spit an' image!
>
> Simeon:
> Dog'll eat dog! (31-2).

Commenting on the Oedipus complex, Girard observes that it is the desire to mimic the father that motivates the son to usurp his father's bed. Eben wants not only to have the farm but also to take his father's wife. Throughout the play, Eben repeats that he hates his father because he slaved his "Maw" to death. Underneath this surface level, he hates Ephraim because the latter had exclusively the mother's attention. For Eben, "Maw" and the farm are one. In trying to possess the farm--which belonged to her--he is trying to possess his mother, the thing he couldn't do when she was alive:

> It's Maw's farm agen! It's my farm! Them's my cows! I'll milk my durn fingers off for cows o' mine! (46).

This explains his fury when he discovers that his father also goes to Minnie. It is as if Ephraim were for the second time preventing Eben from getting closer to his "Maw." But this time, Eben decides to go to Minnie and to take her as his father did. After returning from the village, he tells his brothers:

> She's like t'night, she's soft 'n' wa'm, her arms're wa'm, she smells like a wa'm plowed field, she's purty (32-3).

Simeon ironically says that he might try to make his new stepmother his mistress too: "Mebbe ye'll try t'make her your'n, too?" (40). Simeon's irony turns out to be prophetic. Abbie becomes Eben's mistress. Their first sexual encounter is a "mixture of lust and mother love" (108). Abbie identifies with Eben's mother:

> Tell me about yer Maw, Eben.
>
> Eben:
> They hain't nothin' much. She was kind. She was good.
>
> Abbie:
> [Putting one arm over his shoulder. He does not seem to notice--passionately.]
> I'll be kind an' good t' ye!
>
> Eben:
> Sometimes she used t' sing fur me.
>
> Abbie:
> I'll sing fur ye! (107).

Later, the disciple (Eben) becomes the model of his own model (his father). Ephraim doesn't accept the fact that he is getting old:

> I'm gettin' old--ripe on the bough. [Then with s sudden forced reassurance.] Not but what I hain't a hard nut t' crack even yet an' fur many a year t' come! By the eternal, I kin break most o' the young fellers's backs at any kind o' work any day o' the year (83).

In Part III, Scene 1, he invites the neighbors to show them his virility and strength. At seventy-six he has not only fathered a child, but is also still capable of dancing like a youth:

> Whoop! Here's dancin' fur ye! Whoop! See that! Seventy-six, if I'm a day! Hard as iron yet! Beatin' the young 'uns like I allus done! Look at me! I'd invite ye t' dance on my hundreth birthday, on'y ye'll be dead by then (125-6).

This obsession makes him envious of his youngest son. His jealousy leads him to a hand to hand confrontation with Eben. After beating his rival, Ephraim says to Abbie:

> Ye needn't t've fret, Abbie, I wa' n't aimin' t' kill him. He hain't wuth hangin' fur--not by a hell of sight! [More and more triumphant.] Seventy-six an' him not thirty yit--an' look whar he be fur thinkin' his Paw was easy! No by God, I hain't easy! An' him upstairs, I'll raise him t' be like me! (136).

Peter L. Hays observes that "the symbolic use of child murder occurs in places where there is also the suggestion of incest, another symbol of perverted, unnatural development" (435). In Desire Under the Elms, out of her incestuous relationship with Eben, Abbie gives birth to a baby boy that she kills to keep her lover. In Violence and the Sacred, Girard writes that if children and slaves are very often the target of unanimous violence, it is because no one will avenge their death. In O'Neill's play, the victim is an infant. The whole family, not just Abbie, is responsible for the infanticide. Ephraim makes Eben believe that Abbie used him to produce a heir that would give her the farm:

> Waal, it'll be her'n, too--Abbie'sye won't git 'round her--she knows yer tricks--she'll be too much fur ye--she wants the farm her'n--she was afeerd o' ye--she told me ye was sneakin' 'round tryin' t' make love t' her t' git her on yer side... ye... ye mad fool, ye! (134).

Believing he has been fooled, Eben decides to leave Abbie:

> Ye' made a fool o' me--a sick, dumb fool--a purpose! Ye've been on'y playin' yer sneakin', stealin' game all along--gittin' me t' lie with ye so's ye'd hev a son he'd think was his'n, an' makin' him promise he'd give ye the farm and let me eat dust, if ye did git him a son! [Staring at her with anguished, bewildered eyes.] They be a devil livin' in ye! T' ain't human t' be as bad as that be! (138).

Girard writes that "the more critical the situation is, the more precious the sacrificial victim must be" (18). In a desperate attempt to keep her lover, Abbie kills her own baby:

> Abbie:
> [Hysterically.]
> I done it, Eben! I told ye I'd do it! I've proved I love ye--better' n everythin'--so's ye can't never doubt me no more! (145-6).

These three characters, however, are not entirely responsible for the infanticide. They are both guilty and innocent.[5] Ephraim unintentionally makes Eben believe Abbie has betrayed him. At the time, Ephraim doesn't know that the baby is Eben's. He cannot predict the consequences of what he is saying to Eben. Somehow, it is misfortune that has caused the killing of the baby.

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[5] This ambivalence characterizes the community's attitude toward the victim of the first sacrificial crisis in Girard's theory. Because the murder is collective, the individual doesn't feel entirely responsible for the performance of that violent act.

The community's guilt toward the victim of the collective murder is seen in Eben's reaction to Abbie when she tells him that it is love for him that has prompted her to kill the baby. The need to protect the self from guilt explains Eben's violent outburst against Abbie: he "springs onto his feet in a fury, threatening her, his twitching fingers seeming to reach out for her throat," and shouts: "Ye lie! I never said--I never dreamed ye'--I'd cut off my head afore I'd hurt his finger" (150).

Girard writes that when violence breaks out it wears out all differences among the antagonists. By the end of the play, both Eben and Abbie seem mad. Abbie kills the baby and Eben, torn by guilt, acts in an irrational way. He decides to deliver Abbie to the Sheriff:

> I'm a-goin' fur the Sheriff t' come an' git ye! I want ye tuk away, locked up from me! I can't stand t' luk at ye! Murderer an' thief 'r not, ye still tempt me! I'll give ye up t' the Sheriff (151).

Later, when his violence has subsided, he recognizes his responsibility for the child's murder:

> I put it in yer head. I wisht he was dead! I was much as urged ye t' do it! (160).

According to Girard, there is a physical resemblance between the vicarious victim and the real object of violence. Hence, it should come as no surprise that Abbie deflects her anger against Eben onto the baby, for Eben's having decided to leave her. Scene 4 of Part III points to the strong resemblance between the father and his son. Addressing Abbie, Eben says:

> Ye saw he looked like me--ye knowed he was
> all mine--an' ye couldn't b'ar it--I knowed ye!
> Ye killed him for bein' mine! (150-1).

In this play, the death of the baby doesn't entail any form of reprisal. The father is as responsible as the mother for its murder. Ephraim asks the Sheriff to apprehend the two lovers not to avenge the baby's death but because he has painfully discovered his sexual impotence: the baby is not his but Eben's.

Ephraim in this case resorts to what Girard calls "public vengeance."[6] Under the public system, "an act of vengeance is no longer avenged; the process is terminated, the danger of escalation averted" (16). This leads us to consider whether this sacrificial act is generative.

Far from being cathartic, violence in this play signals the breakup of society. Abbie, Eben, and Ephraim out of selfishness have sacrificed the future generation to secure the enjoyment of the present. Abbie wants Eben, the latter wants the farm, and his father wants the baby as an extension of the self. The law-enforcement authority to whom Ephraim delivers Eben and Abbie lusts for his farm as much as his son and wife. The Sheriff and the neighbors are vultures waiting for the old man's death to get hold of his farm. The child-sacrifice symbolically means that our modern values are leading us to self-destruction: there is no future, for we ourselves have killed it. No less significant is the play's ironical tone. Doris V.

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[6] Girard distinguishes two kinds of vengeance: the private vengeance and the public vengeance. "By definition, primitive societies have only private vengeance. Public vengeance is the exclusive property of well-policed societies, and our society calls it the judicial system. This system does not suppress vengeance; rather it effectively limits it to a single act of reprisal, enacted by a sovereign authority specializing in this particular function" (15).

Falk states that "the affirmative ending of the tragedy is unconvincing... . Even when this sin has been compounded with adultery, incest, and murder, romantic love 'purties up' everything." The final words of the Sheriff reinforce the ironical tone of the play: "It's a jim dandy farm no denyin'. Wished I owned it" (269).

A close reading of the play shows that religious and family violence are inextricable. This has the special effect of suggesting the circularity of human experience. In Part 1, Scene 4, Abbie tells Eben that she has lost a baby before. This intensifies our horror as we suspect her of having killed her first baby too. Abbie's murder calls to mind Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. According to the Koran and the Bible, "God delivered to Abraham the ram previously sacrificed by Abel. This ram was to take the place of Abraham's son Isaac; having already saved one human life, the same animal would now save another."[7] In Desire Under the Elms, this sacrifice is pointless for it saves nobody's life. Rather, it is an absurd act revealing only selfish values.

According to Girard, religion is "another term for that obscurity that surrounds man's efforts to defend himself by curative or preventive means against his own violence." This obscurity coincides with "the transcendental effectiveness of a violence that is holy, legal, and legitimate, successfully opposed to a violence that is unjust, illegal, and illegitimate" (23). In Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill denounces this legal form of violence. Ephraim's hardness represents those atrocities committed in the name of religion: wars, bigotry, and

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[7] Girard, p. 4.

lack of understanding. One could say that Abbie's suffocation of the baby calls to mind "the way in which Ephraim's hard Calvinism has strangled the humanity in his sons."[8] He has enslaved his two previous wives to death and trapped his sons within the strangling stone-walls of his farm. Peter remarks that his father has "slaved himself t' death. He's slaved Sim 'n' yew t' death--o'ny none o' us hain't died--yet" (23).

Whereas the rock on which Jesus Christ built his church is symbolic of regeneration and love, the stones of Ephraim's farm are symbolic of his spiritual aridity. Instead of a heaven, he has built a family tomb. With bitterness, Peter says:

> Here--it's stones atop o' the ground--stones atop o' stones--makin' stone walls --year atop o' year--him 'n' yew 'n'then Eben--makin' stone walls fur him to fence us in! (16).

As in the Calvinist dogma, Ephraim's God is hard and lonely. Rather than reinforcing the social or familial fabric, Calvinism has made people more lonesome and harder toward one another. After discovering that Simeon and Peter have taken his money, Cabot decides to stay on his farm:

> Ha! [<u>He begins to recover. Gets slowly to his feet-- strangely</u>.] I calc'late God give it to 'em--not yew! God's hard, not easy! Mebbe they's easy gold in the West, but it hain't God's gold. It hain't fur me. I kin hear His voice warnin' me agen t' be hard an' stay on my farm. I kin see his hand usin' Eben t' steal t' keep me from weakness...[<u>A pause--then he mutters sadly</u>.] It's goin' t' be lonesomer now than

[8] Hays, p. 436.

> ever it war afore--an' I'm gittin' old Lord-ripe on the bough...[Then stiffening.] I waal--what d'ye want? God's lonesome, hain't He? God's hard an' lonesome! (164).

In Hebrew, Ephraim means fruitful land. Ephraim is the second son of Joseph (Gen 41. 52), who with Manasseh, his brother, compromised the "house of Joseph." Later, the strife over land made them the two brothers enemies. The tribe of Ephraim was as aggressive as the old man in O'Neill's play. Just as the Israelites fell short of creating their "promised land," Ephraim fails to make of the American wilderness a home. The last scene where Abbie and Eben embrace near the gate of the farm calls to mind the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden[9]. Whereas the forefathers wanted to make the new continent a heaven, the grotesque animal imagery[10] throughout the play ironically points to the failure of the American dream. It suggests man's fallen state rather than his salvation. For Simeon and Peter, the West means money, not a spiritual heaven. So, if O'Neill sees human history, especially violence, as cyclical, it is because human motifs such as greed and selfishness are forever recurring.

Besides these Biblical allusions, O'Neill has used some elements of Greek drama. Although about New England, Desire Under the Elms is built on the model of Greek tragedy. For aesthetic purposes, the

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[9] Mentioned by John Gatta Jr., "The American Subject: Moral History As Tragedy in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Essays in Literature, 5-6 (1978-9): 227-39.

[10] Gatta writes that "the cumulative effect of this animal imagery, combined with the palpably bestial conduct of those so delienated, is to belie that familiar national myth of the newborn "Amerian dream" (231).

Greeks didn't show violence on the stage. In this play too, the audience doesn't witness the infanticide. The latter occurs in Ephraim's and Abbie's room. This has the special effect of intensifying the audience's horror as they imagine what is going on behind the curtains.

The plot of Desire Under the Elms derives from three Greek plays. From Sophocles's Medea, O'Neill borrows the principle of human substitution of one victim for another. "Frightened by the intensity of Medea's rage against her faithless husband Jason, the nurse begs the children's tutor to keep his charges out of their mother's way"[11]:

> I am sure her anger will not subside until it has found a victim. Let us pray that the victim is at least one of our enemies.

The incestuous love affair between Abbie and Eben reminds one of Sophocles's Oedipus the King. In this Greek tragedy, the son kills his father and marries his mother. When he discovers his sin, he blinds himself and leaves Thebe. The plot of this play might also derive from Euripides's Phaedra. The two playwrights show that passion and vengeance are inextricable. Like Abbie, Phaedra falls madly in love with her stepson Hippolytos. Both women seek revenge when they have been rejected. Just as Phaedra tells Theseus that his son has tried to outrage his father's home, Abbie tells Ephraim that Eben has tried to make love to her.

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[11] Girard, p. 9.

Besides plot, O'Neill has introduced some ancient Greek rituals such as the Dionysian dances. Whereas for the ancients the latter were symbolic of life and regeneration, in Desire Under the Elms, the grotesque dances in Part III, Scene 1 symbolize death as they occur just before the murder of the baby. The time scheme of the play is most significant in this respect. The play starts in summer and ends in spring. Whereas for Chaucer spring is a symbol of rebirth, for O'Neill it means death. This violent act means that modern civilization is sentencing itself to death by its selfish and materialistic values.

Although he built his play on the model of Greek tragedy, O'Neill uses both the naturalistic and the expressionistic mode. According to Hatlen, the naturalist "has to show the debilitating effects of unfavorable environment and heredity by bringing on stage characters who were twisted, wayward, and grotesque" (160). In this play, all the characters speak and behave like animals. The play, as Hays observes, is full of meaningless cliches such as "there's gold in the West," "like his Paw," "dog'll eat dog," and "the cows knows us." The repetition of these simplistic observations denotes a special meaning: man is the offspring of his environment. On the kinetic level too, the characters move like animals. While dancing, Ephraim looks "like a monkey on a string" (125). When Eben calls them to supper, the stage directions tell us that they are running to their food like animals:

> [They turn, shouldering each other, their bodies bumping and rubbing together as they hurry clumsily to their food, like two oxen

> toward their evening meal. They disappear around the right corner of the house and can be heard entering the door.] (19)

O'Neill uses also the expressionistic technique of short bursts of staccato speech to show the alienating effect of this rural environment. The rhythm of the dialogue between Simeon and Peter indicates their alienation:

> Simeon:
>
> [Startled--smacks his lips.]
>
> I air hungry!
>
> Peter:
>
> [Sniffing.]
>
> I smells bacon!
>
> Simeon:
>
> [With hungry appreciation.]
>
> Bacon's good!
>
> Peter:
>
> [In same tone.]
>
> Bacon's bacon! (19).

In "*Desire Under the Elms*/ a Phase of O'Neill's Philosophy," Roger Asselineau writes: "Reduced to essentials in this very primitive

strong setting, man appears primarily as an animal. Eben and especially Simeon and Peter, look like oxen, and feel tied up to the other animals of the farm by bonds of brotherhood."[12]

In Part 1, Scene 4, Simeon and Peter do an absurd Indian war dance around their father. "The dance's frenzied nature and the wild laughter accompanying it illustrate the depths of the mindlessness of characters ruled by primitive emotions, not their intellects"[13] (343).

Hatlen writes that in a naturalistic play, "the protagonist does not move in a straight line toward his goal from conscious intent but is bedeviled by doubts and frustrations, torn by inner conflicts, ridden by passions"[14] (162). In Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill uses a complex method of characterization. In the scene when Eben is tempted by his stepmother, his hardness disappears, and he seems guilty, and "confused" (103). He starts speaking like a toddler. As he and Abbie enter the parlor, the following dialogue occurs:

> Abbie:
>
> When I fust come in--in the dark--they seeemed somethin' here.
>
> Eben:
>
> [Simply.]

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[12] Roger Asselineau, "*Desire Under the Elms* / A Phase of O'Neill's Philosophy," in Ernest G. Griffin, Eugene O'Neill (New York: MC Graw: Hill Book Company, 1976), p. 60.

[13] James A Robinson: "O'Neill's Grotesque Dancers," Modern Drama 19 (1976): 341-49.

[14] Hatlen writes that this technique of complex characterization was clear to Strindberg who wrote in his foreword to Miss Julie: "People are character. They are conglomerates made up of past and present stages of civilizations, scraps of humanity, torn- off pieces of sundry clothing turned into rags--all patched together as is the human soul" (160).

Maw.

Abbie:

I kin still feel--somethin'.

Eben:

It's Maw.

Abbie:

At fust I was afeerd o' it. I wanted t' yell an' run. Now--since yew come--seems like it's growin' soft an' kind t' me. [Addressing the air--queerly.] Thank yew.

Eben:

Maw allus loved me (105).

The same complexity characterizes the setting. The elms might reflect the two sides of Eben's personality: softness and hardness. The stage directions tell us that there are two enormous elms on each side of the house. "They appear to protect and at the same time to subdue" (11). The same ambiguity characterizes the wooden gate Simeon and Peter take away when they leave the farm:

> [Takes the gate off its hinges and puts it under his arm.] We harby 'bolishes shet gates, an' open gates, an' all gates, by thunder! (57).

It is true that they have escaped their father's tyranny, but they are taking the symbol of Ephraim's hardness with them. This is ambiguous because it suggests that they too might become further Ephraims in California.

No less relevant is the presentation of the parlor as a tomb. Since the death of Eben's mother, the parlor hasn't been opened. According to the stage directions, the interior of the parlor is a "grim, repressed room like a tomb in which the family has been interred alive" (104). The stage appears as a liminal space between life and death. The danger of this liminality is expressed in the violent conflicts between the characters. In this tomb-like place, each of them is fighting to be the last survivor. Such struggle seems meaningless since they are all doomed to death. It is as if O'Neill were saying to his audience: since the worms are what awaits us, our lust for material security is worthless. O'Neill's dark vision of life boils down to this: we are born to suffer, and the only way to make life meaningful is to accept it. Rather than fighting against one another, we can reduce the pain of living by understanding and loving one another.

To sum up, we can say that this play is about both familial and religious violence. Ephraim's hard Calvinism has emotionally starved everything around him including his sons, his wives, and himself. Ephraim's short-sightedness might stand for man's spiritual darkness. As in The Emperor Jones, violence in Desire Under the Elms, is not generative. The infanticide means that as long as we

behave like dogs eating one another, there is no future for modern humanity. In Long Day's Journey into Night, which is also a family drama, O'Neill reaches another conclusion: the more disparate the parts, the tighter the whole and the hold they have over each other. In this autobiographical play, his characters use aggression as a self-defensive strategy. Because they cannot find peace, the Tyrones are at each other's throat. Only when they recognize their shortcomings and show some understanding toward one another, does violence become generative.

CHAPTER III

Long Day's Journey Into Night

In Long Day's Journey into Night, O'Neill couldn't find a better inspiration for domestic violence than his own family. The play, completed in 1941, and posthumously published in 1953, was dedicated to his third wife Carlotta, on the twelfth anniversary of their marriage. In the dedication, O'neill wrote:

> I mean it as a tribute to your love and tenderness which gave me the faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play--write it with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the haunted Tyrones.[1]

According to O'Neill's biographers, O'Neill's family was stricken by many calamities. His mother became addicted to morphine after the death of her second child Edmund. His father was a miserly alcoholic, and his elder brother wasted his life between the bottle and "whore-houses." Given this background, no wonder that O'Neill tried once to kill himself. After that, he started taking sea voyages to escape what looked like a family curse: alcoholism and self-destruction. After quitting alcohol, he dedicated himself to his theatrical career. This chapter will examine Long Day's Journey into

[1] Eugene O'Neill, Long Day's Journey into Night (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 7.

Night in view of Girard's theory of violence. The first part will view the death of the baby Eugene Tyrone (O'Neill's dead brother) as an example of what Girard calls "collective murder." Special attention will be given to the similarities between the members of this family. And the rivalry between Jamie and his father will be seen as an embodiment of Girard's concept of "mimetic rivalry." The second part will examine not only the contaminating and irrational power of violence, but also its relation with the "sacred." The third part will demonstrate that Jamie is the familial scapegoat. This scapegoat, however, is only temporary, for the demon of violence demands another sacrifice which is the social self of every character in the play. The last part of this chapter, will examine the form and mode of the play in the light of Girard's conception of violence.

In "The Origins of Myth and Ritual," Girard states that a collective murder can often be found at the origin of all cultural forms. The unanimous violence directed at this victim is generative because it gives birth to a new social or cultural order. An overview of Long Day's Journey into Night suggests that the death of baby Eugene could represent this collective murder. Apart from Edmund who was born after Eugene, all the other members of the family are responsible for the latter's death. The community's guilt toward the innocent victim of unanimous violence is seen in the Tyrones' projection of guilt onto one another. Mary states that she has always believed "that Jamie did it on purpose because he was jealous of the baby. He hated him." (87). Yet, deep inside, she knows that if she "hadn't left him with [her] mother to join [Tyrone] on the road...Jamie would never have been allowed, when he still has measles, to go in

the baby's room." Similarly, Tyrone knows that if he hadn't written to his wife telling her that he missed her, Mary wouldn't have joined him, and the baby might not have died. To escape the remorse of his conscience, Tyrone also lays all the blame on Jamie. "Oh, I know Jamie was only seven, but he was never stupid. He'd been warned it might kill the baby. I've never been able to forgive him for that" (87). As for Jamie, although he never mentions it, the death of Eugene weighs on his conscience too. Mary contends that it was not she, but Tyrone who insisted on having another baby to take Eugene's place. Jamie reasons this way: had Eugene lived, Edmund might not have been conceived and Mary would not have been introduced to morphine. Because they have to protect themselves against their guilty consciences, they all avoid the subject of Eugene's death. Only when Mary relapses into her morphine addiction, does she mention that taboo subject. In Act II, Scene 2, when Mary begins her reminiscences, Tyrone begs her to forget the past. "Dear Mary! For the love of God, for my sake and the boys' sake and your own, won't you stop now? " (85). What he is in fact afraid of, is the recalling of a painful past that would bring him to acknowledge his responsibility in the death of Eugene. Such acknowledgment might lead to the shattering of his apparent security. This illustrates not only the concepts of "collective murder" and the community's subsequent "guilt," but also Girard's concept of "generative violence." In this play, the death of Eugene has led to the present situation: Edmund's poor health, Mary's addiction, Tyrone's love of the bottle, and Jamie's whoring and alcoholism.

In "The Sacrificial Crisis,"[2] Girard writes that "the cultural order is nothing more than a regulated system of distinctions in which the differences among individuals are used to establish their 'identity' and their mutual relationships," and he adds that "it is not these distinctions but the loss of them that gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another's throats" (49). An overview of Long Day's Journey into Night reveals many similarities between the Tyrones. According to Karen Horney, the genesis of aggression often lies in the rejection of the child. The four Tyrones seem to have undergone the same experience: Tyrone's father abandoned his family and returned to Ireland where he committed suicide. Mary's frequent references to her father draw attention to the absence of her mother. The only female figures she mentions are Mother Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary. This suggests that she was possibly rejected by her real mother. Mary's lack of attention toward Jamie is behind his jealousy of his two brothers and father. Because he was conceived to replace the dead baby, Edmund has always felt that his mother didn't want him. This feeling has been further aggravated by his apprehension that his birth may have significantly contributed to his mother's addiction. In Act III, he tells his mother:

> And why are you so crazy against my going away now? I've been away a lot, and I've never noticed it broke your heart! (119).

The second similarity between the Tyrones is their vacillation between love and hate. Commenting on his mother's detachment,

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[2] Rene Girard, "The Sacrificial Crisis," Violence and the Sacred (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977, pp. 39-67.

Edmund tells his father that it seems to him that Mary deliberately withdraws from them as if, despite her love, she hated them.

> The hardest thing to take is the blank wall she builds around her. Or it's more like a bank of fog in which she hides and loses herself. Deliberately, that's the hell of it! You know something in her does it deliberately 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 ! (139).

Yet, we know that Mary's relapse is due to Edmund's disease. In Act II, Scene 2, she confesses her guilt: "I never should have born Edmund." She was sick when pregnant, as a consequence, Edmund was born nervous and too sensitive, and that she believes was her fault:

> And now, ever since he's been so sick I've kept remembering Eugene and my father and I've been so frightened and guilty--(88).

Because she loves him, she is afraid to lose him as she previously lost her father and the young Eugene. This explains her violent outburst when she discoveres that Tyrone has sent Edmund to Doctor Hardy.

> No! I won't have it! How dare Doctor Hardy advise such a thing without consulting me! How dare your father allow him! What right has he? You are my baby! Let him attend to Jamie!
>
> [More and more excited and bitter.]
>
> I know why he wants you sent to a sanatorium. To take you from me! He's always tried to do that. He's been jealous of every one of my babies! He kept finding ways to make me leave them. That's what caused Eugene's death. He's been jealous of you most

> of all. He knew I loved you most because--
> (119).

In Act IV, Jamie confesses that he has delibrerately been a rotten influence on his brother. Warning Edmund against himself, he says:

> Nix, kid! You listen! Did it on purpose to make a bum of you. Or part of me did. A big part. That part that's been dead so long. That hates life. My putting you wise so you'd learn from my mistakes. Believed that myself that for times, but it's a fake. Make my mistakes look good. Made getting drunk romantic. Made whores fascinating vampires instead of poor, stupid, diseased slobs they really are. Made fun of work as sucker's game. Never wanted you succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama's baby, Papa's pet!" (165).

Yet, he confesses later: "But don't get wrong idea, Kid. I love you more than I hate you. My saying what I'm telling you now proves it" (166).

As for Edmund, he both loves and hates his father. He hates him when he remembers that Tyrone's miserliness may very well have caused his mother's morphine addiction. Had Tyrone sent her to a good physician, she might never have known morphine. In Act IV, Edmund exclaims:

> Because you've never given her anything that would help her want to stay off it! No home except this summer dump in a place she hates and you've refused even to spend money to make this look

> decent, while you keep buying more property, and playing sucker for every con man with a gold mine, or a silver mine, or any kind of get-rich-quick swindle! You've dragged her around on the road, season after season, on one-night stands, with no one she could talk to, waiting night after night in dirty hotel rooms for you to come back with a bun on after the bars closed! Christ, is it any wonder she didn't want to be cured. Jesus, when I think of it I hate your guts (141).

But after listening to his father's family story and to his confession of how he ruined his own artistic career for material success, Edmund is moved. Looking at his father with understanding, he tells him: 'I'm glad you've told me this, Papa. I know you a lot better now" (151).

The same ambivalent feelings characterize Tyrone's attitude toward his elder son. Though he accuses Jamie of being a failure, a drunkard who is incapable of supporting himself, Tyrone is in fact deeply affected by his son's failure. It is frustration that prompts his outburst of verbal violence in Act I. Later, with indignant appeal, Tyrone tells Jamie:

> If you'd get ambition in your head instead of folly! You're young yet. You could still make your mark. You had the talent to become a fine actor! You have it still. You're my son--! (33).

At the end of Act IV, he bitterly comments on the drunken Jamie:

> A sweet spectacle for me! My first-born, who I hoped would bear my name in honor and dignity, who showed such brilliant promise! (167).

In addition to their vacillation between love and hatred, their use of masks is another common feature between these characters. In "The Origins of Myths and Rituals," Girard writes:

> In primitive societies the mask displays combinations of forms and colors incompatible with a differentiated order that is not primarily that of nature but of the culture itself. The mask mixes man and beast, god and inanimate object. They are beyond differences; they do not merely defy differences or efface them, but they incorporate, and rearrange them in original fashion. In short, they are another aspect of the monstrous double.[3]

In reference to modern plays, Susan Valeria Harris observes, masks have a double function: they both protect and reveal the character. The mask is usually the public or false face, the unmasked face the private or true one. This critic notes that "the Jungian idea about frozen persona (a protective and false social self) forms the basis for many of Eugene O'Neill's plays."[4] In a culture where people are afraid of falling short of what they think society expects from them, they often hide their shortcomings from the public eye. In Long Day's Journey into Night, every character is wearing a mask. Whenever anyone tries to see beneath their façades, and discover their naked selves, the characters invariably resort to aggressiveness to defend themselves. This explains the tense atmosphere in the first three acts of the play. For example, Tyrone is a successful actor.

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[3] In his chapter "From Mimetic Desire to the Monstrous Double," Girard defines what he means by the double. "When all differences have been eliminated and the similarity between two figures has been achieved, we say that the antagonists are doubles. It is their interchangeability that makes possible the act of sacrificial subsitution" (159).

[4] Susan Valeria Harris Smith, Masks in Modern Drama (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 108.

Although, he has amassed a lot of money, he believes he has failed as an actor by permanently restricting himself to the role of the Count of Mount Cristo. He has also sacrificed his wife and children to his need for secure wealth of which he was deprived in childhood. He is responsible not only for his wife's addiction to drugs but also for Jamie's alcoholism and Edmund's sickness. "The tragedy of Tyrone," as Doris V. Folk remarks, "is that he sold his soul for the illusion of success"[5] (13). In Act IV, he bitterly realizes that he is nothing behind the mask of success he has created and in which he has trapped himself.

On the surface level, Edmund is accusing his father of trying to cause his death by sending him to a cheap public sanatarium. Underneath this accusation, however, he is in fact hiding a death wish. Although he knows his health is precarious, he keeps on drinking. To use Poe's words, his "imp of the perverse" is pushing him toward self-destruction. He has even attempted once to commit suicide in a bar called Jimmie the Priest's.

Jamie is also wearing a mask. Out of childhood jealousy and envy of the promise shown in Edmund, Jamie has deliberately taught his brother cynicism and self-destructive dissipation, in the guise of romantic adventure. Tyrone constantly warns Edmund to beware of Jamie's sneering tongue. But under his constant sneering, Jamie is hiding self-contempt and loathing, for he has always had Eugene's death on his conscience. As Dennis J. Rich[6] points out, Jamie "assumes

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[5] Doris V. Falk, "*Long Day's Journey*," Modern Critical Interpretations/ *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Harold Bloom ed (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), pp. 9-20.

[6] Dennis J. Rich, "Exile Without Remedy/ the Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Eugene O' Neill/ A World View Virginia Floyd, ed (New York: Frederick Ungar Co, 1979), p. 259.

the mask of the cynic. But underneath this Jamie is a spiritual suicide. Confronted with meaninglessness in his relations with others and with himself, he has given up on life. He is, as he describes himself, a 'God-damned shell."

The same thing could be said about Mary. She is hiding her fear and contempt for sexuality from the others as well as herself. In his essay " Pitching the Mansion and Pumping the Morphine/ Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*,"[7] Kevin P. Reilly contends that "her drug-taking does seem to be an attempt to escape from the excrementalized self of the present into the vision of the spiritualized self of the past, the self of girlish romance who was in communion with the comforting Virgin Mary" (26). Reilly contends, furthermore that Mary does exhibit a contempt for sexuality right from Act I. When James follows his compliment on the beauty of her eyes with a kiss in full view of Jamie, she is embarrassed. Later, what at first seems modesty, turns out to be a device to cut herself off from her husband and sons: "You must not try to touch me. It isn't right, when I am hoping to be a nun" (174). Reilly further suggests that her failed suicide by drowning could well have been an attempt to clean her body from the dirt of sexuality by immersion in purifying waters.

Not least important is the characters' frequent use of quotations throughout the play's action. Like masks, they serve both to reveal and hide the private self. Some of Jamie's quotations are clues to his character. A notable instance being his distortion of Oscar Wilde's " The Ballad of Reading Gaol." Wilde's original lines are "the

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[7] Kevin P. Reilly, "Pitching the Mansion and Pumping the Morphine/ Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*," Gypsy Scholar 5-6 (1978-9): pp. 22-33.

man had killed the thing he loved/ And so he had to die." According to Jamie, Wilde got the meaning twisted: "the man was dead and so he had to kill the thing he loved. That's what it ought to be" (166). Because Jamie is spiritually dead inside, he seems to be saying that he has tried to destroy Edmund, his rival who took all of Mary's love. The reference takes on an additional meaning when we realize that later in that ballad, Wilde alludes to Cain's murder of Abel.[8]

The use of masks and quotations reveals another common denominator between the Tyrones: self-defense. Denial is the most important defensive strategy in the play. The latter, according to Stroupe, is "a total repudiation of an internal or external threat in spite of clear evidence of its existence."[9] It is clear that Mary semi-consciously thinks that Edmund has consumption, the disease that killed her father, but she rigorously denies it, thus her insistence that he has a summer cold. In Act I, everyone except Jamie denies Mary's relapse back into morphine dependency. Whenever Jamie hints at his mother's addiction, the other family members jump at his throat. For example, when Jamie tells his father that he woke up at night because he heard his mother walking in the spare room (Eugene's room), Tyrone retorts: "By God, how you can live with a mind that sees nothing but the worst motives behind everything is beyond me" (38). And Edmund reacts similarly when his brother tells him that he suspects his mother's return to morphine: "She didn't! You're crazy" (57).

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[8] John H. Stroupe, Critical Approaches to O'Neill (New York: AMS, 1988). Stroupe mentions that there is a reference in Wilde's ballad to Cain's murder of Abel "And how men their brothers maim." p. 176.

[9] Stroupe, p. 172.

The second thing the Tyrones deny is Edmund's sickness. When Tyrone demands that Jamie pretend to his mother that Edmund is not sick, Jamie says: "All right: have it your own way. I think it's wrong to let Mama go on kidding herself. It will only make the shock worse when she has got to face it. Anyway, you can see she's deliberately fooling herself with that summer cold talk. She knows better" (29). Jamie's characteristic behavior, as noticed in the above examples, is that of revealer or exposer of truth. Whereas Tyrone, Edmund, and Mary deny reality, Jamie reveals the lies they have been fabricating to protect themselves. His defensive behavior clashes with the characteristic defenses of the other family members and directly produces some of the upheaval. He is considered the black sheep of the family and Mary even warns everyone against his poisonous tongue. Thus, it is the clash between those strategies of evasion and confrontation that leads to verbal and physical aggression in the play. When Jamie begins his cynical speech about the madness of his mother in Act IV, and asks "where is the hophead? Gone to sleep?" (161), in a blank non-acceptance of reality, Edmund slaps him on the face.[10] When strategies of denial and undoing are used as defenses in a family, they betray the presence of psychological tension. Stroupe rightly remarks that "the intensity of defensiveness at any point in the play indirectly reflects the degree of psychological tension among the characters" (177). These defensive strategies betray the vulnerability of the inner self. Whenever someone puts his finger on another's Achilles' heel, the old

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[10] Stroupe identifies three other important defensive strategies: regression, introjection, and displacement.

wounds and guilt are revived, which in turn cause the outbreak of violence.

Besides self-defense, the family has a shared sense of loss. To start with Mary, her loss is theological. As her husband observes, "she hasn't denied her faith, but she's forgotten it, until now there's not strength of spirit left in her to fight against her curse" (78). She longs for a return to the stability of her youth, and for a state of grace she believes she once had attained. But her life has been marked by suffering. The final humiliation is her addiction to morphine. Mary discovers that she is no longer able to face life. "One day long ago I found I could no longer call my soul my soul" (93). If Mary's loss is "theological," Tyrone's loss is "aesthetic," he has prostituted his talent as a classical actor for the illusion of material success. In his life, the absurd appears in the comparison between the actor he might have been and the material success he is: "That God-damned play I bought for a song and made such a great success in--a great money success--it ruined me with its promise of an easy fortune...what the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder, that was worth well, no matter. It's a late day for regrets" (149-50).

According to Dennis J. Rich, Jamie's loss is "psychological."[11] He believes the worst because he wants to believe the best. "His being is defined by "the divorce of an existence envisioned and existence as it actually is." Quoting from Rossetti, Jamie gives us a definition of himself:

Look into my face. My name is Might-have-been;

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[11] Rich identifies four types of loss in the play: theological, aesthetic, psychological, and metaphysical, pp. 259-60.

I am also called No More, Too Late, Farewell (168).

Edmund's loss, as Rich states, is on a "metaphysical plane." "He is the character who experiences most the crisis of the absurd. He realizes that life is 'damned crazy' (151), and at one point in his life he 'stopped to think too long'" (147). It is at this time that he to tried to kill himself. Now he rebels against death and the absurd. And decides to go for that sanatorium for cure." All that he seeks in life are some moments of insight and understanding. In these short glimpses of hope, he feels that "for a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall an you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason!" (153).

In "Freud and the Oedipus Complex," Girard argues that "mimesis is at the source of continual conflict. By making one man's desire into a replica of another man's desire, it invariably leads to rivalry; and rivalry in turn transforms desire into violence" (169). The antagonists become doubles: anybody can be the double of the other, and anybody can be a victim. This process which links violence to the lack of distinctions will naturally perceive incest as its ultimate goal. While mimicking the father, the child identifies with him by means of appropriation, i.e., by "taking the things that belong to the father" (170). This sheds light on the tense relationship between Jamie and Tyrone and Jamie and his brothers. In his book Long Day's Journey into Night/ Native Eloquence,[12] Michael Hinden suggests a "possible rivalry between father and son over the love of Mary." In this play, Jamie is thinking of his father not merely as the

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[12] Michael Hinden, *Long Day's Journey into NighT*/ Native Eloquence (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990).

head of the family, but as Mary's sexual partner. There are many signs that he is bitterly jealous of his father. For example, in Act IV, when he awakens temporarily from his drunkenness, he greets his father with lines from Richard III that suggest he secretly thinks of his father as a hated rival:

> Clarence is come, false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
> That Stabbed me in a field by Tewksbury.
> Seize on him, Furies, take him into torment (168).

Jamie later repeats the same image to his brother. In his warning to Edmund against his own self, he says:

> And when you come back, look out for me. I'll be waiting to welcome you with that 'my old pal' stuff, and give you the glad hand, and at the first good chance I get stab you in the back (168).

Hinden maintains that "all his life Jamie has been competing unsuccessfully with his father for his mother's love, and has transferred his feelings of rivalry to his brothers." (56-9). He has destroyed one brother Eugene. And now, he is trying "to protect his brother Edmund from a similar fate at his hands." He confesses to Edmund:

> Never wanted you to succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama's baby, Papa's pet! (165).

Girard writes that "because disciple and model are converging on the same object, a clash between them is inevitable" (174). In his identification with the father (the model), Jamie (the disciple) not only desires the mother (the very object which the father desires),

but tries to appropriate his father's estate. This leads him to wish the death of Tyrone. Unmasking his deep motives, he tells Edmund:

> ... You suspect right now I'm thinking to myself that Papa is old and can't last much longer, and if you were to die, Mama and I would get all he's got, and so I'm probably hoping--(163).

Edmund is shocked by the fact that his brother is harboring such thoughts. He is coveting not only Tyrone's money, "but most important of all, the prospect of having Mama for himself."[13] The identification with the father leads to a loss of differentiation between son and father. And it is this elimination of differences which leads to chaos and thus to the unleashing of violence. A close view of the play shows some similarities between father and son. First, Jamie is an actor like his father. Throughout the play, he is compared with his father. In Act I, Scene 1, the stage directions tell us that "Jamie the elder, is thirty-three. He has his father's broad-shouldered, deep-chested physique, is a an inch taller and weighs less, but appears shorter and stouter because he lacks Tyrone's bearing and graceful carriage" (19). Besides his physical appearance, Jamie has inherited from his father his love of the bottle. Both father and son drown their sorrows and guilt in the whiskey padlocked in the cellar. After all, it is Tyrone (the model) who introduced his son (the disciple) to alcohol. Whenever, young Jamie had a nightmare, his father would give him a teaspoon of whiskey to quiet his fears. Furthermore, the obsession with the mother seems to be continually present in the family. Both Tyrone and Jamie are deeply attached to

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[13] Hinden, p. 57.

their mothers. At sixty-five, Tyrone still cannot hold back his emotions whenever he remembers his mother. He is in tears when he tells Edmund all the pain his mother suffered when his father abandoned them:

> Twice we were evicted from the miserable hovel we called home, with my mother's few sticks of furniture thrown out in the street, and my mother and sisters crying. I cried, too, though I tried hard not to, because I was the man of the family. At ten years old! There was no more school for me. I worked twelve hours a day in a machine shop, learning to make files (148- 49),

He concludes his reminiscences by stating that "there was never a braver or finer" woman than his mother. Even now, Tyrone wishes that his father were "roasting in hell" (147).

Commenting on the nature of violence, Girard writes that "violence is self-propagating. Everyone wants to strike the last blow, and reprisal can thus follow reprisal without any true conclusion ever being reached" (26). The same pattern of reprisal is operating in this play. In tragic dialogue,[14] Girard observes, "hot words are substituted for cold steel" (44). This kind of "stichomythic" dialogue is expressed in the men's use of quotations. Hiding behind the words of Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Swinburne, Dowson, Rossetti, and Symons, the characters direct arrows at one another and return them when possible to the person who sends them. In Act IV, underneath

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[14] According to Girard, there is a symmetry in tragic dialogue. This symmetry "is perfectly mirrored by the stichomythia, in which the two protagonists address one another in alternating lines." Another characteristic of this kind of dialogue is that it "is a debate without a resolution. Each side resolutely continues to deploy the same arguments, emphases, goals, Gleichgewicht is Holderlin's word for it" (44-5).

this apparent argument over Shakespeare and the Decadent poets, there is a real battle going on between Tyrone and Edmund. For example, when Tyrone condemns his son's favorite writers as "whoremongers and degenerates" (135), this reminds one of Jamie. Edmund in defense of his brother counters that Shakespeare was a "souse too." Well aware that Shakespeare is his father's idol, Edmund's insult is undoubtedly directed at Tyrone. In retaliation, Tyrone says:

> Don't compare him with the pack you've got in there.
>
> [He indicates the small bookcase again.]
>
> Your dirty Zola! And your Dante Gabriel Rossetti who was a dope fiend!.

Because violence often operates without reason, it destroys both the other and the self. Attacking Edmund (the other), Tyrone calls Dowson a dope fiend, but he soon realizes that he is only hurting himself. Indeed, this derogatory term could well be applied to Mary his beloved wife. This explains why he feels guilty afterwards and why Edmund puts an end to the argument: "Perhaps it would be wise to change the subject" (135). Thus, Long Day's Journey into Night could be seen as a modern revenge play, where only violence is the winner, as both parties end up hurting each other and themselves.

The irrational nature of violence can also be seen in the shifting of alliances in the Tyrone family. As Hinden observes, "When two members are alone, they tend to quarrel. A third person usually intervenes to restore order but he is as likely as the original

participants to renew the argument."[15] Often Mary is the peacemaker. In Act I, she intervenes on Jamie's behalf with Tyrone ("Now don't start in on poor Jamie, dear" (18)), and in Act II, on Tyrone's behalf with Jamie ("Remember your father is getting old, Jamie. You really ought to show more consideration" (60)), but neither gesture prevents her from attacking both men later on. To the puzzlement of Edmund, she turns on Jamie:

> [Sharp--letting her resentment toward him come out.]
>
> It's you who should have more respect! Stop sneering at your father! I won't have it! You ought to be proud you're his son! He may have his faults. Who hasn't? But he's worked hard all his life. He made his way up from ignorance and poverty to the top of his profession! Everyone else admires him and you should be the last one to sneer--you, who, thanks to him, have never had to work hard in your life (60).

And later in Act III, she spews her anger at Tyrone. After stating that Jamie won't return home so long as he has the price of a drink left, she suddenly changes her tone. The stage directions indicate that "her face hardens and she stares at her husband with accusing hostility":

> No, it isn't at all. You brought him up to be a boozer. Since he first opened his eyes, he's seen you drinking. Always a bottle on the bureau in the cheap hotel rooms! And if he had a nightmare when he was little, or a stomach-ache, your remedy was to give him a teaspoonful of whiskey to quiet him (110).

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[15] Hinden, pp. 33-34.

Similarly, Edmund defends his mother against Jamie in Act I, but later throws Jamie's accusations in her face. Suspecting his mother's relapse back into morphine addiction, Jamie keeps staring at her before he finally tells her: "Take a look at your eyes in the mirror" (63). Edmund who has just come into the room, turns on Jamie and attempts to calm his mother by telling her that her eldest son is a liar.In Act III, however, when Mary tells him that she hates him when he becomes gloomy and morbid, Edmund "gets up from his chair and stares condemningly at her--bitterly, and says to her bitterly: It is pretty hard to take at times, having a dope fiend for a mother" (120). This indicates that violence is not only irrational, but also cyclic.

Girard explains that violence is never really removed from the community. Whenever violence threatens to emerge again, people resort to rituals and sacrifices. The latter are "extraordinary precautions to prevent the community from falling once again to reciprocal violence" (121). This explains why Girard identifies them as "letting-off-steam" techniques. In Long Day's Journey into Night, rituals, alcohol, morphine, as well as morbid poetry have an anesthetic and protective function. These means of escapism are attempts to protect one's integrity from being shattered by guilt.

For Girard, violence is the heart and the secret soul of the sacred. The operations of the sacred and violence are ultimately the same process. "The sacred involves order as well as disorder, peace as well as war, creation as well as destruction" (258). In Long Day's Journey into Night, Mary moves like a sacred figure. She embodies both life and destruction for the other characters. On the one hand,

she is the bond of common feeling between the other members of the family. Quarrels are often resumed for her sake. When she is around, the characters get closer to each other. In Act I, for example, Jamie and Tyrone accuse each other of having caused Edmund's illness, but the quarrel calms down when Tyrone mentions Mary:

> It is damnable luck Edmund should be sick right now. It couldn't have come at a worse time for him.
>
> [He adds, unable to conceal an almost furtive uneasiness.]
>
> Or for your mother. It is damnable she should have this to upset her just when she needs peace and freedom from worry. She's been so well in the last two months since she came home .
>
> [His voice grows husky and trembles a little.]
>
> It's been a home again to me. This home has been a home again. But I needn't tell you, Jamie.
>
> [His son looks at him, for the first time with an understanding sympathy. It is as if suddenly a deep bond of common feeling exists between them in which their antagonisms could be forgotten.]
>
> Jamie: [Almost gently.]
> I've felt the same way, Papa (36-37).

On the other hand, Mary is the cause of the altercations between the father and his sons. Both Edmund and Jamie think that their father's miserliness has led to their mother's morphine

addiction. She is even the provocation of the only instance of verbal violence in the play. When Jamie asks whether "the hophead" has gone to bed, Edmund's response is to slap his brother's face. Her pivotal position in the play suggests the picture of a deity surrounded by worshippers seeking salvation. Indeed, Tyrone, Jamie, and Edmund all believe they could save themselves from alcoholism and self-destruction if Mary succeeds in her struggle against morphine. Her relapse explains not only their violence against her, but also their dead silence at the end of the play. Explaining his insolence toward his mother, Jamie admits:

> I suppose it's because I feel so damned sunk. Because this time Mama had me fooled. I really believed she had it licked. She thinks I always believe the worst, but this time I believe the best.
>
> [His voice flutters.]
>
> I suppose I can't forgive her--yet. It meant so much. I'd begun hope, if she'd beaten the game, I could, too (162).

Despite his deep love for Mary, Tyrone is also capable of angry outbursts against her. He cannot help wounding her for the pain she causes. They could have had a home, he argues, had it not been for Mary's instability. At such moments, he catches himself and relents, deciding that Mary is not responsible for her addiction. In the final scene, Mary is completely isolated from her family, dreaming of the Virgin Mary and Mother Elizabeth. The three men have poured themselves drinks for consolation. But even alcohol doesn't alleviate their distress, for Mary's withdrawal means spiritual death for them.

At the play's end, "Mary stares before her in a sad dream. Tyrone stirs in his chair. Edmund and Jamie remain motionless" (176).

In "Sacrifice," Girard observes that "when unappeased, violence seeks and always finds a surrogate victim. The creature that excited its fury is abruptly replaced by another, chosen only for it is vulnerable and close at hand" (2). He further explains that the purpose of sacrifice is "to restore harmony to the community and to reinforce the social fabric" (8). In the first three acts of Long Day's Journey into Night, Jamie functions as the familial scapegoat. Everybody argues that he bears the chief burden of responsibility for their collective unhappiness. According to Hinden, Jamie "is regarded by everyone including himself as morally unclean and to his despair he is viewed as a source of pollution spreading contagion throughout the family" (58). As a boy he contaminated his brother with measles and now he is poisoning everybody with his cynicism. Tyrone openly associates him with poison. "Beware of that brother of yours," he tell Edmund, "or he'll poison life for you with his damned sneering serpent's tongue !" (109). Mary uses similar imagery complaining of Jamie's "vile, poisonous tongue" (83). To use Hinden's words, "both parents are intent on isolating Edmund from Jamie," the cause of his disease. But is the elder brother the only poisoner in the family?

As Hinden points out, on the symbolic level, the pattern of poison imagery in the play identifies Jamie once again with his mother. "Mary is a poisoner too, in the sense that her addiction threatens to distabilize the family" (59). By identifying Jamie and Mary as the family poisoners, O'Neill has Jamie function as a familial scapegoat, scourging his own conscience but also symbolically

bearing away the various contagions that plague the Tyrones" (59). Tyrone is also responsible for his family's suffering, If he hadn't been miserly and economizing on Mary's and Edmund's medical treatment, perhaps Mary would never have known morphine, and his son wouldn't have contracted consumption, the immediate cause for his wife's relapse. Because the parents can't direct their violence against themselves, they deflect it onto the first and closest person to them, their son, a surrogate for the guilty self. Girard notes that "sacrificial substitution implies a degree of misunderstanding. Its vitality as an institution depends on its ability to conceal the displacement upon which the rite is based" (5). This explains the failure of the first sacrificial mechanism in Long Day's Journey into Night. The parents are aware that they bear the same amount of responsibility as Jamie: their responsibility is too obvious to be totally ignored by their conscience. Their aggressiveness as well as the pattern of defense they develop indicate their inability to rid themselves of guilt. Whereas at the beginning, the movement of the characters is flight from guilt and from the problems posed by existence, at the end they move towards an acceptance of life's hardships. This movement is accompanied by a decrease in the emotional intensity of the play. Each of the three men comes to a recognition of his aims and motives. For two of them, Jamie and Tyrone, this amounts to a humiliating confession. In an effort to redeem himself, Jamie confesses his hatred and jealousy towards his brother. Similarly, Tyrone admits that he allowed himself to be corrupted by early success, and that he prostituted his talent for financial gain and security. For the first time, his real character is revealed to the audience and to his son

Edmund as well. We realize that his longing for his youth is no less poignant than his wife's. The letter in which Booth commends him for his playing of Othello, may be hidden, as Edmund suggests, somewhere perhaps in the attic, in the same place as Mary's wedding dress. His confession puts an end to the quarrel. By offering their social masks, both Jamie and his father find peace. Likewise, once Edmund admits that he is a little in love with death, and that he expects nothing in life but some moments of illumination when "the veil of things as they seem [is] drawn back by an unseen hand," is he then able to find serenity. As Girard demonstrates, "sacrifice serves to protect the community from its own violence...the purpose of sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community to reinforce the social fabric" (4). In this play too, sacrifice helps to promote family unity. The final unmasking of the characters makes the characters more understanding toward one another.

Girard has pointed out that Greek tragedy effaces all differences between antagonists. "Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all utilized the same procedures and almost identical phraseology to convey symmetry, identity, and reciprocity" (46). In Oedipus the King, for example, Sophocles puts in Oedipus's mouth words that emphasize his resemblance to his father: resemblance in desires, suspicions, and course of action. As a result, an audience can not take sides, and hopefully remains impartial. This leads us to consider the form and mode of Long Day's Journey into Night in the light of Girard's view of violence and tragedy.

In her book, The Absent One Mourning, Ritual, Tragedy, and the Performance of Ambivalence, Susan Letzler Cole writes that the

originary impulse of tragedy was that of funerary ritual. "In tragic drama, the text makes present for the reader/ viewer the full enactment of the universal paradox of mourning" (6). Funeral rituals, "in various guises, enact the desire to reanimate the dead" (9). Thus they extend "the life of the deceased beyond the moment of death by invoking belief in a liminal period during which the mourners' behavior is directed toward controlling the 'danger' of transitional states. This danger of liminality is paradoxically controlled by entering the liminal realm itself." (10). This dangerous liminality has been incorporated into the Greek stage. She observes that the world of tragedy is the world of liminality in space, time, and feeling. Regarding O'Neill, it is the model of Greek tragedy that underlies the structure of this modern play. O'Neill has reverted to the classical unities of time, place, and action. Paralleling the lack of distinctions between characters, the boundaries of place and time have been eliminated. And as a result, O'Neill's stage has become the center of liminality. In Act I, we know that there are two libraries in the same room. In the left wall, there is Tyrone's library, containing classical works by Shakespeare, Dumas, Victor Hugo, etc,... On the right side, there is Edmund's "damned library" (135). It contains "philosophical and sociological works by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Engels, plays by Ibsen, Shaw, and Strindberg, poetry by Swinburne, Rossetti, Wilde, Dowson, Kipling, and Shakespeare. This informs us of the antagonistic philosophies of father and son, and prepares the context for their battle of the books. The existence of Shakespearean works in the young men's library breaks the neat distinction between the two libraries. And it is Shakespeare that Edmund later quotes to

antagonize his father. Once Edmund won a wager from Tyrone by memorizing the role of Macbeth in a week. When, in Act IV, Tyrone quotes Shakespeare: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," Edmund ironically responds using Shakespeare's words: "Fine! That's beautiful. But I wasn't trying to say that. We are such stuff as manure is made on, so let's drink up and forget it. That's more my idea" (131). The setting here suggests the lack of real differences between father and sons as well as Girard's concept of "mimetic rivalry." After all, it is the father who has introduced his sons to Shakespeare.

On the second floor, there are four small bedrooms: one for James and Mary, one for each of the brothers, and a spare room where Mary gives herself her morphine injections. This extra room would have belonged to baby Eugene had he lived. From afternoon till evening, Mary sporadically stalks the second floor. And everybody else is worried. They suspect that she has returned to her morphine addiction. Edmund tells his father:

> Yes, she moves above and beyond us, a ghost haunting the past and here we sit pretending to forget, but straining our ears listening for the slightest sound, hearing the fog drip from the eaves like the uneven tick of a rundown, crazy clock--or like the dreary tears of a trollop spattering in a puddle of stale beer on a honkey-tonk table top! (152).

On the symbolic level, this could mean that there is no present as long as the Tyrones are haunted by the memory of the dead. As Mary puts it: "the past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too"

(87). The overlapping of past and present in the play indicates the elimination of the time boundary. Besides baby Eugene's room, time liminality is expressed through O'Neill's use of sounds. The melancholy foghorn and the warning bells on yachts anchored in the harbor and Mary's piano playing in Act IV, indicate the overlapping of past and present. The power of the past over the present is also expressed in the gestures and movements of the characters. In the last act, at the end of his confession, Tyrone starts turning off the light bulbs in the chandelier, one after another:

> No, I don't know what the hell it was that I wanted to buy.
> [He clicks one bulb.]
> On my solemn oath Edmund I'd gladly face not having an acre of land to call my own, nor a penny in the bank--
> [He clicks another bulb.]
> I'd be willing to have no home but the poorhouse in my old age if I could look back now on having been the fine artist I might have been.
> [He turns out the third bulb, so only the reading lamp is on, and sits down again heavily. Edmund suddenly cannot hold back a burst of strained, ironical laughter.] (151)

In Act IV, the four confessions can help arouse a liminal feeling in the audience. In Act IV, Mary appears with her wedding dress, plays the piano, and recalls her dream of becoming a nun. Though physically present, she is mentally absent. This ambivalence between presence and absence or life and death pertains to the liminal realm of tragedy. This kind of feeling can elicit empathy and understanding in those members of the audience who have become involved in the

play. In a letter to a friend, O'Neill interpreted the ending of the play as follows:

> At the final curtain, there they still are, trapped within each other by the past, each guilty and at the same time innocent, scorning, loving, pitying each other, understanding, and yet never to be able to forget.[16]

We can say then that the mode of the play relates to Girard's view that a literary text is both objective and subjective. It is true that Long Day's Journey into Night is an autobiographical play, but at the same time, it is deeply rooted in the American tradition. Tyrone's Irish background and his aspiration for material success ought to be viewed as a realist dramatization of the American dream. Far from being an optimistic realist, O'Neill has adopted the view of the pessimistic naturalist, who sees man as the offspring of his environment and impotent to do anything to change his fate. The most poignant scene in the play is perhaps in Act IV, when James Tyrone tells his son that he doesn't understand what made him sacrifice his career for money. But while saying that, he cannot help himself from clicking out one bulb after another to save money. Like Zola, O'Neill seems to imply that human behavior is rooted in the pressures of the environment. Eventually, O'Neill's tragic hero is simultaneously innocent and responsible for his suffering. And to survive, he must accept the inconsistencies of his human condition.

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[16] As quoted by Hinden, p. 36.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter will examine three important questions: what made O'Neill view violence in the same way as Girard? what is his conception of tragedy? and why is violence generative only in Long Day's Journey into Night? In the first part of this final chapter, we will focus on Girard's and O'Neill's common interest in myths, rituals, and Greek drama. It will focus in particular on O'Neill's interest in restoring theater to its ritual function. The third part will examine O'Neill's view of tragedy. Finally, relying on the dramatist's biography, we will look at the common themes present in The Emperor Jones, Desire Under the Elms, and Long Day's Journey into Night. This part will pay particular attention to the development of O'Neill's thought and how this may have affected his view of violence.

Girard's theory of violence can be summed up in a few words: all cultural forms originate in a "collective murder." And he then proceeds to examine the function of these cultural forms such as religion, myths, and rituals. Whereas sacrificial rituals act as "letting-off-steam" techniques to protect the community from its own violence, religion and myths all distort the reality of the first act of unanimous violence. This helps to keep the community safe from the knowledge of its own violence and thus from replunging it

into chaos. Girard observes that the Greek tragedians understood that it is the loss of order that leads to the unleashing of violence. For example, in Oedipus the King, there is no difference between Oedipus, Theseus, and Laius. They are all responsible for the outbreak of violence and unrest. Girard's theory is a mixture of everything: anthropology, religion, literature, mythology, and history. Similarly, O'Neill's drama shows a diversity of sources ranging from the times of the Ancients, to Post W.W.II. This common interest in Greek drama and rituals explains why Girard and O'Neill have reached the same conclusions concerning the nature of violence. O'Neill's interest in Greek drama cannot be separated from his interest in restoring theater to its ritual function. Leonard Chabrowe observes:

> For O'Neill, art is for life's sake. He tried to convert the theater back into the church because he had a deep psychological need to do so. Only this could turn doubt into will and despair into acceptance. O'Neill's purpose is to achieve an effect in the modern theater like that in the ancient Athenian. And such an effect meant not only finding equivalents for the Theater of Dionysus and Greek fatalism but reuniting them.[1]

In The Emperor Jones, O'Neill takes us back to those sacrificial rituals in primitive societies. The confrontation between Jones and the witch-doctor and his crocodile god is symbolic of the struggle between the forces of life (Dionysus) and those of death (the

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[1] Mentioned by Chabrowe in the introduction of Ritual and Pathos/ the Theater of O'Neill (London: Associated University Presses, 1976), p. xxi.

gorgon)[2]. As in Greek tragedy, O'Neill's tragic hero is both victim and self-victimizer. The death of Jones stands for the triumph of those evil forces in the cosmos. However, his plight cannot be attributed solely to external forces: there is a tragic flaw in his character as well. It is his greed that turns the natives against him.

In Desire Under the Elms, the folk dances can be seen as attempts on the part of the playwright to create the Dionysian spirit. In leaving the farm, Peter and Simeon are leaving the tomb-like home for freedom outside. The ceremony following the baby's birthday turns out to be a funeral ritual rather than a ritual for the celebration of life. No less important is the title of the play in this respect. It prepares us for the battle between the powers of life and death (Eros and Thanatos). Indeed, it is Abbie who introduces "desire" or life in the tomb where the Cabots are interred alive. Sexuality in this play is not associated with sin. Rather, it is an expression of the life instinct[3]. Abbie arouses this instinct not only in Eben who is metaphorically dead by his father's Calvinism, but also in the old man: she awakens in him the desire to have a child at seventy-six. Like Jones's fate, the baby's death could be attributed both to misfortune and to the characters' greed and selfishness.

In Long Day's Journey into Night too, O'Neill combines Greek fatalism with the theater of Dionysus. Whereas in the two previous plays O'Neill's characters are unaware of the forces motivating them, in this play, the Tyrones come to an awareness of their tragic flaws

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[2] In Greek mythology, the Gorgon is any of the three frightful maidens with wings and claws, and with snakes instead of hair. The three Gorgons--Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa --were daughters of Phorcys and Ceto. Medusa was mortal and was beheaded by Perseus; generally she alone could petrify by her glance.

[3] Asselineau, p. 64

and to the fact that they are not entirely responsible for what has befallen them. Only in this play do O'Neill's characters communicate and show empathy for one another. It is this spiritual communion that explains why violence is generative only in this play. For O'Neill, the stage seems a place of spiritual communion not only between the characters, but also between the characters and the audience. This leads us to consider the function of the dramatist according to O'Neill.

"Most modern plays," O'Neill writes, "are concerned with the relation between man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested only in the relation between man and God." In a much quoted letter to George Jean Nathan, O'Neill shows the same attitude:

> The playwright today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it... the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlor entertainer.[4]

The Dionysian spirit of the play lies in man's struggle to make his life meaningful. For O'Neill man must not surrender to pessimism. Rather, he must accept his suffering, for it is through his struggle against the absurd that man asserts himself. Long Day's Journey into Night can be seen as a celebration of life because the characters have

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[4] Eugene O'Neill as quoted in Joseph Wood Krutch, "Introduction to Eugene O'Neill," Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill (New York: Liverright, Inc, 1932), p. xvii.

thrown away their masks and accepted their suffering. O'Neill's view of tragedy corresponds to what Doris Alexander[5] calls aesthetic tragedy. According to this critic, life is "one eternal tragedy, of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to be the force that express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression."

Personal factors could also have drawn O'Neill's attention to the cyclical nature of violence. Richard Armour writes that: "After reading a biography of O'Neill, one not only understands his tragedies better, but finds them a relief."[6] O'Neill's biography reveals that violence and self-destructiveness are passed on from father to son in his family. His grandfather abandoned his wife and children to return to Ireland where he killed himself with rat poison. His father James O'Neill denied paternity to Nettie Walsh's son. Hinden notes that O'Neill's portrait of himself is "disingenuous" in Long Day's Journey into Night. "Edmund's inexperience and passivity" serve not only to bring "the family's aggression into focus," but also to protect himself. Indeed, when the play was written, O'Neill had already abandoned two wives and three children. He didn't meet the son he had by Kathleen Jenkins till Eugene O'Neill, Jr. was twelve. In 1918, he married Agnes Boulton, and lived with her till he met his third wife Carlotta Monterey. He shunned his second wife and his two children by her, Shane and Oona. "While writing this family tragedy, he might be reflecting on his own failed relations with his children. Like Mary Tyrone, O'Neill had an ambivalent attitude toward his

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[5] Mentioned by Chabrowe, p. xxi.

[6] Hinden, Long Day's Journey into Night / Native Eloquence, p. 107.

children." At first, he admitted that when he thought of his children he suffered "like hell from a sense of guilt toward them."[7] But soon he was speaking of Shane as just another "parasitic slob of a Boulton," stating that "son or not, he simply does not interest me as a human being." Ironically, O'Neill once copied this passage from Thus Spoke Zarathustra[8]: "Unto my children shall I make amends for being the child of my fathers." Unfortunately, he failed to achieve that goal. And the only thing he gave them was self-destructiveness: for two of his children killed themselves. Eugene O'Neill, Jr., slit his wrists in his bath three years before his father died. "Shane, who never understood his father's rejection, became an alcoholic like his uncle Jamie and a drug-addict like his grandmother. He jumped to his death from an apartment window in New York in 1977."[9] It seems that O'Neill was aware of this vicious pattern entrapping his family in violence and self-destruction. The problem that puzzled him may originally have been this: how can can we break that circle of family violence? can one give what he has been deprived of? It is quite possible that it is this personal problem that prompted O'Neill to write these three plays. The latter might be viewed as three attempts to break that vicious circle. In The Emperor Jones, Jones both exploits and despises the natives because he was treated in a similar manner by the whites in the United States. In Desire Under the Elms, Eben is hard, greedy, and suspicious: he is the "Dead spat image of his 'Paw'." In Long Day's Journey into Night, however, O'Neill succeeds in breaking the circle. Whereas James Tyrone never forgave

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[7] As quoted by Hinden, p. 106.
[8] Hinden, p. 107.
[9] Hinden, p. 107.

his father the suffering his mother endured when he abandoned them, Edmund does understand and forgive his father. In showing sympathy and compassion toward his own father, O'Neill may might be cherishing the hope that one day his children may also understand and forgive him. In Long Day's Journey into Night, Mary Tyrone expresses animosity toward her sons as a defensive aggressive response to her own guilty feelings for abandoning them. Admitting her helplessness toward what seems a family curse, she confesses to her husband: "the present is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us" (87).

An overview of these three plays shows a common theme: the constant search for home. In The Emperor Jones, Jones flees to the West Indies. Escaping lynching in the United States, he thinks this island will be a heaven. Ironically, he is killed there by members of his own race. In Desire Under the Elms, we find the same yearning for a home. Abbie, Ephraim, and his three sons all covet the farm. This quest is also unsuccessful because home for them means land, stones, and material possessions, rather than compassion or family warmth. In Long Days' Journey into Night, Mary tries to prevent her son from going to the sanatorium. In an admonishing tone, Edmund tells her: "And why are you so against my going away now? I've been away a lot, and I've never noticed it broke your heart!" (119). This search springs from Edmund's sense of displacement in his family. It is true that O'Neill (Edmund in the play) wanted to discover the world but at the same time he was looking for a place where he could belong. A home for O'Neill is a place of spiritual communion, not only with his fellow beings but also with the universe. Edmund

tells his father that he experienced this feeling of oneness at sea. The first time when he was "on the Squarehead square rigger, bound for Buenos Aires," and the second time on the American line, "when [he] was looking on the crow's nest in the dawn watch":

> A calm sea, that time. Only a lazy ground swell and a slow drowsy roll of the ship. The passengers asleep and none of the crew in sight. No sound of man. Black smoke pouring from the funnels behind and beneath me. Dreaming, not keeping lookout, feeling alone, and above, and apart, watching the dawn creep like a painted dream over the sky and sea which slept together. Then the moment of ecstatic freedom came. The peace, the end of the quest, the last harbor, the joy of belonging to a fulfillment beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams! And several times in my life, when I was swimming far out, or lying alone on a beach, I have had the same swimming experience. Became the sun, the hot sand, green seaweed anchored to a rock, swaying in the tide. Like a saint's vision of beatitude. Like the veil of things as they seem drawn back by an unseen hand. For a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason! (153).

In short, both personal and external factors--like the failure of the American dream and W.W.I--affected Eugene O'Neill's view of violence. Commenting on international conflicts, Girard states that we have a "perfectly straightforward and even scientifically calculable choice between total destruction and the total renunciation of

violence."[10] However, he doesn't mention how to renounce violence. Jeffers writes that Girard "scorns humanism too much to suggest we shall do it ourselves, yet he never quite says we shall be given the grace to do it either" (425). In contrast with Girard, and despite the dark vision in his drama, O'Neill does not scorn humanism, nor does he advocate a return to the old faith like T. S. Eliot. Rather, his faith is in man's ability to forgive and understand. In Long Day's Journey into Night, O'Neill admits that it is human to fight back, but it is more human to understand and forgive those who hurt us. In a world torn by mass destruction, greed, and selfishness, O'Neill doesn't surrender to pessimism. He has faith not only in man's ability to kill the beast within, but also in his ability to give and to reach out to his fellow beings. Jamie tells his brother that he expects the worst because he hopes for the best. This explains perhaps why O'Neill described this tragedy as a "Long Day's Journey into Light--into Love."[11]

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[10] Jeffers, p. 404.

[11] It is mentioned in the letter accompanying the autobiographical play he dedicated to his wife Carlotta. See Long Day's Journey into Night.

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