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A LIFETIME OF SUFFERING AND SURVIVAL:
EUGENE O'NEILL AND THE PROGRESSIVE SYMBOL OF FOG

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By
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The essay of Kelsey B. Shewbridge is hereby accepted:

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O'Neill's plays express profound suffering; no one can dispute that. If it's uplift you're after, he's not your man.

Robert M. Dowling¹

I'm far from being a pessimist. I see life as a gorgeously-ironical, beautifully indifferent, splendidly-suffering bit of chaos the tragedy of which gives Man a tremendous significance... On the contrary, in spite of my scars, I'm tickled to death with life!

Eugene O'Neill²

The term "Modernism" cannot be contained in a singular definition, and its elusiveness is often cited amongst critics. Anthony M. Maher begins an article on Modernism by stating, "Any attempt to define Modernism must remain conscious of the considerable hermeneutical challenges" (Maher 15). While debates will continue to explore the definition of Modernism, what emerges as a pertinent and obvious characteristic of American Modernism is the profound effect that World War I and industrialization had upon human psychological change and development. Industrialization produced technological and scientific advancements that completely altered the ways in which Americans lived and worked. World War I was the deadliest war of its time, with modern inventions of mechanized weapons producing massive numbers of casualties never before witnessed. Many young Americans found themselves unable to adjust to such a quick turnover of political, social, and economic structure: society became fragmented, individualism rose, and dark feelings of isolation and exile were increasingly common. The art and literature that manifested from this "Lost generation"³ sought to examine and make sense of the psychological effects of human

suffering that so many Americans endured. Modern poets, writers, and playwrights alike took on the task of creating art that not only depicted the complexities within their own minds, but within the minds of every American who experienced tragedy and isolation in the wake of World War I. Among the playwrights who suffered and addressed such psychological turmoil, none surpasses the work of Eugene O’Neill.

Eugene O’Neill is one of America’s greatest playwrights: his contributions to American Modernist art have created lasting impacts in theater and beyond. He infuses his plays with autobiographical content – a characteristic that sets him apart from the works of Symbolists and Expressionists like T.S. Eliot. Eliot, among others, valued depersonalizing art and committing to “a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (*The Sacred Wood* 42) in order to “preserve it from contamination, from the irruptions of personal particularities” and savor the intrinsic value (Richards 78). Rather than choosing to create autonomous art, O’Neill found great success and satisfaction in crafting plays intrinsically woven from personal experience. Richard Dana Skinner describes the experiences that O’Neill accumulated during the Modern era, all of which made an impact upon his plays:

Environment has naturally made him more acutely conscious of certain inner problems than of others. The struggle of the ‘nineties between a general smug complacency and a limited but intense idealism and devotion to beauty and art; the philosophic unrest and discontent of the succeeding decade with its intellectual pride; the defeat of scientific materialism in the great war, and the impulse to a new maturity in the disastrous years after the war: all of these national currents of mind

and soul have influenced profoundly his consciousness of special forms of human struggle. (Skinner 66)

The “special forms of human struggle” to which Skinner refers is the universal battle between good and evil; it is what he calls, “a picture in objective form of the stretching and tearing of a soul between a will toward the good and an appetite for the revolt of sin” (55). Skinner builds a list of crucial factors that evidently sharpened O’Neill’s consciousness of internal battles, yet factors such as “philosophic unrest and discontent of the succeeding decade” and “the impulse to a new maturity” can also be attributed to any other Modernist who lived during World War I and America’s shift into an industrialized state. Hemingway, Crane, Frost and Fitzgerald are only a few figures who brought forth literature and art that could encompass these “special forms of human struggle.” What highlights O’Neill and brings him to the forefront is the influence of rapid societal transformation combined with the impact of his ill-fated family dynamics. O’Neill’s injection of family struggle – and the psychological turmoil that comes as a result – into his plays packs a poignant punch; this injection is what ultimately propels his work past those of his contemporaries and gives his work such an inexorable pull.

Eugene O’Neill was a man strongly connected to his family, but not in ways that one may initially assume. Family units are generally a source of comfort, care, and support, but not for O’Neill; his family caused him tremendous grief and mental suffering for decades. Growing up with an unloving mother addicted to morphine, a grudging father disappointed with his acting career, an alcoholic older brother, and a haunting death of the other brother, O’Neill endured a childhood that many others would happily say they never experienced. He was born into a family already tormented by death and

conspiracy. In 1885, his brother, Edmund, contracted measles from the oldest brother James (nicknamed Jamie), and died as a result at just two years old. The mother, Mary Ellen, “Ella,” claimed that Jamie “purposely exposed” Edmund to the disease, and her belief in this notion spurred a lifelong resentment for her first-born (Shaughnessy). Just three years after Edmund’s death, Eugene was born. According to biographer Robert M. Dowling, Eugene “became convinced...that his mother never forgave [Jamie] for infecting Edmund; and he himself suffered from a tormenting mixture of survivor’s guilt and death envy” (Dowling 34). Upon his birth in 1888, Eugene was thrust into a family dynamic saturated with grief and condemnation that would create complex psychological struggles for years to come.

The O’Neill family continued to unravel in dismal fashion while moving into the 20th century. “Worse still, perhaps,” writes Dowling, “a hotel doctor prescribed Ella O’Neill morphine for the intolerable pain of giving birth to Eugene, an eleven-pound baby, thus precipitating a drug addiction that would last for well over two decades” (36). Indomitably enslaved to morphine, Ella would send herself into frenzies without it. In 1903, during his impressionable high school years, Eugene witnessed for the first time one of his mother’s episodes: “Having run out of morphine, she [Ella] ran headlong, wearing only a nightgown and shrieking like a madwoman, toward the Thames River...The men rushed after her and stopped her before she could leap from the dock” (43). This strange and dreadful scene was a revelation of sorts for Eugene; he had now observed the control that addiction possessed over his mother, and that she was insane as a result. Dowling suggests this revelation “activated an addiction of the young man’s own,” the addiction to alcoholism, which Jamie “eagerly reinforced” (43). Each new

experience with his family increased Eugene's psychological pain, leading him to engage in momentary lapses of escape or "psychic painkillers," such as heavy drinking and promiscuity (44). Eugene's mother and two brothers both created tensions that seeped into the plays that Eugene would produce later in his life. However, the influence of his father was a major contributing factor in O'Neill's decision to pursue a career as a Modern playwright as well.

Family issues seemed perpetual as O'Neill regularly turned to alcohol and sex as an escape from his tragic life. Soon after witnessing his mother's addiction, and feeling utterly hopeless, he renounced his Catholic faith. His father, James O'Neill, disapproved, and one Sunday morning before mass, they fought over Eugene's rejection of God. Dowling describes the scene: "...the full-bodied James, who could have handily drubbed his son, abruptly stopped, straightened his cuffs, and said, 'Very well. The subject is closed'" (44). The result of such a renunciation for Eugene led to a strained relationship with his father and a lifelong search for hope in a seemingly hopeless world. The pitiful cycle of family issues always consisted of mother's rampaging addiction, father's disappointment in both his sons and himself, and Eugene and his brother drinking themselves into dipsomania; for Eugene, this spiral was uncontrollable and inexplicable. The family dynamics of the O'Neill family created a symbolic, elusive fog around Eugene's life that caused him great psychological trauma. The fog that was the suffocating presence of his family situation blinded Eugene and rendered him incapable of living a peaceful or, at least, a somewhat stable life. A bout of tuberculosis would be, ironically, exactly the terrible beauty Eugene needed to take a time-out, to reflect, and

realize the capacities he had garnered over time to become a thinker and playwright, and more importantly, to analyze and begin to define the symbolic fog that impaired him.

In 1912, O'Neill battled tuberculosis for about six months, having taken refuge in a sanatorium during his recuperating term. Years later, O'Neill admitted in a letter to his doctor, David Lyman, that he was "reborn" there, and that his "second birth was the only one which had my full approval" (98). The recuperating term gave Eugene the chance to reflect on the powerful and adverse effect his family had on his life, and the psychological pain they inflicted. He recounted to a local newspaper, *The Telegraph*, years after recovery:

"It was at Gaylord that my mind got a chance to establish itself, to digest and value the impressions of many past years in which one experience had crowded on another with never a second's reflection. At Gaylord I really *thought about* my life for the first time, about past and future. Undoubtedly the inactivity forced upon me by the life at a san forced me to mental activity, especially as I had always been high-strung and nervous temperamentally." (qtd. by Dowling 98)

Over the course of six months, Eugene was able to "digest and value the impressions of many past years": years filled with traumatic and nightmarish experiences. Eugene's time spent at Gaylord Farm was his second chance at life – what Dowling calls, "a transformative intellectual and psychological 'second birth,'" – that gave him newfound clarity about the events he had experienced up until that point. "It took T.B.," wrote O'Neill years later, "to blast me loose" (qtd. by Dowling 101). This "blasting loose" was, in part, O'Neill's decision to join Modern theater as a playwright. He would not only recognize that his experiences in touring theater with his father "would prove invaluable

for the genre,” but O’Neill would also pledge to trump James’ fame: “Someday, I won’t be known as his son. He will be known as my father” (98). Eugene’s bout of tuberculosis transformed his vision: rather than desperately searching to see through the fog of family affairs that surrounded him, he wanted to confront it, and try to understand the tight grasp it had upon his psyche. The end of the year 1912 marked the beginning of O’Neill’s journey to construct the influences his family had, and finally, to confront the inexplicable haze of family issues that engulfed him.

“Fog” is such an ambiguous term in and of itself, that it is necessary to clarify exactly its application for this study. O’Neill employs a literal image of fog in two plays⁴: *Fog*, published in 1914; and his ‘magnum opus,’ *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, published in 1956, three years after his death. The image of fog never stands alone as literal: O’Neill always places metaphoric meaning behind it. This metaphoric meaning develops over time within each of the plays formerly listed. On the literal level, the image of fog is what readers expect: a weather condition that yields fuzzy vision and poor awareness of surroundings. On the metaphorical level, fog represents his characters’ clouded states of mind and their search for a sense of meaning and truth in an otherwise chaotic life. The symbolic employment of fog in both plays reveals O’Neill’s progressive movement toward discovering and clarifying the meaning behind his own psychological pain caused by his family. The metaphoric meaning of fog achieves a pinnacle relevance in *Long Day’s Journey*, when O’Neill writes his life and his family affairs onto the stage.

O’Neill, while incredibly skilled as a playwright, may never have discovered how to investigate and define his fog without the influences of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and Swedish writer August Strindberg. During his fight against tuberculosis,

O'Neill was "...made an avid reader and introspective artist," as he spent much of his free time reading the works of these two men ("Eugene O'Neill" 387). "Nietzsche and Strindberg he always kept with him," commented his second wife Agnes Boulton about his reading and writing habits (*Strindberg and O'Neill: A Study* 106). Both men, their lives and their works, heavily influenced the content and structure of O'Neill's plays. They essentially laid the groundwork for O'Neill in the process of defining his psychological distress throughout his career.

The life and beliefs of Friedrich Nietzsche provided a philosophical framework that lent meaning to the experiences of O'Neill's younger years. Nietzsche quickly became a "literary hero" of O'Neill's after he discovered the philosopher in 1906, and reading *Thus Spake Zarathustra* made a lasting impression on O'Neill's convictions (*O'Neill* 122). Twenty years after his discovery of Nietzsche, he wrote to friend and critic Benjamin De Casseres: "Zarathustra... has influenced me more than any book I've ever read...I've always possessed a copy since then and every year or so I re-read it and am never disappointed" (qtd. in *O'Neill* 121). According to biographers Barbara and Arthur Gelb, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* "was Eugene's Catechism," and after renunciation of his Catholic faith, he "swallowed [*Zarathustra*] whole" (121). As a philosophic discourse embedded in fiction, *Zarathustra* drives plot through a "spirit of reckless rebellion born out of extreme suffering and pain" and a belief that "God is dead," both to which O'Neill felt akin (Poulard 16). O'Neill also felt a pull toward the autobiographic material, as he became aware that his own life paralleled Nietzsche's in several ways. Gelb and Gelb note:

He always felt a kinship to the German philosopher...Nietzsche...[he] had undergone a loss of faith comparable to Eugene's and become a devastating critic of Christianity and its ideals. Many aspects of O'Neill's later life strikingly paralleled those of Nietzsche's. The drooping black mustache...the solitude in which he spent his last years, the tremendous strain he put on his creative spirit, the somber satisfaction he took in being misunderstood, and the final collapse—all are a mirroring of Nietzsche. (*O'Neill* 121)

In sharing the “loss of faith” and a search for truth as a result, O'Neill clung to Nietzsche intensely. O'Neill made powerful connections with Nietzsche's philosophic teachings and experiences, both of which helped O'Neill clarify meaning from a chaotic youth. O'Neill learned that he could write his psychological pain into his plays, and as he matures throughout his career and continually reflects, the development of his pain intensifies through the literal and metaphoric employment of the image of fog in his plays.

Alongside the major impact of Nietzsche is that of August Strindberg. O'Neill began reading works of several playwrights during his time at Gaylord, but among them, Strindberg became O'Neill's greatest inspiration. He considered Strindberg “that greatest genius of all modern dramatists,” and in his 1936 Nobel Prize speech, O'Neill attributed all success to him: “It was reading his plays when I first started to write...that, above all else, first gave me the vision of what modern drama could be, and first inspired me with the urge to write for the theater myself” (234). Tied not only by literary medium, but also by striking similarities in their outlooks on life, O'Neill strived to emulate Strindberg (233). Once again, O'Neill felt a pull toward Strindberg's autobiographic content, just as

he had felt with Nietzsche. Both writers drew much of their inspiration from their own lives; critic Mary Emily Parsons Edwards writes:

O'Neill experienced this shock [of recognition] while reading Strindberg's plays: he understood Strindberg's quest for love and peace because he himself was engaged in a similar quest...Strindberg was able to influence O'Neill so profoundly because of the strikingly similar nature of their lives and thoughts.

Both playwrights were tortured pilgrims, grimly struggling along the road of life in an *effort to wrest some type of meaning and some sort of joy from existence.*

(Edwards 13; my emphasis)

Irresistibly drawn toward the similarities he shared with Strindberg, O'Neill felt he could finally share his feelings of isolation and mental suffering with someone other than himself: he was not alone in his journey to "wrest some type of meaning" out of an afflicted life. Strindberg and O'Neill were both the "unwanted child" within a "corrupted family matrix"; they both longed for their mother's love that they never received; and, in response to their experiences, both questioned concepts of truth and reality in the face of their psychological affairs (Hartman 217–18). Strindberg's autobiographical plays gave O'Neill hope that it was possible to find meaning through writing about personal traumas and experiences. The idea of constructing self-analytical works as a way to interpret personal experience profoundly struck O'Neill, and this idea reinforced O'Neill's decision to write plays and to incorporate in several of them the complex image of fog as a defining symbol of a clouded consciousness in a search for meaning and truth amidst suffering.

The influences of Nietzsche and Strindberg shaped O'Neill into a masterful modern playwright. Winther compliments O'Neill's improvement of his playwriting techniques over the years, stating, "As O'Neill grew and developed as a dramatist he followed faithfully his original technique. His plays grew in scope and theme and with this growth his symbolism grew more complicated" (*Eugene O'Neill* 258). What also "grew more complicated," as an analysis of three of O'Neill's important plays reveals, is the literal presence and symbol implications of fog. Each play signals a stage of the developing meaning of fog. Both Nietzsche and Strindberg help to advance its meaning from one play to the next. The earliest play, *Fog*, becomes O'Neill's initial attempt to define fog as psychological trauma; the play displays a struggle for clarity within a search for meaning. The deaths of all O'Neill's family members – his morphine addicted mother, his grudging father, and his alcoholic brother – in the early 1920s heightened his focus on the psychological pain he endured. After the deaths of his family members, O'Neill began, in 1941, to write *Long Day's Journey into Night*. In this play, it is evident that O'Neill has come to understand his psychological turmoil, has arrived at a version of peace with his family, and has unmistakably mastered the literal and metaphoric implications of fog in his life and work.

Fog is a one-act play written in 1914 and later produced in 1917. Marked by Gelb and Gelb as "the most cryptic and psychologically revealing of his early plays," *Fog* is not only the first play of O'Neill's that introduces the brooding image of fog, but it is also the first to highlight autobiographical influence (*Monte Cristo* 409). In *Fog*, O'Neill addresses his wicked past by planting himself, his mother, and his deceased brother, Edmund, into the text. O'Neill shares similarities with a character identified as "a Poet";

his mother and Edmund are the “Polish Peasant Woman” and the “Dead Child” respectively. Critic Travis Bogard asserts that while there does not exist an apparent biographical connection between the Poet and O’Neill, one can still safely assume there are strong similarities between the two:

In *Fog*, there are no biographical details...that may be compared with the facts of O’Neill’s life. Yet the poet who dreams on death appears so regularly in the O’Neill canon, and in the end is drawn in such complete and identifiable detail, that this early anticipation of the later self-images may be taken as the first of the many dramatic projections of O’Neill’s self. (Bogard)

Readers see recurring versions of O’Neill throughout his career, and *Fog* displays the very first depiction of him through the Poet. By inserting himself and his two family members into the text, O’Neill opens the process of unraveling personal trauma.

O’Neill’s morphine-addicted and unloving mother instilled feelings of mistreatment and neglect; Eugene would never be the child that his mother lost. Through the employment of the image of fog, and the dialogue between the Poet and the Business Man, O’Neill begins his search for some kind of meaning or explanation for the psychic confusion that his mother and brother have fastened to him.

Fog opens with O’Neill’s description of the scene, which presents fog as a literal image: “The life-boat of a passenger steamer is drifting helplessly off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. A dense fog lies heavily upon the still sea... A menacing silence, like the genius of the fog, broods over everything” (“Fog” 27). Immediately, O’Neill provides the vision of a hazy scene, one in which the characters cannot make out each other’s faces, resulting in unidentifiable characters whose identities are gradually revealed as the fog

lifts and they share details of themselves (“Man’s Voice” becomes “First Voice,” “Other Man,” then “Businessman,” and “Second Man’s Voice” becomes “Dark Man,” then “Poet”). The heavy fog creates a setting that evokes tones of mystery and elusiveness due to its blinding effects. Metaphorically, the fog represents O’Neill’s psychological troubles. He writes that the silence of the sea, “*like the genius of the fog, broods over everything*” (“Fog” 27). The fog is “genius” in its brooding, connoting its supernatural ability to encompass objects completely and forbid visibility. Fog, just like the menacing silence of the sea, surrounds the characters and forces them to come face-to-face with psychological traumas. Several times throughout the play, the setting establishes feelings of anxiety and forces the characters to confront fears. The dialogue begins when the “Man’s Voice” asks “Second Man’s Voice” a question, and, receiving no response, the stage direction reads, “*He...raises his voice, the fear of solitude suddenly alive within him*” (27). While “Man’s Voice” fears loneliness, “Second Man’s Voice” fears the fog surrounding them and the dangers it possesses, constantly referring to its persistent presence throughout the play. The intrusive fog characterizes O’Neill’s direct confrontation with the perplexities that his family has created. *Fog* highlights O’Neill’s struggle to clear the psychological complexities he faces. As his characters are lost in the fog of the sea and confront their personal horrors, O’Neill is lost in his search for the meaning of his psychological troubles and confronts them as well.

The dialogue between the Businessman and the Poet is tense; caught in the fog, they are forced to confront deep, personal fears. They discuss and often argue with one another on topics of being lost at sea and of their differing personal beliefs. First, they talk of the death of the Polish Peasant Woman’s child. The Poet believes that death was

best, for it was “kind to the child” by preventing years of “sordid drudgery” (30). The Businessman disagrees, noting, “everyone has a chance in this world,” to which the Poet responds with deliberate questions about the Dead Child’s circumstance. The fog is dense at this point, therefore the Businessman is “First Voice” and the Poet is “Second Voice”:

SECOND VOICE: What chance had that poor child? Naturally sickly and weak from underfeeding, transplanted to the stinking room of a tenement or the filthy hovel of a mining village, what glowing opportunities did life hold out that death should not be regarded as a blessing for him? ...Surely his prospects of ever becoming anything but a beast of burden were not bright, were they?

FIRST VOICE: Well, no, of course not, but—

SECOND VOICE: If you could bring him back to life would you do so? Could you conscientiously drag him away from that fine sleep of his to face what he would have to face? Leaving the joy you would give his mother out of the question, would you do it for him individually?

FIRST VOICE: Perhaps not, looking at it from that standpoint. (30–31)

The Poet ensures that the Businessman is aware of the poor and wretched life the Dead Child would live, highlighting the Dead Child’s malnourishment and severe lack of “glowing opportunities” presented to him. The Poet points out that saving the Dead Child does not mean giving him “a chance in this world,” but subjecting him to a life filled of poverty, which the Poet calls “the most deadly and prevalent of all diseases” (31). The Poet’s comments are not so much a commentary on social structures and poverty as they are verbalized introspection.

The Poet conveys a melancholy tone that reflects how O'Neill feels about his brother, Edmund. O'Neill was the last son born after Edmund, who died from measles – a devastating loss from which his mother never fully recovered. To Ella O'Neill, Eugene would never compare to Edmund; Dowling notes that O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* "proposes that his birth was no more than a mistake made out of desperation and that his existence in her eyes was a bedeviling reminder of her guilt over Edmund" (Dowling 35). O'Neill lived a tragic childhood in Edmund's place. He uses the Poet to reveal his feelings of death envy, wishing he had been the one to perish rather than Edmund. The Poet admits his suicidal thoughts, stating that the shipwreck had been the "providential" sign he needed, the "solution I had been looking for," and inquires about the Dead Child: "Why was I not taken instead?" ("Fog" 36, 37). In this way, O'Neill emits envy – the Poet's desire for suicide reveals O'Neill's own suicidal tendencies. In 1911, he attempted suicide by overdose and later recorded the event through the autobiographical character Ned Malloy in the one-act play *Exorcism* (Dowling 77). The Poet's suicidal thoughts also reveal O'Neill's belief that death saved Edmund from the corrupted upbringing O'Neill endured. Inevitably born into the family and marked by his mother as the bastard replacement child, Edmund's death constantly haunts O'Neill and reminds him of the psychological traumas he has suffered for years.

The discussion between the Businessman and the Poet moves from the Dead Child to the mother, which indicates O'Neill moving the play's focus from Edmund to his mother, Ella. As the conversation changes, so does the literal image of fog. The stage direction reads, "*It is becoming gradually lighter although the fog is as thick as ever*" ("Fog" 33). The scene brightens and the men begin to pinpoint each other's

characteristics, but the fog is “as thick as ever,” indicating that no amount of light can prevent the characters, or O’Neill, from facing their dark traumas. The Poet becomes sentimental as he recalls observing the mother before the shipwreck occurred: “I used to watch her every day down in the steerage playing with her little son...I think he must have been the only child she ever had, the look on her face was so wonderfully tender as she bent over him” (36). The Poet’s affectionate description is a sign of yearning from O’Neill. As the Poet revisits a scene of the mother and her child, O’Neill wonders what childhood may have been like with a loving mother. However, these moments of wonder are only “hopeless hopes”⁵ for O’Neill, as the cruel reality remains that Edmund is dead and Ella is resentful.

The Businessman’s response to the Poet’s tender memories reinforces the impact that O’Neill’s family issues have had upon him. The Businessman replies with practical advice, telling the Poet he “take[s] things to heart too much,” and that he should not worry about the mother because “She’ll forget all about it – probably sooner than you will. One forgets everything with time. What a devil of a world it would be if we didn’t” (36). The Businessman’s attempt at soothing the Poet falls flat because it indicates exactly the situation O’Neill has endured for years: his mother has not forgotten about Edmund, and the passing of time has not healed the pain of death, thus his life remains a “devil of a world.” In response, the Poet follows by revealing his suicidal thoughts, which again depicts the suffering O’Neill faced. The fog remains thick, and the Poet continues to battle inner conflict. The dialogue between the Poet and the Businessman is one literary employment through which O’Neill unpacks his psychological baggage; he

unravels his deepest turmoil and as the literal fog remains thick, O'Neill struggles to understand the impact of tragic family issues upon his life.

The literal fog subsides by the end of the play, which restores the characters' vision. This newfound clarity in visibility seems promising, but the Poet is all too aware of the imminent dangers of fog at sea. O'Neill experienced life at sea aboard the *Charles Racine* and other ships, and imparts his knowledge of the looming nature of fog to the Poet (Dowling 103). With a clear horizon expanded in front of them, the Businessman and the Poet see the ship that has found their location. The officers aboard claim that the sound of a crying child led to their spot. Baffled by this statement, the Businessman wears "*an expression of annoyed stupefaction on his face,*" while the Poet, "*after listening to the OFFICER's explanation with intense interest,*" checks on the Polish Peasant Woman and the Dead Child and concludes that they are both dead, and the child has been so for over 24 hours ("Fog" 48). The Businessman and the officers are shocked, but the Poet seems only to sympathize. When the officer advises rescue, the Poet responds "*Gently*" with "I think I will stay with the dead," and remains in the boat to observe the dead mother and child "*with eyes full of a great longing*" (50). The Poet's "great longing" indicates O'Neill's yearning once again. The Poet fastens himself to the dead, which parallels O'Neill who clings to the "hopeless hope" of wishing for a loving relationship with his mother that will never come to pass. The literal fog disappears, which brings hope to the Businessman and provides him an escape from his fear of isolation. However, the Poet dismisses the possibility of escape and remains in a metaphoric fog, which expresses O'Neill's confrontation with the inexplicable hold that psychological pain has upon him. The disappearance of literal fog does not signify the

disappearance of the metaphoric meaning of fog; the psychological pain for O'Neill never fully departs. His mother and brother have caused him traumas that are complex and cause him much grief and suicidal thoughts, which O'Neill exhibits through the Poet.

O'Neill struggles with his traumas from the start of his playwriting career and continues to battle them for the remainder of his life. Many of the troubles O'Neill faces in his life mirror the troubles that Strindberg faced: a search to replace a faith lost in youth; a childhood almost completely void of motherly love; and a continuous feeling of ambivalence towards his parents (Parsons 4). Strindberg wrote these experiences into his plays, and O'Neill follows suit. He took from Strindberg "the courage to explore in his writings the darkest corners of his own character" (9). Strindberg would also inspire O'Neill to venture into naturalism and make his "darkest corners" – powerful moments of affliction that often go uncommunicated – come alive onstage. Strindberg wanted his play *The Father* to go beyond realism or "fake naturalism," which "consists simply of sketching a piece of nature in a natural manner" (qtd. by Parsons 18). For Strindberg, naturalism in its true sense "seeks out those points in life where great conflicts occur" and reveals them as relatable human experience (18). O'Neill's thoughts on naturalistic theatre run parallel to Strindberg's, when after the release of "*Anna Christie*" he told a reporter:

Naturalism is too easy... The naturalistic play is really less natural than a romantic or expressionist play. That is, shoving a lot of human beings on a stage and letting them say the identical things in a theatre they would say in a drawing room or a saloon does not necessarily make for naturalness. It's what those men and women don't say that usually is most interesting." (qtd. by Dowling 231)

O'Neill joins Strindberg in the movement toward depicting mental suffering and "great conflict" onstage, an effort that helped Modern theatre transcend Victorian realism. *Fog* becomes one of the first displays of O'Neill exploring the difficulties and the frustrations brought on by his family, and Strindberg aids him in the application of this autobiographical technique.

O'Neill's psychological struggle comes to life in *Fog* through snippets of Nietzschean influence as well. Poulard articulates O'Neill's early involvement with Nietzsche: "In the very beginning of his career, roughly between 1913 and 1918, it is quite apparent that he did not yet understand Nietzsche but merely looked to him and others for support of the revolutionary ideas of the avant-garde young Americans" (Poulard 41). O'Neill began with only a rough sketch of the masterpiece that Nietzschean philosophy would later become in his writing, but *Fog* surely reflects several Nietzschean ideas that he adopted after he lost his Catholic faith. O'Neill shows signs of influence from Nietzsche's three versions of man discussed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: man, higher man, and overman. The Poet resembles the man, or the one who "is bound by the all-too-human bonds of family... and is bothered by pain and suffering" (40). Restricted by the troubles of his mother and brother as they haunt him like the fog, O'Neill cannot remove the scratches that they have etched upon his psyche. The common man also "wants to escape the suffering and misery of his life and creates therefore an eternal life after death into which he can flee" (40). The Poet wishes for death when he asks the question, "Why was I not taken instead? — I, who have no family or friends to weep, and am not afraid to die" ("Fog" 37). The words of the Poet show us O'Neill's beliefs in Nietzsche; O'Neill is a common man wanting to escape his own suffering, ultimately

wishing he could have been the one to die instead of Edmund. In his earliest stages of Nietzschean influence, O'Neill probes for meaning in the tangled, complicated web that his family has strung in his mind.

O'Neill's *Fog* reveals a psyche immensely ruined by damaging family conflict, and a mind that wants nothing more than to place meaning at the center of the ambiguous influences that smother his life. Fog's metaphoric presence in this early play is a budding symbol that signals the beginning of a long journey for O'Neill; as he continues to employ fog both literally and metaphorically, he partakes in self-analysis by writing himself into the texts and repeatedly confronting his psychological pain in search for ways to explain the grief he suffers. Through this process, the metaphoric meaning of fog grows more complex. When O'Neill transitions into his final work, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, it is evident that he has grown accustomed to his psychological turmoil, has learned to pacify the perpetual feelings of mental suffering, and he has unmistakably mastered the technique of employing the image of fog into his plays.

Long Day's Journey into Night is Eugene O'Neill's most profound and meticulous work. Fiercely autobiographical, it is a renowned piece that solidifies O'Neill as an American icon in the Modern theatre. O'Neill wrote this play with the realization that there was not much time left on earth: according to Dowling, by 1941, "His dog was dead; his hand tremors had worsened [from an undiagnosed neurological illness]; his marriage was not going well; and his despair over the escalating world war had reached its lowest ebb" (Dowling 431). These adversities in mind, O'Neill declared:

'At this time...it seems the only wisdom is to concentrate on what is most important and get as much as I can write written.' What turned out to be 'most

important' was obvious to him, a play idea about his family that had been haunting him at least since 1927, much earlier when one takes into account its echoes in virtually everything he'd written up to then. (432)

The time had finally come when O'Neill knew he must confront his family for the last time, and this time, he would come to terms with his psychological torment. *Long Day's Journey into Night* cements O'Neill's understanding of the grief that surrounded him; he never quite reaches a clear explanation for why or how his family affected him so immensely, but he does derive meaning and instills a sense of forgiveness at last.

Long Day's Journey into Night is was published and produced in 1956, three years after O'Neill's death and twenty-two years earlier than he would have liked. In his will, he urged that the intimate play not be published until 25 years after his death and never produced as a play (448, 471). Writing his own family onto the stage and bringing his traumas to life was an exhausting and harrowing act; his late wife Carlotta Monterey describes her observation of the mentally and physically taxing effort: "...that man [was] tortured every day by his own writing. He would come out of his study at the end of a day gaunt and sometimes weeping. His eyes would be all red and he looked ten years older than when he went in in the morning" (432). Gelb and Gelb also note, "An artist who sketched him on two separate occasions described his eyes as 'circles of intense darkness' that 'one sees in the faded daguerrotypes of Poe... he looks as if he were surrounded by an aura of mysterious sorrow'" (*Monte Cristo* 7). Indeed the artist was correct – O'Neill was surrounded intensely by sorrow. He began writing this play a couple years after the successive deaths of his family members: his father in 1920, his mother in 1921, and his brother, James, two years later in 1923 (*Norton Anthology* 848).

He would not finish writing and editing until 1941; the process was arduous and took a heavy toll. However, in devoting himself to this immensely autobiographical work, O'Neill finally faced his family with "pity and understanding and forgiveness" (Dowling 480).

Long Day's Journey into Night is O'Neill's most meticulous piece for a specific reason: by the time he revised and completed it in 1941, he has come to an acute awareness of his psychological troubles, conscious that he had reached a "passionate detachment that would allow him to expiate the demons of his youth" (*Monte Cristo* 7). Direct confrontation with his family affairs, done by staging his family as "the Tyrones," allowed O'Neill to reconcile with his struggles. Dowling discusses O'Neill's intentions further; summarizing his satisfaction in writing the play, O'Neill reveals what he wants audiences and readers to cultivate:

"At the final curtain," O'Neill explained after its completion, "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 not understanding at all, forgiving but still doomed never to be able to forget." (Dowling 433)

The beginning of the play depicts his family as stable and unperturbed, but as the plot progresses from day into night, family troubles and hidden secrets quickly unravel. As O'Neill writes his family into this play as "the Tyrones," the image of fog inevitably appears. Much like the Businessman and the Poet in *Fog*, the family members in *Long Day's Journey into Night* are cognizant of the literal fog that physically surrounds them in the setting. In contrast to the characters in *Fog*, however, the family members are also aware that the literal fog acts as a metaphor for their greatest inner conflicts and fears.

O'Neill is also keenly conscious of Nietzsche and Strindberg's impacts, and the explicit use of their names and philosophies in *Long Day's Journey into Night* indicate O'Neill understands their roles in helping him search for meaning amidst psychological suffering. The difference that illuminates the transformation of O'Neill's application of the image of fog between these two plays is clear; fog evolves from a symbol for inner conflict and animosity towards his family, to a symbol for tolerance and acknowledgement of the irreversible state of all of their flaws.

The characters in *Long Day's Journey into Night* who are attentive to both the literal and metaphorical applications of fog as it looms about them are Mary and Edmund Tyrone. While Mary represents O'Neill's mother, O'Neill makes an interesting choice when casting himself. O'Neill names his autobiographical character "Edmund," and calls the dead child of the family "Eugene." This morbid reversal of roles, as Dowling mentions:

...[has] deeper symbolic meaning for the mother, Mary Cavan Tyrone, who makes clear that she gave birth to her third son to replace the deceased Eugene, and only at the insistence of her husband James... "I knew I'd proved by the way I'd left Eugene (Edmund) that I wasn't worthy to have another baby," Mary Tyrone says to James while high on morphine, "and that God would punish me if I did. I never should have borne Edmund (Eugene)." (Dowling 35)

This reversal of roles is a large result of a "tormenting mixture of survivor's guilt and death envy," which O'Neill has conveyed at least once before through the Poet in *Fog*. Both O'Neill and his mother have psychological traumas to deal with; O'Neill wrestles with traumas spurred by his mother, her morphine addiction, and her resentment towards

him, while his mother wrestles with her morphine addiction and dissatisfaction with her husband and his traveling career. O'Neill and his mother are aware of their traumas, and through the metaphoric meaning of fog in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill confesses the struggle to conceal and to deal with their respective traumas. While O'Neill displays himself as a character who uses fog as a means for acknowledging and coping with the traumas that linger in his life, he displays his mother as a character who uses it to seal away her traumas, cover them up, and continue her downward spiral of perpetuating her greatest conflicts.

O'Neill's application of fog becomes two-fold: its literal presence and growth in density depicts Mary and Edmund Tyrone's gradual movement toward facing their traumas by the end of the play. The image of fog also becomes a metaphor for the ways in which Mary and Edmund choose to endure and escape their traumas. The first mention of fog comes from Mary in Act I, who notices the day is sunny and bright as she remarks, "Thank heavens, the fog is gone" ("Long Day's Journey" 852; Act I). Immediately, Mary's comment attaches a feeling of anxiety to the fog, which signifies its imminence, if not its dangerous connotation. As the play progresses, the fog returns and grows thicker, and both Mary and Edmund become increasingly aware of their traumas. Tyrone and James Tyrone Jr., O'Neill's father and older brother respectively, are not as perceptive of the fog and its depth; Mary and Edmund are more critically aware of its presence and power. By the end of the play, it is nighttime and the literal fog surrounds and smothers them in complete darkness: "*Outside the windows the wall of fog appears denser than ever*" (899; Act IV). Likewise, Mary and Edmund are also utterly lost in the depth and complexity of their psychological affairs. Adrift in the her oppressive addiction, Mary

cannot reverse her state of tragedy, while Edmund uses fog as a false means of escape – clinging to a “hopeless hope” – and comes to realize he must accept his family in their calamitous state. Edmund’s pity and acceptance parallels O’Neill’s; he affirms this when he admits that writing *Long Day’s Journey into Night* gave him the chance to “face his dead at last ‘with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones’” (Dowling 480).

Long Day’s Journey into Night takes place in one day over the course of four acts, and it begins on a morning in August of 1912. O’Neill opens the play on a bright, sunny morning, the weather depicting tones of cheerfulness and optimism; the dark and gloomy fog does not arrive until Act II. O’Neill briefly describes the weather before moving on to character depictions: “*It is around 8:30. Sunshine comes through the windows at right*” (“*Long Day’s Journey*” 850; Act I). For now, the day seems bright and there is no fog to be seen. The dialogue between the family members reflects this sunny day as humor and joking fun fill the scene. However, even in tones of playful banter, O’Neill hints at their troubles from the very beginning. Mary and James Tyrone (called “Tyrone” in the play), or mother and father, playfully argue about Tyrone’s snoring habits:

MARY: I do feel out of sorts this morning. I wasn’t able to get much sleep with that awful foghorn going all night long.

TYRONE: Yes, it’s like having a sick whale in the back yard. It kept me awake, too.

MARY: [*affectionately amused*] Did it? You had a strange way of showing your restlessness. You were snoring so hard I couldn’t tell which was the foghorn! [*She*

comes to him, laughing, and pats his cheek playfully.] Ten foghorns couldn't disturb you. You haven't a nerve in you. You've never had.

TYRONE: [*his vanity piqued – testily*] Nonsense. You always exaggerate about my snoring.

MARY: I couldn't. If you could only hear yourself once. (852; Act I)

This conversation seems teasing and fun as Mary picks on her husband's loud snoring, but something significant lurks deeper. Through this dialogue, O'Neill foreshadows the approaching literal fog in the setting, as well as the lingering metaphoric fog that signals growing discord between characters. This playful banter anticipates recurring quarrels of love and hate, unity and disagreement. As the play progresses, the fog grows thicker as fights between family members become more psychologically damaging, which heightens their cognizance of their traumas. While the day may seem bright and promising without the literal fog, the dialogue between these characters hints at a darker day as well as darker dilemmas ahead.

Literal fog appears for the first time as a soft, looming presence in Act II:

“Outside the day is still fine but increasingly sultry, with a faint haziness in the air which softens the glare of the sun” (866; Act II). As the fog begins to creep into the setting, traumas lurk closer to Mary and Edmund. The fog continues to thicken as the play progresses and O'Neill describes its growing presence in the stage description for each act. Act III begins with: *“Dusk is gathering in the living room, an early dusk due to the fog which has rolled in from the Sound and is like a white curtain drawn down outside the windows”* (886; Act III). “Like a white curtain,” the fog reduces visibility but still

allows light to shine through. However, by Act IV, the fog has completely engulfed the Tyrone family in the darkness of the night: “*It is around midnight... In the living room only the reading lamp on the table is lighted. Outside the windows the wall of fog appears denser than ever*” (899; Act IV). O’Neill creates a shifting image from light to dark, and evokes a tone that shifts from cheerful to somber, even suffocating. The literal fog does not remain as a simple prop for the setting; for O’Neill, the image of fog also represents the psychological journey of him and his family members over the course of one day, exemplifying a shift from simplicity to complexity in dealing with their traumas. As the day grows into night and the fog begins to brood over everything, Mary and Edmund become increasingly aware of their impending confrontations with the psychological suffering they endure.

Mary and Edmund Tyrone, O’Neill’s mother and O’Neill himself respectively, are the most attentive characters to the binary application of fog in the play. As opposed to the Poet in *Fog*, who let the imminent state of fog – and his psychological pain – engulf him at the play’s end, Mary and Edmund have learned how to navigate the fog and use it to manifest false moments of liberation from their suffering psyches. Tyrone (O’Neill’s father, James) and James Tyrone Jr. (O’Neill’s older brother, Jamie) suffer too; Tyrone is dissatisfied with his acting career and James Tyrone Jr. continues to plummet into alcoholism. However, the recurring sound of the foghorn separates these two sets of characters. While Tyrone and James Tyrone Jr. snore through the sound of the foghorn at night and scarcely refer to it, Mary and Edmund know that the foghorn prompts them to return to the cruel tragedies they both endure. The foghorn repeatedly

awakens them to their traumas throughout the play, reminding them that their manipulations of fog only provide them temporary relief.

Mary and Edmund exploit the fog, working with its hazy and obscure attributes to liberate themselves from their psychological affairs. Mary enjoys the presence of fog, because it reminds her of her ability to escape from her traumas. In Act III, Cathleen – a servant to the Tyrone family – mentions how frightened she was by the thick fog the night before, and Mary responds in the opposite manner:

MARY: [*dreamily*] It wasn't the fog I minded, Cathleen, I really love fog.

CATHLEEN: They say it's good for the complexion.

MARY: It hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you anymore. (887; Act III)

For Mary, the literal presence of fog becomes metaphoric of her morphine addiction; she finds grim satisfaction in succumbing to morphine, which allows her to sink into temporary bliss and escape “from the world” and her traumas. O’Neill places Mary onstage to parallel his own mother, who never considered that her cyclic actions forced her family to grow afraid of ever leaving her alone. Her addiction was one of several factors that contributed to O’Neill’s depression during his years before becoming a playwright, constantly worrying about her physical and mental states of health (*O’Neill* 186). Her effect on her son was inerasable: O’Neill was bound to place her onstage.

When Mary hides away in her addiction, the rest of the Tyrone family are never surprised, and they do not let her quick fix go unnoticed. “No one but the three O’Neill men,” writes Dowling, “could have known that Ella was on morphine, that her

otherworldly demeanor was a result of the drug's effect rather than her ordinary temperament" (Dowling 86). Likewise, the men of the Tyrone family are hyperaware of Mary's addiction, and constant exposure to her bouts of morphine consumption has allowed them to identify the difference between "otherworldly" and "ordinary" Mary. Readers receive a clue about her addiction in Mary's interactions with her husband as she decides to leave to find her glasses:

TYRONE: [...*pleading and rebuking*] Mary!

MARY: [*turns to stare at him calmly*] Yes, dear? What is it?

TYRONE: [*helplessly*] Nothing.

MARY: [*with a strange derisive smile*] You're welcome to come up and watch me if you're so suspicious.

TYRONE: As if that could do any good! You'd only postpone it. And I'm not your jailor. This isn't a prison. ("Long Day's Journey" 877; Act II)

Tyrone knows about his wife's addiction to morphine, but remains a bystander to her injurious habits because he knows he has exhausted all means of helping her heal. Critic Timo Tiusanen discusses Mary's use of fog and argues that her manipulation of it is "both a disguise from the world and a symbol of her guilty escape" (Tiusanen 44–45). The fog of her morphine addiction is the "guilty escape" from her realities. Mary's addiction is both helpless and obstinate, and Tyrone often turns to undermining remarks in attempts to release his frustration. When Mary and Tyrone stay up late to wait for Jamie to come back from the bar in Act III, Mary ridicules Tyrone for his influential drinking habits, to which he retorts: "So I'm to blame because that lazy hulk has made a drunken loafer of himself? ... When you have the poison in you, you want to blame

everyone but yourself!” (“Long Day’s Journey” 893; Act III). Tyrone undercuts his wife and his son in one riposte, exposing the flaws in each of their characters. Mary’s addiction affects every one of the Tyrones, and pulls them into a perpetual battle between guilt and blame.

When Mary sees literal fog, she revels in it and cherishes its presence. It is a distraction from her tragic realities, which are discussed intermittently throughout the play. Any time Mary mentions her troubles to someone, it sends her into a panicked state. She becomes suspicious of others observing her addiction because morphine is her exclusive solution to escaping her traumas. One trauma that Mary confronts is her dissatisfaction with the home in which her family has come to settle. In a conversation with Edmund in Act I, she expresses these feelings and says, “I never wanted to live here in the first place,” to which Edmund responds, “Well, it’s better than spending the summer in a New York hotel, isn’t it?” Mary quickly retorts with, “I’ve never felt it was my home. It was wrong from the start” (864; Act I). This discussion quickly changes to a quarrel, as Mary accuses Edmund of being suspicious: “It makes it so much harder, living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion, knowing everyone is spying on me, and none of you believe in me, or trust me” (865; Act I). Facing her troubles is a fearful task for Mary, and at the end of the Act, she “*strains forward, seized by a fit of nervous panic. She begins a desperate battle with herself*” (866; Act I). Mary has a weak mental battle with her traumas, and each one incites fits of frenzy, which send her back into her morphine addiction. Just like O’Neill’s mother, Mary cannot overcome her addiction and instead chooses to give in to its false allowances of immunity from mental and physical pain.

Edmund is not lost in a tragic cycle of addiction and strife like his mother, and thus the metaphoric meaning of fog – and his manipulation of it – differ. Edmund seeks to escape the psychological turmoil that his family has created, the most influential being an unloving mother spiraling downward in addiction. Instead of using literal fog as a metaphor for avoid his traumas, the presence of literal fog is a kind of healing process for him – a cleansing ritual that allows him to step away from his family’s problems and unwind, if only briefly. Moments when literal fog is dense and surrounds him are moments when Edmund feels at peace. In Act IV, he returns from a trip to the beach and tells his father why he lingered so long on his journey: “I loved the fog. It was what I needed” (902; Act IV). Edmund then moves into a finer articulation of literal fog as his form of escape:

The fog was where I wanted to be. Halfway down the path you can’t see this house. You’d never know it was there... Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is. That’s what I wanted – to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself. [It was] as if I was a ghost belonging to the fog... It felt damn peaceful to be nothing more than a ghost within a ghost. (902; Act IV)

Edmund delights in the literal fog as it strips him of all his troubles; fog is a place “where truth is untrue,” and where his realities are wiped away. However, literal fog is temporary in its nature, and thus it does not allow peace for long: when the fog clears, the tragic realities remain. According to Tiusanen, Edmund “comes back from the fog to describe his experience, to give it a verbal form, to turn it into art” (Tiusanen 45). The literal fog becomes metaphoric for Edmund, representing a level of tolerance that he maintains for

his family. O'Neill became tolerant of his family's affairs by the time he finished writing *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and he displays feelings of pity and forgiveness through Edmund, who learns to regard his family's traumas as irreversible conditions.

The foghorn extends the meaning of fog for both Mary and Edmund. The sound of the foghorn always brings them back, snatching their fleeing minds and cementing them in their cold, hard realities. The purpose of a foghorn is to warn ships of navigation hazards when the fog disrupts clear vision. Edmund is not disturbed by the sound of the foghorn because he uses the literal fog as a means of finding peace. Mary, however, hates to hear the sound: it is a constant reminder of her oppressive addiction and her existing traumas. She cannot face her traumas in a productive manner like Edmund. In her conversation with Cathleen as mentioned previously, she comments on the foghorn and says, "It's the foghorn I hate. It won't let you alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning you, and calling you back. [*she smiles strangely*]" ("Long Day's Journey" 887; Act III). The sound of the foghorn reminds her of all of the troubles she faces: her unhappy home; rheumatism that prevents her from fulfilling her life as a pianist; and having Edmund as a son. She refuses to face these problems directly because they are the sources of her miserable life, and morphine is the only redeeming quality of false freedom. These are the characteristics of O'Neill's own mother. O'Neill replaced his name in the play with Edmund's, his dead brother: the choice he had wanted to make as the Poet in *Fog*. The world of literature and theatre allowed O'Neill to transcend reality and swap his own life with Edmund's. In this fashion, O'Neill shows Edmund the tragic childhood from which death saved him, the life Eugene wished would end. Placing his family onstage gave

O'Neill the chance to resolve the mental pain he endured, and come to a final reconciliation.

O'Neill's use of fog literally and metaphorically has transformed brilliantly between *Fog* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. What was once metaphorical of a cloudy consciousness becomes a metaphor for manipulation of psychological states. This transformation of fog would not have been possible without the influences of Nietzsche and Strindberg. When O'Neill decided to write a strongly autobiographical play, Nietzsche and Strindberg had long been powerful influences in his career. It is clear through O'Neill's severely autobiographical work that Strindberg was and always has been a force behind his plays. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, O'Neill voices his gratitude to Strindberg: "If there is anything of lasting worth in my work, it is due to that original impulse from him, which has continued as my inspiration down all the years since then" (*O'Neill* 234). Strindberg formed a framework within O'Neill's fog of psychological trauma; he was a guide, a leader, and a model in technique and content. Both men faced the troubles caused by their families, and more specifically their mothers. Strindberg brought the "dark corners" of the mind onstage, and O'Neill felt he must do the same, for it was those "dark corners" that needed addressed to feel satisfaction with his life.

References to Nietzsche in *Long Day's Journey into Night* highlight the direct impact on O'Neill. Nietzsche's influence formed new modes of thought for O'Neill, especially shaping his understanding of religion. In Act II, Edmund speaks Nietzsche's name and references the work that influenced O'Neill the most at the beginning of his

playwright career. He mentions the work in a conversation about Mary's addiction with his father:

EDMUND: Did you pray for Mama?

TYRONE: I did. I've prayed to God these many years for her.

EDMUND: Then Nietzsche must be right. [*He quotes from Thus Spake Zarathustra.*] 'God is dead: of His pity for man hath God died.' ("Long Day's Journey" 878; Act II)

Edmund speaks straight from *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and verbalizes his faith, or lack thereof. The phrase, "God is dead," speaks to the seeming uselessness of his father's prayers for Mary. Edmund believes that God must be dead if He has left prayers unanswered for many years. O'Neill's insertion of Nietzsche here displays his loss of faith in youth, and the helplessness he felt as a result. O'Neill renounced his Catholic faith, but Nietzsche and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* became a source of fulfillment. While not completely void of faith by the end of his life, it was Nietzsche, not Catholicism, who would instill a sense of hope for O'Neill. Tyrone then speaks of the repetitive states of misery they all find themselves in, which hints towards Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence, which is the belief that everything that has been done will be done repeatedly for eternity. Tyrone states, "We've lived this before and now we must again" (878; Act II). They have lived with Mary and her cyclic addiction for years, and it seems that it will never end, just as the term "eternal recurrence" suggests. This is a gloomy state of affairs, especially when the Tyrone family must handle Mary's addiction over and over.

Nietzsche solidified convictions in O'Neill that he felt necessary to portray in such an

intimate piece of writing. Strindberg and Nietzsche aided O'Neill in the process of advancing the application of fog in its complexity and its binary meaning.

The beginning of O'Neill's career displays underdeveloped perceptions of the taxing and influential force of psychological pain, as revealed in an analysis of the literal and metaphorical presence of fog in *Fog*. The application of fog developed over time into complex renderings of psychological pain indicating that O'Neill has come to an understanding of his suffering, and has reached his own version of peace with his family in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. His tireless efforts amassed reputable awards beginning as early as 1920 with a Pulitzer Prize awarded to his first full-length play *Beyond the Horizon*. In 1936, O'Neill became the only American playwright ever to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, "for the power, honesty and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy" ("The Nobel Prize"). Writing autobiographical plays was never an easy process for O'Neill, for every play he wrote was a battle through pain. "On the stage and off," writes Dowling, "O'Neill confronted tragedy head-on throughout his life... But he rarely lost sight of the possibility of escape, that sense of belonging to something larger and more meaningful than himself" (Dowling 10). O'Neill placed personal experiences of hope, doubt, and suffering onstage, and revealed the universality of such feelings; he exposed some of our most primal affections and captivated audiences and readers alike.

Near the end of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Edmund Tyrone declares, "Stammering is the native eloquence of the fog people" ("Long Day's Journey" 914; Act IV). O'Neill's last and most laborious effort to resolve his pain still could not convince him that he had accurately depicted his family's innermost fears and emotions: the only

result he sees is a stammered and stumbling account. Despite O'Neill's negative views of his writing, the legacy of this play marks its solidified placement in the canon of modern theatre. He achieved a personal goal set early in his career; he earned his national and international success and usurped his father's place in the family as the reputable figure in American theatre. O'Neill's additions to the canon of American theatre utterly changed its trajectory and established a new and invigorating pathway for succeeding playwrights. His magnum opus, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, is a true masterpiece: a work in which O'Neill seizes control of his fog of psychological suffering and finds meaning in something once crippling, mysterious, and incomprehensible.

Notes

1. Robert M. Dowling in the introduction of his work, *Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts*, page 9.
2. Eugene O'Neill in a letter to Mary Clark in 1923, quoted by Dowling, in the introduction of *Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts*, pages 9–10.
3. See Ernest Hemingway's posthumously published memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, pages 61–62, for a discussion on the source of "Lost generation." Hemingway notes, "Miss Stein made the remark about the lost generation... 'That's what you all are,' Miss Stein said. 'All of you young people who served in the war. You are a lost generation'" (Hemingway 62).
4. A third play by O'Neill, "*Anna Christie*," remains to be analyzed for its depiction of fog as both literal and metaphorical. Published in 1921, "*Anna Christie*" rests between *Fog* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* and exhibits O'Neill's growing awareness of the complexity and symbolic meaning of the application of fog.
5. A phrase used by O'Neill to describe his "pipe dreams," defined as "unrealistic or fanciful hope[s] or scheme[s]; a 'castle in the air'" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). For a finer discussion of the phrase "hopeless hope," see Steven F. Bloom's *Student Companion to Eugene O'Neill*, pages 142–143.

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