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**The Analysis of Autobiographical Elements in Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*  
and *Long Day's Journey into Night*: Dark Reality and Delighted Dreams**

Bachelor's Thesis

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

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## Introduction

This thesis is dedicated to Eugene O'Neill, one of the first American playwrights to gain worldwide recognition in theatrical circles, and concentrates on two of his plays, the comedy *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933; published 1933) and the tragedy *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956; published 1956).

The first chapter focuses on the playwright's life, specifically on his formative years, his relationship to the theatre and the innovations which made him famous. During his childhood and adolescence, O'Neill spent a lot of time travelling and living in different places which developed in him a life-long feeling of rootlessness. The loss of religious faith and strained relationships among the members of his family contributed to his feeling of not belonging and meaninglessness of life which eventually led to a great personal crisis and a subsequent suicide attempt in his early twenties. The end of this personal crisis awakened in him a new desire for life and he decided to become a playwright. The first theatre group to notice O'Neill were the Provincetown Players, a small experimental theatre which eventually helped O'Neill ascent among the Broadway elite of that time. His new experimental approach toward both form and content helped to transform the obsolete American theatre into a more modern institution emphasizing the artistic experience of its audience.

O'Neill is particularly known for incorporating autobiographical elements into his plays which will be the main subject matter of chapters two and three. The second chapter is going to analyze to what degree O'Neill's real family and their mutual conflicts correspond to those of the Tyrone family and the conflicts presented in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. More precisely, it is going to introduce the characters of the play and, via comparison to the corresponding members of O'Neill's family, attempt to determine to what extent the circumstances leading to Mary Tyrone's supposed loneliness and morphine addiction are based on reality; whether James O'Neill truly traded his great acting talent for financial security and whether he truly was as greedy a miser as James Tyrone; if Jamie Tyrone's pursuit of alcohol and prostitutes were the only real pleasures and life-goals of Jamie O'Neill, the author's older brother; and, finally, how serious the progression of O'Neill's illness was and what its subsequent treatment looked like in comparison with the disease-ridden Edmund Tyrone, the dramatist's alter-ego.

Chapter three examines *Ah, Wilderness!*, one of O'Neill's few well-known comedies. Like chapter two, the third chapter focuses on the description and analysis of

characters and events of the play, and on the subsequent comparison of the Tyrones and the Millers, that is, of the dark reality of O'Neill's family life and the delighted dream of a supporting and virtuous family of the Millers which provides a stable and safe environment for a young individual to grow up in, and which O'Neill dreamed of having himself when he was an adolescent.

# 1 Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill was a celebrated American playwright and Nobel Prize winner whose work changed the perception of the American theater and its development in the first half of the twentieth century.

## 1.1 O'Neill's early years

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born on October 16 1888 in New York City. With a slight exaggeration it could be said that he had been a great traveler since his early childhood. Along with his mother, the young O'Neill was forced to travel around the United States because of his father James O'Neill, a relatively famous and successful travelling actor.

Both his parents were Roman Catholics of Irish origin who desired to have their children raised in accordance with the beliefs of their religion. When he was about seven years old, O'Neill was sent to St. Aloysius Academy for Boys, a Catholic boarding school. After reaching the age of twelve, O'Neill entered De La Salle Institute, another Catholic school situated in Manhattan. However, he did not particularly like either of these schools for, by this time, he was beginning, to a great concern of his parents, to rebel against the Catholic Church and the God whom he blamed for not saving his mother from morphine addiction. He felt considerably more content at Betts Academy in Stamford, a nonsectarian preparatory school providing its pupils with an individual approach and "academically stimulating" (Gelb 76)<sup>1</sup> atmosphere, as the Gelbs call it in their 1962 biography *O'Neill*. In 1906, O'Neill began to attend Princeton University where he had stayed for less than nine months, during which he was fond of drinking and women rather than studying, and considered the school too traditional and providing "little in the way of intellectual challenge or stimulation" (Gelb 112). After leaving Princeton, he decided to further educate himself on his own.

He spent several months in New York where he began to live a bohemian life, enjoying frequent drinking bouts and the company of prostitutes in whom he was particularly interested and whose world and fate became an important part of many of his works.

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<sup>1</sup> The citation format used in thesis is MLA (7<sup>th</sup> edition).



Even though O'Neill was a passionate socialist and anarchist in his early twenties, strongly opposing to capitalism and materialism, he abandoned his radical views and attitudes later in his life

In addition to the regular travels around the United States in his childhood, he was, due to various circumstances, also forced to travel abroad. In order to avoid an unwanted marriage, his father sent him on a gold-digging expedition to Honduras whose jungle served him as a source of inspiration in the 1920 full-length play *The Emperor Jones*. However, the most important journey he took, at least with respect to his dramatic work, began in the spring of 1910 when he decided to become a sailor. While on the sea, he travelled to Argentina, England and South Africa. The experience gained while living among sailors, namely the seaman's nature, the difficulties they had to suffer, became an integral part of his plays, especially the earlier ones.

On the one hand, O'Neill had managed to gather a considerable amount of material for his future career during this period of his life; on the other hand, however, the years of unrestrained conduct considerably affected O'Neill's health, especially the months spent as a homeless beggar in South America and, subsequently, one of the penniless outcasts at a New York waterfront saloon called Jimmy-the-Priest's. These years of his life were filled with excessive alcohol consumption, unhealthy diet, improper regimen and experimenting with various types of narcotics, which he even used in order to commit suicide during a deep personal crisis in the spring of 1912.

The year 1912 is an important year in O'Neill's life not only because, as the Gelbs explain, his suicide attempt "seemed to have satisfied his inner rage" (189) and, obviously, reawakened a new zest for life in him, but rather because this is the very year when he began to seriously consider the idea of becoming a playwright.

## **1.2 O'Neill and the American theatre**

Eugene O'Neill liked to claim that he decided to become a playwright during the stay in a sanatorium where he was treated for a mild form of tuberculosis. The truth is, however, that he had already begun working on various notes to his plays in the summer of 1912. The idea of his future career apparently entered his mind earlier.

O'Neill's journey to theatrical prominence was not an easy one. At first, there was no theatre willing to perform his unconventional plays. He succeeded for the first time when the Provincetown Players, a New York theatre group of young and radical socialists

and anarchists, noticed him in 1916 and decided to perform his one-act sea play *Bound East for Cardiff* in their Wharf Theatre. These amateur theatre enthusiasts sought to oppose to the highly profitable, yet highly commercial Broadway by creating a small non-profit theatre which would focus on the artistic element of the staged plays and, according to Milan Lukeš's biography *Eugene O'Neill*<sup>2</sup>, provide its visitors with "a place of intense social experience" (Lukeš 20).

Despite having claimed to hate the lack of artistic taste, exaggerated sentimentality and melodrama so typical for the early twentieth century Broadway, O'Neill, nevertheless, had valid reasons to endeavour to have his plays produced by Broadway. Firstly, a small private theatre, such as the Provincetown Players or The Experimental Theatre, Inc., a reorganized group consisting of the former Provincetown Players after their dissolution, could not serve as a sufficient source of income for someone who chose to make a living by writing plays on a professional level. Secondly, it is important to note that O'Neill was a great individualist and considered the theatre "a popularizing medium of his own work" (Lukeš 32). Therefore, considering the limited financial means and lack of professionalism of these groups, there was little hope for these small theatres to become a popularizing medium on a larger scale.

O'Neill is known to have had a complicated relationship to the theatre. He was undoubtedly aware that he owed all his fame and fortune to it. Nevertheless, there was a high degree of skepticism towards the theatre which was most likely caused by the influence of melodramatic school to which he had been, thanks to his father, exposed since childhood. It is the more interesting that, though he openly loathed his father's school, there were critics as, for example, John Henry Raleigh who in his essay "Eugene O'Neill and the Escape from the château d'If" pointed out that there were more than enough melodramatic elements in his own work.

Be it as it may, nobody can deny the fact that O'Neill was the first American playwright who managed to increase the prestige of his profession in the eyes of the public. As John Gassner mentions in his essay "The Nature of O'Neill's Achievement: A Summary and Appraisal", he gave it "a position of some importance in American cultural life" (Gassner 166) and, although there was a number of critics who disliked O'Neill's experimental approach, it was his innovations and renowned imagination which made his plays so powerful, and which helped transform the old-fashioned melodramatic American

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<sup>2</sup> All the quotations from this source are my translations of the Czech original.

scene into a theatre focusing more on the artistic element of plays than on a mere financial gain.

### 1.3 O'Neill the Pioneer

Despite all the shortcomings of his plays concerning, for instance, the overwhelming repetition of a particular element and directness of dialogue which Hugo von Hofmannsthal reproached O'Neill in an essay "Eugene O'Neill", the negativity mentioned in John Gassner's essay "The Nature of O'Neill's Achievement: A Summary and Appraisal", or the already pointed out abundance of melodramatic features to which O'Neill was so notoriously opposed, the playwright cannot be denied the skillfulness and experimental innovativeness with which he presented the themes in his works.

In addition to the realism and naturalism of the sea plays from the early period of his dramatic work, elements of symbolism and expressionism abound in O'Neill's work.

O'Neill had always been interested in what was hidden beneath the surface of things, especially in the depths of human minds. As Eugene M. Waith explains in his essay "Eugene O'Neill: An Exercise in Unmasking", by the means of masks, for instance, O'Neill wanted to portray not only that people try to hide their true self from others but that there are inner conflicts within an individual which influence the development of one's personality, as is the case of the protagonists of *Lazarus Laughed* or *The Great God Brown*. For the same purpose, O'Neill sometimes also used asides or soliloquy. Another expressionist technique is sound which O'Neill used for example in *Emperor Jones* in the form of drum beating whose increasing tempo correspond to Jones's rising panic.

However, it was not only the new experimental devices that made O'Neill a theatrical pioneer. It was also the content of his plays which brought a change into early twentieth century American theatre.

As well as many other authors of the early twentieth century, O'Neill tried to portray in his work what he considered to be the possible causes of deterioration of social and moral values with which the society of that period had to deal with. According to O'Neill, this "sickness of today" (Gassner 142), as he refers to the state of American society, was caused by the decline of spirituality and the subsequent unsuccessful attempt to find a substitute for it in the form of science and materialistic fulfillment which were supposed to give the human existence a new significance and meaning.

His aversion to materialism is based on his own life experience, or, more precisely, the experience of his father James, who wasted his great acting talent due to a vision of easily earned money. According to Lukeš, O'Neill thought that exaggerated greed leads to "a destruction of human soul" (Lukeš 122) which gradually evokes in an individual the feelings of purposelessness and inner emptiness. As a result, the individual's life loses its meaning.

The absence of deeper meaning is closely associated with estrangement and isolation which, consequently, make O'Neill's protagonists question their place in the world and awakens in them a desire to belong. This state is achievable in solitude (although only temporarily) or in death which is, as Lukeš explains, "a redemption from earthly suffering and guilt" (Lukeš 139).

The sea has a special place in both O'Neill's work and heart. As the Gelbs claim in *O'Neill*, the sea was one of the few places where he felt a sense of belonging and "a sense religious extasy" (Gelb144).

Many protagonists of O'Neill's plays try to escape from the severe everyday reality by creating an illusionary idea about their lives, usually based on the past, so that they do not have to face how terrible the reality truly is. More importantly, however, they need to pursue a great dream promising a better future. This dream must be difficult, maybe even impossible to achieve, for, when a dream is easily achievable, it is not a dream worth achieving. Without a great dream, one's existence is not worth living and one is as good as dead.

O'Neill was very fond of Freud and his theories which are reflected in his work especially on the relationship between parents and children, mostly father and son. This relationship is described as "antagonistic, and especially on the part of the father, it is almost inhuman" (Lukeš 67). The winner of the conflict is habitually the parent whose victory is "the triumph of biological determinism" (Lukeš 68).

One of the things Eugene O'Neill is particularly known for is the incorporation of autobiographical elements into almost every single of his plays. The one play that is considered to be the most autobiographical of them is his masterpiece, a tragedy called *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which will be, together with its humorous counterpart, a comedy *Ah, Wilderness!*, the main subject of analysis in the following chapters.

## ***2 Long Day's Journey into Night, Dark Reality***

The play “of old sorrow, written in tears and blood”, as O’Neill himself aptly labelled his famous tragedy *Long Day's Journey into Night* in its dedication, is an autobiographical play focusing on the Tyrone family whose members, corresponding to the members of the author’s own family, suffer from existential crisis for which they blame events from the past or one another. These disputes result in tense conflicts which are usually followed by an immediate reconciliation and understanding.

Even though the play is generally considered to be autobiographical, one must keep in mind that it does not precisely correspond to reality. As Lukeš explains, despite O’Neill’s effort to be objective during the process of writing, he had to condense and simplify events and relationships so that the events which took place over several months in reality are portrayed within one day. To what extent the facts in *Long Day's Journey into Night* are autobiographical became a subject matter of numerous researches, including this one. The following chapters are going to introduce the characters of the play and compare them to the real members of O’Neill’s family in order to discover the degree of similarity or difference between them. The first character to be analyzed is Mary Tyrone, a neurotic and lonely mother and wife suffering from chronic morphine addiction.

### **2.1 Mary Tyrone, the Voluntary Slave**

Mary Cavan Tyrone is the wife of James Tyrone and mother of their two sons, older Jamie and younger Edmund. Even though she is fifty-four, Mary is described as a woman who “must once have been extremely pretty, and is still striking” (*Journey* 12). The most striking feature of her persona is, however, the extremely visible anxiety she suffers from. She is particularly self-conscious about her hands which became unsightly due to her rheumatism, “one avoids looking at them, the more so because one is conscious she is sensitive about their appearance and humiliated by her inability to control the nervousness which draws attention to them” (*Journey* 12). She finds herself in a vicious circle and the fact that others know about her anxiety and her inability to control it makes her feel even more uncomfortable and unsettled.

Of all the family members, Mary Tyrone appears to be troubled the most. Her unfulfilled dreams, together with her recurring morphine addiction and feelings of loneliness and guilt for her infant son’s death, are the sources of frustration not only for Mary herself but also for other members of the Tyrone household.

Mary has always dreamed of having a nice house where she could invite visitors without having to feel ashamed. Her husband, however, is a very thrifty person that does not like to spend money on unnecessary things, including home improvements and even his clothing which he wears “to the limit of usefulness” (*Journey* 13). Even though Mary understands that her husband’s difficult childhood spent in poverty is what caused his avarice and has sympathy for him, she cannot deny that she is missing something in her life. When talking about the Chatfields, the richer neighbours whom she neither likes nor is prone to meet, there is an indisputable hint of jealousy in her speech, “I mean they have decent, presentable homes they don’t have to be ashamed of. They have friends who entertain them and whom they entertain. They’re not cut off from everyone” (*Journey* 44). Mary never really felt at home in the local town and especially in their house. All this contributes to the fact that Mary becomes isolated and alienated from her neighbours, remains friendless and often feels lonely because there is no one with whom she could share her feelings and thoughts.

Another (and probably the crucial) tragedy that befell not only Mary but the entire Tyrone family, was the death of an infant son and brother, Eugene, after contracting measles from his older brother Jamie. Even though Mary says that she blames only herself for his death, she admits that, despite being told not to approach his little brother while being ill, Jamie purposefully infected his brother out of jealousy, “I’ve always believed Jamie did it on purpose. He was jealous of the baby. He hated him” (*Journey* 87). It is understandable that she could never truly forgive him. This feeling of loneliness, seclusion and guilt does not help to improve her already disturbed mental state.

Due to the difficult birth of her son Edmund, Mary started having health complications which her doctor decided to alleviate by prescribing morphine to which she later became addicted. Even though she spent some time in sanatorium in order to get rid of her addiction, she never truly recovered. As the story develops, Mary becomes more and more anxious because of Edmund’s alleged illness. Although she tries to delude herself that what Edmund suffers from is nothing but a summer cold, she feels deep inside that this affliction is more serious than that which makes her feel unsettled. James, Jamie and Edmund sense the atmosphere of growing tension and are very careful about what they say in her presence so that they do not upset her even further. All of them, especially Jamie, also observe her carefully which makes her feel as if they did not trust her. Because of this uncomfortable atmosphere, all the men of the household try to spend as little time

at home as possible. They are worried that she loses her will and relapses again which she eventually does.

After taking the drug, her behaviour becomes unpredictable. There is no significant change in her appearance at first sight, except that she is calmer and less nervous. When looking more closely, however, one can notice that “her eyes are brighter, and there is a peculiar detachment in her voice and manner, as if she were a little withdrawn from her words and actions” (*Journey* 58). Under the influence of morphine, she becomes detached from reality and, even though she tries to conceal it, sometimes it seems as if she spoke to herself rather than to other people in the room as, for example, when she describes to her servant Cathleen why she hates the foghorn and, on the contrary, why she loves the fog. It seems as if Mary wanted Cathleen to stay only because she needs an excuse to keep talking. In this state, her mood shifts abruptly from sheer rage to complete detachment. For instance, when she accuses her husband of being the reason why she does not feel at home anywhere or when she blames him for being the reason why Jamie started drinking and was expelled from school, she suddenly calms down, starts apologizing for her behaviour and “goes on with the same detachment” (*Journey* 111).

By the end of the play, Mary gets completely trapped inside her imaginary world and is consumed by her memories and ideas of what she might have become if she had not married James Tyrone, “I had two dreams. To be a nun, that was the more beautiful one. To become a concert pianist, that was the other” (*Journey* 104). Mary comes from a religious family and, as a girl, she was educated in a convent where she grew into a very pious young woman. However, she was discouraged by an older and more experienced nun who advised her to try to live as an ordinary girl for some time and, if she did not change her mind, they could talk about the matter again. Nevertheless, she met her future husband several months after the dialogue and got married. Her dream remained unfulfilled and, even though she loves her husband and her sons, she regrets how much she had to sacrifice when she became a wife and mother.

During the years in the convent, she was a very keen and hard-working pianist who, according to her tutors, “had more talent than any student they remembered” (*Journey* 104). Due to the limitations caused by her illness and the amount of time she spent on travelling with her husband, she had very little time to practice and, once again, failed to achieve her dream. For the present seems to be unbearable for her, she seeks refuge in times when she felt best, “It kills the pain. You go back until at last you are

beyond its reach. Only the past when you were happy is real” (*Journey* 104). At the very end of the play, she appears in the living room with a youthful expression in her face, with her hair braided into two braids and wearing a blue dress over her nightdress. She pays very little attention to the surroundings of the room and even to those who are present there. From the way she speaks about becoming a nun one day, the rest of the Tyrone family can see that she got completely lost in herself and is so far out of their reach that they do not even try to make her come to her senses.

The unfortunate destiny of the author’s brother, Ella O’Neill, is very similar to that of Mary Tyrone. There are, however, certain inaccuracies which, if addressed properly, will allow one to see Ella’s personality in a new light.

## **2.2 Ella O’Neill, the Victim and the Victimizer**

A student of Eugene O’Neill’s plays will be immediately surprised by the fact that, unlike the names of the father and elder son, which are identical with their real-life models, O’Neill named the mother of the Tyrone household Mary instead of Ella, which is a name by which his mother was publicly known. Originally, Ella’s name was Mary Ellen Quinlan until the age of fifteen when she entered a boarding school. She stopped calling herself Mary after entering the school and began to call herself Ellen. Shortly after getting married, she started using Ella. As Arthur and Barbara Gelb claim in *O’Neill*, many psychiatrists thought that O’Neill “tried to link his mother to the Virgin Mary, to stress symbolically her frustrated desire to have been a nun rather than a wife and mother” (Gelb 11). It is also very likely that by calling his mother Mary he wanted to symbolically express her inner desire to return to her youth when she was happy, before she was married and had children.

Ella was the daughter of Thomas and Bridget Quinlan, two immigrants from Ireland. Her father was a successful middle-class businessman who wanted to provide his daughter with as many advantages as he could, including proper education and music lessons. Occasionally, Ella was also allowed to visit the theatre with her father. That was where she first saw James O’Neill, a famous actor and her future husband. She was not, however, introduced to him by her father during her senior year as Mary did in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. It is true that James O’Neill and Ella’s father knew each other after meeting in Quinlan’s shop. However, Ella was in her senior year in 1875 and her father died in the year 1874. In addition, Quinlan could not have taken part in Ella’s wedding



preparation and the purchase of her wedding dress of which Mary is so fond because the wedding took place after his death. According to the Gelbs, O'Neill did it deliberately to "heighten Ella's tragedy" (Gelb 15) so that she "becomes a more poignant victim when she is thrust into James's harum-scarum theatrical world directly from the sheltering home of her father" (Gelb 15).

Both in reality and in the play, the young girl was sent to convent of St. Mary to acquire further education. As well as Mary, Ella was fond of an idea of becoming a nun. Nevertheless, Mother Elizabeth, a senior nun, advised her not to be hasty about her decision. Ella followed her recommendation to live as an ordinary girl and, after meeting and marrying James, she did not return to the convent. In addition to other courses, Ella also studied music and dreamed of becoming a pianist. In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, James Tyrone belittles Mother Elizabeth's claims that Mary is particularly talented and says that the nuns in the convent were only flattering her, "Not that your mother didn't play well for a schoolgirl, but that's no reason to take it for granted she could have..." (*Journey* 138). However, Arthur and Barbara Gelb argue that the real Mother Elizabeth was a pianist herself and, in 1850, she even founded for a music department at St. Mary. Therefore, her "judgement [that] Ella was exceedingly talented" (Gelb 14) could not have been completely out of place.

Another question arises with respect to Ella's isolation from the outside world. Right from the beginning of their marriage, Mary accompanied her husband on his tours across the country and, even though there had always been the members of his theatrical company, she claims that she has "never felt at home with them" (*Journey* 102). Indeed, Ella herself accompanied her husband on his tours around the state to her mother's great displeasure. As the Gelbs further explain, she knew her daughter's delicate nature and knew that Ella "could hardly find herself at home among the rugged troupers who were James's friends and formed almost his whole world" (Gelb 19).

Concerning the alleged loneliness that she suffers in the New London community, Mary complains that there is no one with whom she can spend her free time. This complete isolation from other people seems unlikely, however, for, according to the Gelbs, Ella used to visit Eugene and Jamie in school "accompanied by one of her New London relatives" (Gelb 70) or spent time with "her relatives the Brennans, and another old New London family, the Sheridans..." (Gelb 92-93). The explanation probably lies partly in the fact that Ella's social and cultural standards were considerably high. As well as Mary, Ella spent summers in New London and was also dissatisfied with the house in

which she had to live. Unlike the Tyrones who all chide James for the neglected state of their mediocre residence, the opinions concerning their uncared-for house differed among the New London residents. A Sunday Journal reporter, who once interviewed James in his house, describes the house as “an elegant two-story structure...and an ideal spot for rest and recreation” (Gelb 84). While James’s friends considered the house decent enough, it definitely was not as luxurious as the houses of the more affluent families in the neighbourhood. She accused her husband of not caring about the condition of their dwelling and complained that their house was “ill constructed, shabbily furnished and cheaply maintained” (Gelb 83). Ella was probably upset with her husband because she knew that he had more than enough money to adequately furnish their home and provide their family with equally elegant lifestyle which the more sophisticated families led. Even though it is true that James did not care very much about the improvements of their home, he tried to make up for it by providing Ella with “gifts of expensive jewelry and clothes” (Gelb 44), which somewhat contradicts the image of Ella’s needs being utterly neglected. Due to her husband’s poor Irish origin and his profession, their family was considered “shanty Irish” (Gelb 95), as recalls Mrs. E. Chappell Sheffield in Arthur and Gelb’s *O’Neill*, and was “snubbed by the elite of New London” (Gelb 94). This must have been very difficult to bear for a woman as cultivated and ambitious as Ella was. At the same time, however, the people from her social class considered her snobbish and probably took her strange behaviour for haughtiness. Her relative, Lil Brennan, recalled meeting Ella once who “passes [her] in the street and doesn’t even notice [her]” (Gelb 94). Such behaviour can hardly be considered something other than an affront. By this time, however, she had already been heavily addicted to morphine which was a secret kept from public knowledge for decades.

Just as Mary, Ella suffered from postpartum complications which her obstetrician tried to alleviate by prescribing morphine. In *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, Jamie points out that “from what Mama’s said, he was another cheap quack like Hardy!” (*Journey* 39). However, Lukeš points out that Ella was first prescribed morphine after breast surgery in 1887 which is before O’Neill’s birth. Whatever the reason, Ella became a long-term morphine user as many other people, especially women, did in the second half of the nineteenth century. Back then, it was possible to acquire morphine even without a prescription and, even though there had already been scholars who warned people about the risks of an excessive use of this drug, regular practitioners were still prone to solve more serious cases and chronic illnesses by prescribing this drug to their patients. David

T. Courtwright's claims in his book *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* that it was the general practitioners' laziness and lack of skill which were to blame the most for the rapid increase in the number of morphine addicts in the nineteenth century:

Estimates of the number of opium and morphine addicts who could trace their plight back to their doctor ranged from a simple majority to 99 percent. The problem became particularly acute with the spread of hypodermic medication during the 1860s and 1870s, when morphine became virtual panacea (42).

The author further argues that most of the morphine addicts in the nineteenth century were women. Next to patients suffering from dysentery, malaria, syphilis or rheumatism who were also prescribed morphine and likely to become addicted, many women who suffered from diseases of the uterus and ovaries. Even though the vast majority of her relatives and friends had no idea about Ella's addiction and were shocked after reading the play, there were some who noticed that there was something odd about Ella's behaviour. Sadie Koenig, a friend of O'Neill's second cousin, recalls that Ella "behaved strangely at times – being drowsy, incoherent, repeating herself or trailing off into vague silences" (Gelb 123). After O'Neill returned from sanatorium, he lived for a while with the Rippins, a family of English origin, in whose house the O'Neills used to dine. The Rippin daughters, Emily and Jessica, considered Ella somewhat eccentric and strange. Emily Rippin recalls Ella not recognizing her, being unusually pale, pushing "plates away from her, not seeming to notice when food spilled from them onto the table or floor" (Gelb 242) and both sisters remember an incident "when Ella, after being served, moved her arm in a wooden gesture and swept off the table all the plates and cutlery before her" (Gelb 242). Ella's strange behaviour was a puzzle for many. Some of her relatives blamed her for being arrogant, the Rippin daughters concluded that Ella might be an alcoholic (which they were talked out of by their mother) and others justified her reticence and reserve by reminding themselves of her having "a difficult life" (Gelb 94), as Lil Brennan recalls her mother, Josephine McGlyn Brennan, saying.

Ella O'Neill was a tormented woman who, due to her innate hypersensitivity, was unable to face the difficulties of real life, which is why she sought refuge from harsh reality in an imaginary world where she could, for at least a short period of time, be happy and in peace.

Some may consider Ella O'Neill a poor and miserable drug addict trapped in a strained marriage without the prospect of a better future. Others may regard her as an immature and pretentious tyrant who hurt her loved ones with her unceasing discontent.

Be it as it may, the above comparison shows that the description of Mary Tyrone mostly corresponds to Ella O'Neill. However, there are several important points which reveal Ella as a completely different person; as well as Mary, Ella O'Neill truly longed for better living standards with which her rich husband undoubtedly could provide her. Nevertheless, there is also evidence from people who knew her closely that James provided her with more than enough comfort and that it was her big ambition to be equal to and associated with the wealthiest families in her neighborhood that made her feel inferior and disconnected from others. Moreover, even though Ella truly became addicted to morphine because of her ill health as Mary did, it was not her husband's supposed avarice that caused her addiction. As will be revealed in the next sections, James O'Neill's attitude toward money and his wariness to spend it was much more complex than Eugene O'Neill decided to portray it in the play.

### **2.3 James Tyrone, the Generous Miser**

James Tyrone, the head of the Tyrone family, is a former matinee idol of Irish origin. Even in his mid-sixties, he is described as "still remarkably good looking" (*Journey* 13). Despite being a handsome and successful man, he did not grow either haughty or arrogant and is described as "simple, unpretentious man" (*Journey* 13). His extraordinary physical attractiveness is highly contrasted with the shabby clothing that he wears. For years he worked on the quality of his voice which was an important requirement of his profession. His perseverance proved successful for, over time, his voice became "fine, resonant and flexible" (*Journey* 13).

James comes from a poor family of Irish immigrants and, as a child, he had to work very hard because his father left for Ireland and did not provide for his family any further. Even though his childhood experience caused a permanent personal trauma of ending up in a poorhouse, he managed to become wealthy due to his successful acting career. In order to secure as much financial security as possible for his retirement, he very often purchases land from people in his neighborhood. He thinks that "land is land, and it's safer than the stocks and bonds of Wall Street swindlers" (*Journey* 15). Nevertheless, his judgement proves to be very poor and his investments never earn him the fortune he

imagines at the beginning. Thus, he tries to save money in other ways which makes him look greedy in the eyes of the rest of the Tyrones. Consequently, the members of the family often get into quarrels because of money and call him a miser. They reproach him not wanting to invest in a proper house or, at least, stylish furniture so that Mary does not have to feel ashamed to invite guests. Also, when Edmund turns out to have contracted tuberculosis and needs to be cured in a sanatorium, a question arises what kind of sanatorium Edmund will be sent to. It depends, of course, on Tyrone and on how much money he will be willing to spend. Jamie accuses him of wanting “to pick a cheap dump” (*Journey* 80) and so does Edmund later in the play when he and James discuss the matter in private. Tyrone defends himself against all their charges by reminding them that they have no idea of what real poverty is and that they never had to struggle as he did. Furthermore, he reproaches Jamie that he is completely dependent on him and that he has “never known the value of a dollar and never will!” (*Journey* 31). He does not take into account even Edmund’s complaints because, firstly, he ruined his health out of his own reckless years of dissipation and, secondly, even though James acknowledges his son’s courage when facing the work and financial troubles which his son went through during his travels, he considers his experience to be “a game of romance and adventure to [him]. It was play” (*Journey* 147). This fear of not having enough money proved to be damaging even to James himself. As a youth, James dreamed of becoming a renowned Shakespearean actor. However, when he was offered the role of Monte Cristo, which proved to be a very profitable contract, he could not resist “its promise of an easy fortune” (*Journey* 149). On the one hand, he became a rich and respected actor. On the other hand, the theatregoers identified him with this particular role and were not very enthusiastic to see him perform anything else. He laments the fact that “[he] had lost the great talent [he] once had through years of easy repetition . . .” (*Journey* 150). He feels sorry that, out of fear of poverty, he sacrificed his dreams and ambitions for the prospect of material security. It is apparent that the childhood experience imprinted in Tyrone’s memory to such an extent that, even when he tries his best, he cannot get rid of the fear of unnecessary waste of resources, as in the case of the redundant number of lit light bulbs at the beginning of Act Four. It is even possible that, originally, avarice was not a part of his personality at all for, as one can see throughout the play, he does not hesitate to share whisky with his sons at any occasion. However, as the fear deepened in him during his life, a part of him indeed became a miser. As O’Neill might have said, he developed a kind of a mask which he is unable to take off, as is apparent during his conversation with

Edmund concerning the choice of a sanatorium to which he will be sent. Even though Tyrone tells Edmund that he can choose any place he likes, he quickly adds that it should be “within reason” (*Journey* 148). In addition, when he realizes a little while later how much the amount of lit bulbs (which he himself lit in quite an ostentatious manner) will cost him, “an habitual association in his mind” (*Journey* 151) appears, the terror overwhelms him and he must turn them off immediately.

There is also a dispute over the personal beliefs and lifestyles of the sons and their father. While James Tyrone is an example of an old-fashioned Irish Catholic for whom his religious faith is unwavering, Edmund tends towards anarchism and socialism. During his travels abroad, Edmund even attempted to commit a suicide which is something Tyrone refuses to believe. Also, James’s religious devotion is called into question by Jamie who reveals him as a hypocrite by pointing out that he himself does not have “any holes in the knees of [his] pants going to Mass” (*Journey* 77). In addition, Edmund’s and Jamie’s tastes in literature are completely different from their father’s. At the very beginning of the play, there are two bookcases in the living room, one belonging to James and the other to Edmund. Edmund admires representatives of anarchism, atheism and decadence as, for instance, Nietzsche, Wilde or Kipling. Tyrone, on the other hand, is very fond of volumes of classical literature, including works of Dumas, Victor Hugo or Shakespeare. Whenever Edmund makes a remark referring to something his father does not agree with or disapproves of, he simply says “keep your damned anarchist remarks to yourself. I won’t have them in my house” (*Journey* 24). By doing so, he gives Edmund a clear message that he is not willing to discuss any of his opinions. This puts yet another strain on their relationship and causes more misunderstanding between the two.

James is not, however, the only scapegoat of the family. Although all the members of his family have their reasons for attacking him, they have their own faults which Tyrone addresses in the process of the play.

Firstly, he is disappointed in Jamie and the aimless life he leads. He does not like his son’s laziness and the fact that he exchanged his bright mind and acting talent for prostitutes and drinking. James himself did not receive any proper education in his youth and, thus, is bewildered that his son who was provided with such a privilege deliberately refused to take advantage of it. Concerning his acting career, Jamie defends himself that he never wanted to be an actor and that his father forced him to follow in his footsteps. James argues that it was his fault for he showed no initiative for a profession on his own, “You never wanted to do anything except loaf in barrooms!” (*Journey* 32). In addition,

James accuses him of being a lazy and ungrateful parasite who has to “come home every summer to live on [him]” (*Journey* 32). It is possible that James projects his own fear of the future into his eldest son. This constant urging for him to finally find an occupation may mean that he dreads the idea of one of his sons ending up in the poorhouse as James himself fears he eventually might.

Secondly, Mary’s most recent relapse is a great disappointment for Tyrone because, after several unsuccessful attempts, he thought that she finally managed to overcome her weakness and has her will under control, “Yes, this time you can see how strong and sure of herself she is. She’s a different woman entirely from the other times” (*Journey* 37). Unfortunately, Edmund’s illness is the breaking point for Mary who eventually gives in to her addiction and indulges in the use of morphine once again. This is something James cannot get over because this time, he truly believed in Mary and enjoyed the fact that “this home has been a home again” (*Journey* 36).

A question arises as to what are the motives of someone who so willingly suffers such atrocities from the ones for whom he works his entire life. The following section attempts to find an answer for these motives.

#### **2.4 James O’Neill, the Poor Rich Man**

James O’Neill was born in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1846. As well as Ella’s parents, Edward O’Neill and his wife, Mary O’Neill, were also Irish immigrants of humble origins. They had six children – three sons and three daughters. Unlike the Quinlans, however, Edward prospered neither in Ireland nor in America. His parents, especially his father, seems to have been very superstitious people which proved to be fatal for the whole family – beside dressing their children in ‘skirties’, which were clothes that prevented little children “from being abducted by malevolent fairies”(Gelb 20), his father decided to travel back to Ireland after a vision of “his Celtic ancestors, who warned him of his impending death” (Gelb 20). Thus, the family was left without its provider and had to languish in a foreign and unknown country. His two older brothers moved elsewhere and he started regarding himself as “the family’s mainstay” (Gelb 20). That was when he developed the fear of poverty. Nevertheless, James O’Neill seemed, at least in public, to take life with more ease and optimism in comparison with his portrayal in the play who openly complains to his son about the malnutrition, exhausting work in a factory and poor housing condition he underwent in his youth. According to the Gelbs, James himself gives a rather over-

romanticized account of his childhood by calling it “careless young years, when spare evenings were spent poring over a Shakespeare . . . , of losing myself in a the land of romance at the theatre where I was an established gallery god” (Gelb 21). His effort to look pleasant and optimistic in the eyes of the public could be related to a desire to secure a stable audience which would consequently provide him with a stable income. Therefore, he would not have to worry so intensively about his future and the future of his family.

James created several versions of how he became an actor. For instance, he claimed that he “had a subconscious assurance . . . that [he] should be an actor one day . . .” (Gelb 22). He also said that he had dreamed of becoming an actor since he was a young lad. When he was fourteen, his sister got married well. He moved in with the young couple in Cincinnati and had worked in his brother-in-law’s company for three years. After work, he used to study with his tutor who took him to the theatre on a regular basis. The Gelbs claim that the most convincing version is that he got involved in it by chance when a manager from Cincinnati was looking for substitutes. After that, he became an apprentice in the theater.

As the Gelbs explain in *O’Neill*, the theatre was a very popular cultural institution in those days which “approximated in popularity the motion-picture industry during the 1930s and 1940s” (Gelb 18). For James, his career was of great importance. He allowed nothing to jeopardize it for he thought it would prevent him from ending up penniless, “As an actor, James belonged first to his profession, and spent himself completely on his audience” (Gelb 18). James was thought to ascend among the elite of his profession. Thanks to his personal charm, he enchanted not only the theatrical audience but even the most prominent actors of the period, namely Edwin Booth Joseph Jefferson and Edwin Forrest, who used to advise him on how to improve his acting skills. He studied Shakespeare, Congreve, Farquhar, French and German comedies and he played Macbeth, Othello, Brutus or Romeo. Despite his great potential, he did not manage to fulfil his dream of being a great Shakespearean actor. In 1883, he received an offer to play the leading role in *The Count of Monte Cristo* which was a moment that changed his future career and life for good. As the Gelbs argue in *O’Neill*, he thought Monte Cristo “marked one more step in the direction of lasting fame and stature” (Gelb 48). On the one hand, Monte Cristo turned him into a wealthy and celebrated man; he played Edmond Dantes more than six thousand times and earned more than eight hundred thousand dollars. On the other hand, however, the public identified him with this particular role so strongly that they were not very enthusiastic to see him in anything else. Although James tried to make



a name for himself via other roles, none was as profitable as Monte Cristo. The older he was, the more obvious it became that he “has passed the meridian of the physical” (Gelb 181), to play a young and handsome young man as Edmond Dantes. It made him feel embarrassed that he had to “return at the age of sixty-two to the unbecomingly youthful, and uncomfortably athletic Edmond Dantes” (Gelb 177). To make matters worse, the play itself did not earn as much as it used to for “the time had finally come... when legitimate theatre audiences had tired of his old melodrama” (Gelb 177). Although James invested in land throughout his life, his investments turned out to be low earning so that he could not rely on income from them. The phobia of the poorhouse was not the only factor contributing to his desire to earn more. With his wife being sent to sanatoriums on a regular basis, his alcoholic son Jamie, unable to keep a job and his younger son Eugene, not showing any special interest in his future, James was more than aware of the fact that the future of his loved ones depends on him and, despite their insults and contempt, he continued coming on the stage while “feeling misunderstood and unappreciated by the three people for whom he was so pathetically laboring” (Gelb 178). Even though he was tempted from time to time, he could not bring himself to abandon his helpless relatives, being probably propelled by the fear of being regarded as his own father whom he, as James Tyrone says in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, wished was “roasting in hell” (*Journey* 147).

Despite all his faults, James O'Neill seemed to have been, unlike the rest of his disturbed family members, a good-natured and brave man who, within his abilities, tried to secure as good a life for all of them as he could. Few people would be able to fight their destiny as valiantly as James.

The comparison of the two fathers confirmed that James Tyrone's wasted talent and fear of poverty correspond to the real misfortunes of James O'Neill. However, his “stinginess”, as is often referred to James Tyrone's proneness to save money, is called into serious question. He was at most a thrifty man who was aware of the fact that, without him, his family would be completely unable to provide for themselves and if he did not think ahead and save as much financial means as he could, they could have eventually ended up in the same conditions as he himself did when he was a boy because of his father for whom he developed a deep-seated hatred.

James O'Neill undoubtedly deserved a considerably bigger gratitude from his family, especially from his two sons, Eugene and Jamie, who are going to be, along with their counterparts from the play, the subjects of analysis in the next sections.

## 2.5 Jamie Tyrone, the Divided Brother

James Tyrone, Jr. is the elder son of James and Mary. He is in his early thirties and, even though his hair is getting thin on top of his head and there are “marks of dissipation” (*Journey* 19) in his face, he is still a good-looking man. On the one hand, he is very similar to his father with respect to his “broad-shouldered, deep-chested physique” (*Journey* 19). On the other hand, he is not as handsome as his father used to be when he was his age. He has a cynical worldview and is prone to sneer rather than smile. On rare occasions, however, he still enchants others with the “humorous, romantic, irresponsible Irish charm” (*Journey* 19).

Apart from the problems concerning Jamie’s excessive drinking, wasted acting talent, unfulfilled scholarly abilities and guilt over his infant brother’s death which are discussed in previous sections, Jamie has other serious character flaws that cause profound pain to people around him.

His character seems to be of a very contradictory nature. One minute he is a jovial and friendly gentleman, the next a cruel and self-centered scoundrel, completely ruthless to the feelings of others. When he comes home from one of the local brothels, Jamie confesses to Edmund that “by the time [he] hit Mamie’s dump [he] felt very sad about [himself]” (*Journey* 159) and other social outcasts. There he, out of sympathy, goes to a room with an overweight prostitute who is about to lose her job for not earning enough money. This is one of the rare moments when Jamie shows at least a little compassion and interest in someone other than himself. He probably sensed that she could understand how he feels for, as well as Jamie, she is considered an outcast by the society. However, his mood is prone to shift in an instant and he starts looking for a victim of his “sneering serpent’s tongue” (*Journey* 109), as Mary calls it. When he cannot see Mary around, he asks Edmund “where’s the hophead? Gone to sleep?” (*Journey* 161). He also openly mocks his father by drinking his whiskey without permission and subsequently waters it (of which he is aware) or by calling him ‘old Gaspard’ which refers to a miserly protagonist of an opera called *Les Cloches de Corneville*

Jamie’s conduct has always had a strong influence on his brother who, according to Tyrone, “grew up admiring [him] as a hero!” (*Journey* 34). His parents reproach him that he was a bad example for his younger brother and that it is Jamie who is to blame for Edmund’s moral decline, anarchist tendencies and corrupted worldview because he “was

too young to see that [Jamie's] mind was so poisoned by [his] own failure in life..." (*Journey* 34). His parents are not far from the truth. On Jamie's part, the relationship between him and his brother is that of a love-hate nature, which is typical for many a character of O'Neill's plays. Even though Jamie does not like to show it overtly very often, he is unsatisfied with his life and a certain part of him enjoys seeing others suffer, especially Edmund, to whom he even directly says during their conversation that he "can't help it. [He] hate [himself]. Got to take revenge. On everyone else. Especially you!" (*Journey* 166). As time goes by, Jamie grows more and more jealous of Edmund whom he calls "Mama's baby and Papa's pet! The family White Hope!" (*Journey* 163). When Edmund manages to have several of his poems published in the local newspaper, it makes his father very proud. Jamie out of jealousy refers to them with contempt and claims that he "used to write better stuff for the Lit magazine in college" (*Journey* 164) and argues that if it were not for him, Edmund would know nothing about neither women nor literature and that, strictly speaking, he owes him for his success. A big part of him hates Edmund because he represents everything that he could have been but will never be. That is why he wanted to be a bad role model for Edmund so that he does not look so unsuccessful in their parents' eyes. Jamie even confirms their parents' accusation himself that he has always been jealous of Edmund and wanted him to fail so that he does not "look even worse by comparison" (*Journey* 165). Even though he usually dismisses his father's scolding for being a loafer with a sarcastic remark or by shrugging his shoulders, it is obviously nothing but a mask which Jamie developed in order to protect himself from being hurt. Nevertheless, the real, sensitive and tormented Jamie is unmasked during the conversation with his brother in Act Four, in which he admits to belong among "all the other poor bums in the world" (*Journey* 159) and thus proves that he actually is sorry for not achieving anything of significance so far, and that drinking and women are not all he needs for happiness.

## **2.6 Jamie O'Neill, the Man in Torment**

In my opinion, Jamie O'Neill's portrayal in the play is the most authentic of all the other portrayals of the members of O'Neill's real family. James O'Neill, Jr. was born in September 1878 as the eldest brother of Eugene O'Neill. He also had to travel with his parents across the country since he was an infant, took after his father, had a wild and

changeable nature and a troubled relationship with both of his parents and, to a certain extent, even with his brother.

His drinking habit began to form while at school and, in his late twenties, he had already become a chronic alcoholic. Over time it became obvious that he “needed his liquor as badly as his mother need her morphine” (Gelb 108). His drinking was condemned especially by Ella which only reinforced their already estranged relationship. Even though both Ella and James disapproved of his way of living and scolded him for his drinking and acquaintance with prostitutes, their eldest son probably considered their reproaches hypocritical and did not take them seriously because, firstly, James was a heavy drinker himself and, secondly, Jamie was more than familiar with his mother’s addiction.

Jamie proved to be his father’s son for there was an unquestionable talent for acting in his nature. Despite his talent, however, Jamie “had no real love for the profession, as his father had” (Gelb 100), and became an actor simply because there was no other occupation for which he would show interest. According to the Gelbs, Jamie not only showed no interest in his father’s profession, he openly scorned it by, for instance, being drunk during performances or by whispering wrong lines to the ears of actors present on stage, as in the case of one *The Count of Monte Cristo* performances during which Jamie persuaded one of the actors say “calomel”, which is a kind of purgative, instead of “calumny” in a sentence, “Count, I harshly challenged you last night but I thought it my duty to repress calumny” (Gelb 182). He especially enjoyed embarrassing and tormenting his father whenever an opportunity presented itself.

The source of this resentment is probably related to the death of James and Ella’s second son and Jamie’s subsequent stay in a boarding school. Jamie’s younger brother, Edmund, died in infancy of measles that he had contracted from Jamie. According to the Gelbs, Ella believed that Jamie killed his younger brother on purpose and, as time went on, he thought that she never forgave him. Six months after his brother’s death, James was sent to a boarding school where he was supposed to stay for nine years. At first, he did well at school and was popular among his peers. While there, his parents came to visit him on regular basis and “James was always fussed over at the school and entertained as though he were visiting royalty . . .” (Gelb 53). Considering Jamie’s egoistic nature, it will be only logical to conclude that this was when Jamie’s hostility towards his father began developing. Jamie obviously loved attention and James, with his naturally enchanting personality, represented a threat to him.

His younger brother Eugene represented a similar threat, especially when the first signs of success started to show. The author's alter ego, Edmund Tyrone, and his complicated relationship with his family, especially his mother, which influenced his entire life, is the next one to be analyzed.

## **2.7 Edmund Tyrone, the Unwanted Son**

Edmund Tyrone is the younger son of James and Mary. For being the youngest member of the family, the rest of the Tyrones often refer to him as "the Kid". He is slightly taller than his brother and, unlike him, he rather resembles his mother, especially with respect to his equally nervous mouth, hands and the overall "quality of extreme nervous sensibility" (*Journey* 20) that is characteristic of them both. One can tell at a mere glance that he suffers from an illness for, even though he has a tan, his skin "has a parched sallowness" (*Journey* 20). It is his worsening health condition which ultimately sets in motion the revelation of long suppressed wrongdoings and misunderstandings which have burdened the family for years.

As well as Jamie and Mary, Edmund holds grudges against his father concerning his miserly behaviour. In addition to the criticism of his thriftiness with respect to electricity, furnishing of their house and recruitment of proper servants, Edmund is outraged that Tyrone prioritizes money at the expense of his family's well-being. Jamie suspects his father does not want to invest sufficient amount of money in a place with people competent enough to cure Edmund because of his "Irish bog-trotter idea that consumption is fatal," and that he will "figure it would be a waste of money to spend any more than [he] can help" (O'Neill 80). Edmund holds the same attitude. He accuses him not only of not providing his mother with proper medical care after giving birth to Edmund but also of being unwilling to send him to a decent sanatorium because he believes that Edmund will die. Therefore, there is no point in spending more money than necessary and concludes that "that's why you're sending me to a state farm..." (*Journey* 143). Edmund argues that he tried to be understanding because he knew about the horrors Tyrone had to go through as a child. What he cannot forgive is the thought of him being ready to put his son's life at risk just so he can save extra money.

However, Edmund experiences much greater anguish regarding his mother's health and her potential relapse. Mary has just come back from a sanatorium and everyone is worried about whether she will give in to her addiction once again or not. Edmund's

illness upsets Mary who does not want to admit to herself that his illness is serious and refers to it as “a bad summer cold” (*Journey* 16). She has already lost one son, Eugene, for which she blames herself her entire life, and the thought of losing yet another one seems utterly unbearable for her. Considering his age, she takes an exaggerated care of him when she, for instance, makes him sit in the rocking chair and fluffs a pillow behind his back. When her statement “big as you are, you’re still the baby of the family to me” (*Journey* 43) is taken into consideration, it seems as if Edmund served Mary as a surrogate for her dead son. Eventually, Mary loses her will and gives in to her weakness. When under the influence of morphine, she wallows in self-pity, blames herself as well as others for dissatisfaction with her life and attacks the other members of her family for various reasons – she attacks Jamie being disrespectful to his father and for looking for the worst in everyone, or her husband for never buying her a decent house in which she would feel at home. However, probably the worst accusation she saves for Edmund. Still ridden with guilt of Eugene’s death, she was worried about bringing another human being into the world because of her failure. She considers herself unworthy of being a mother and thinks that “God would punish [her] . . . [she] never should have borne Edmund . . . He was born nervous and too sensitive, and that’s [her] fault” (*Journey* 88). Edmund suspects his mother of using his illness as an excuse to take morphine:

MARY. But that’s no excuse! I’m only trying to explain. It’s not an excuse!

*She hugs him to her - pleadingly.*

Promise me, dear, you won’t believe I made you an excuse.

EDMUND. *Bitterly.* What else can I believe? (93).

Mary is aware of his suspicion and contempt and, although she blames herself for his fragile mental and physical constitution, she cannot help but blame him for being the cause of her own deteriorating health as well. She “turns on Edmund with a hard, accusing antagonism – almost a revengeful enmity,” and mercilessly releases her wrath, “I never knew what rheumatism was before you were born!” (*Journey* 116). It is no wonder that this, along with his father’s unwillingness to spend more money than necessary to find a proper sanatorium which would truly prevent him from dying, could instill in Edmund’s mind the idea that his parents did not really want him. Hence, Edmund concludes that they do not love him, or at least not as unconditionally as parents should. Consequently, this feeling of being unloved by his parents only reinforces in him the belief of not

belonging. It is only a matter of time before such a person creates a view of meaninglessness of life and begins to consider ending it. It is possible that this was the case with O'Neill himself who, as already mentioned, attempted to commit suicide when he was young, and who made death a frequent motif of his plays. Whether the nature of O'Neill's illness was really that serious and the relationship between him and his parents as dramatic as the author decided to depict it in his play is going to be explained in the next section.

## 2.8 Eugene O'Neill, the Author Himself

Apart from having a different name, O'Neill's portrayal is mostly in accordance with reality, especially concerning his appearance. However, it is interesting that, just as he switched Mary for Ella, O'Neill decided to name a character representing himself Edmund, which was the name of his dead brother. According to the Gelbs, there was a psychiatrist whose analysis concluded that O'Neill had a so called "death wish" (Gelb 188). Considering his hypersensitive nature, this exchange of names may suggest that O'Neill would have preferred to die in his brother's stead or, perhaps, not being born at all if he had known what difficulties await him and how much pain he would have to deal with throughout his life.

Even though it is true that, as well as Edmund, O'Neill himself suffered from tuberculosis in his early twenties, the severity of the disease is debatable. Milan Lukeš further claims that the playwright "dramatized the circumstances of his birth as well as a threat to his life to which he was exposed in 1912" (Lukeš 57). Indeed, his claim can be supported by Arthur and Barbara Gelb who argue in *O'Neill* that "for a few weeks there was no suspicion that Eugene had tuberculosis, and Ella made frequent references to Eugene's "bad cold" which would soon clear up" (Gelb 214). Furthermore, the family's accusation of James having his son's condition diagnosed by a "cheap quack", as the protagonists of *Long Day's Journey* refer to the local general practitioner, is very far from reality, "Eugene was being treated by two doctors, both with excellent reputations, one of whom was the distinguished chief of staff of New London's Lawrence Memorial Hospital" (Gelb 214–215). In addition to having been treated by two prestigious doctors, the Gelbs also reveal that O'Neill had a nurse whom he knew personally and whom he chose himself. This is yet another piece of evidence which puts in question the credibility of the family's charges against James O'Neill's supposed avarice, especially with respect

to the physician whom he hired to tend for his wife while giving birth to O'Neill.

It is clear that O'Neill had been haunted by his mother's addiction and health condition his entire life. Although he wrote *Long Day's Journey into Night*, as he himself put it in the play's dedication, "with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness", he did not hesitate "to reveal his father as a miser, his mother as a narcotics addict, his brother as an alcoholic" (Gelb 3–4). Despite being purposefully kept unaware of Ella's condition by both his father and his brother, the sensitive young O'Neill felt that something was wrong with his mother. Eventually, he discovered the terrible truth about his mother's odd behaviour after he had left the Mount St. Vincent, an all-boys Catholic boarding school. At that time, he attended De La Salle Institute in Manhattan. As the Gelbs reveal in *O'Neill*, O'Neill came back from school one day and surprised Ella while taking a dose of morphine, "she was far more upset than Eugene and accused him of spying on her" (Gelb 72). For she sensed his judgement, she did not want to live with him under the same roof and O'Neill was enrolled in dormitory. This, along with his early years of travelling from town to town and the subsequent years spent in a boarding school, undoubtedly contributed to the development of his lifelong feeling of rootlessness which occurs as a theme in many of his plays.

On the one hand, it is clear that, as well as Edmund and Mary, O'Neill and his mother were not on the best terms a mother and son can be at that period of their lives. On the other hand, the comparison shows that, even though O'Neill truly suffered from tuberculosis in his early twenties, which was still a serious disease at that time, the situation was not as serious as it is presented in the play. According to Milan Lukeš, the writer depicted Edmund "in a more dramatic and more flattering light than was true" (Lukeš 57). The above comparison supports his claim for there were more than enough competent people taking care of O'Neill during his disease which, once more, reduces the credibility of the accusation that his father was a miser and, moreover, calls into question the role of his illness as a possible cause of his mother's relapse.

## 2.9 Conclusion

As the information above confirms, *Long Day's Journey into Night* undoubtedly lives up to its reputation as one of Eugene O'Neill's most autobiographical plays. It was true that James O'Neill wasted his great acting talent for a vision of easily earned money, that his mother Ella had been struggling with a morphine addiction almost her entire life, that



Jamie was a chronic alcoholic not knowing what direction he should give to his life and, finally, that O'Neill was an overly dramatic man desperate for love.

Nevertheless, the changes which O'Neill decided to make create a much more dramatic image of his family, not completely corresponding to reality. As the Gelbs explain in their biography, O'Neill had begun to "dramatize himself" (Gelb 72) at a certain age. Moreover, Lukeš claims that when O'Neill explained in one of his interviews why he does not go to the theatre to see his own plays very often, one of the reasons was that "[he] experiences them so intensely that when the performance is over, [he's] exhausted" (Lukeš 32). O'Neill was obviously a very emotional man who, in my opinion, simply intensified his own life experience in order to make the fate of his characters seem more tragic than it truly was. By turning his father into an old miser, his mother into a mad drug-addict and his brother into a vengeful drunk, he wanted to arouse in the audience the same kind of deep emotions that he experienced himself and, consequently, provide them with an intense emotional experience and spiritual elevation.

### 3 *Ah, Wilderness!*, Delighted Dream

In 1932, Eugene O'Neill wrote his famous "comedy of recollection" called *Ah, Wilderness!* It is a play set in the Connecticut residence of the Miller family in 1906. Even though *Ah, Wilderness!* is classified as a comedy, elements of a more serious nature can be found there as well. It centers around a sixteen-year-old Richard Miller who deals with the disappointment of forbidden love, the pitfall of superficial sexual attraction and the dark side of alcohol consumption. A great emphasis is put on the importance of a supporting family as a crucial element during the development of a young individual.

While few people doubt that *Long Day's Journey* is inspired by the author's real experience, the Gelbs explain in *O'Neill* that a discussion arose concerning how autobiographical the play truly is. The playwright himself described the similarity between him and Richard Miller as negligible and further argued that the play was "a nostalgic dream of what he would have *liked* his adolescence to have been" (Gelb 81).

However, the Gelbs prove that there are undeniable similarities between the inhabitants of New London and the protagonists of the comedy. These include, for instance, the family of John McGinley, the editor and co-owner of a local newspaper, his wife Evelyn, whose name in the play is Essie, their sons, Arthur and Tom, or his friend Mildred whom he knew at the time. Other similarities, especially those concerning the figure of the father, correspond to O'Neill's father James.

The following sections are going to introduce the characters of the play, analyze in what ways they differ from the members of the Tyrone family and, thus, express the author's ideal image, as well as in what ways they possibly correspond to them. As in the previous chapter, the analysis begins with the mother of family, Essie Miller.

#### 3.1 Essie Miller, the Ideal Mother

Essie Miller, the wife and mother of the Miller family, is everything Mary Tyrone is not. With her short and stout figure, round face and her soft, maternal eyes, she represents the typical maternal figure of the western society. Most of the time, Essie presents herself as a caring matron possessing "a bustling, mother-of-a-family manner" (*Wilderness* 14). She is prone to reprimand and correct the behaviour of her children whenever necessary. Unlike Mary, who always finds an excuse for her children's behaviour and does not take any real action in order to improve their manners, Essie genuinely raises her children in

order for them to become proper individuals, “Tommy! Stop spinning your napkin ring! How often have I got to tell you? Mildred! Sit up straight in your chair! Do you want to grow up a humpback? Richard! Take your elbows off the table!” (*Wilderness* 62). When she finds his son’s private library, she scolds Richard for reading “those awful books” (*Wilderness* 21) and for spreading his immoral ideas by “sending a nice girl like [Muriel] things out of those indecent books!” (*Wilderness* 53).

She wants her children to treat their father with respect. He is their provider and he deserves recognition for it. When the family hears Tommy setting off his firecrackers too close to their house despite his father’s warning, she immediately comes to his aid and says, “Tommy! You mind what your Pa told you!” (*Wilderness* 16).

Of course, she does not scold her children all the time. After receiving the break-up letter from Muriel, Richard immediately seems unsettled to Essie. Richard blames his somber expression on abdominal pain and she considers staying with him at home instead of going out for an automobile ride and have an amusing afternoon. For his night spent in the bar, Essie knows that Richard deserves to be punished but, at the same time, she is aware of her son’s delicate feelings and asks Natt to control himself during the process of chastising: “And that’s just what it’s your duty to do – punish him good and hard! The idea of him daring – (Then hastily.) But you be careful how you go about it, Nat. Remember he’s like you inside – too sensitive for his own good” (*Wilderness* 119).

It is possible that, even though O’Neill strongly opposed to conventions, deep inside he wished for his mother to be the typical nagging mother with a genuine interest and an active part in her children’s upbringing. The whole Miller family is concerned with the way Richard has been behaving lately because they do not want to see him go astray. Since he was a child, O’Neill lacked this keen interest of his family members and maybe desired to be punished from time to time so that he knew that somebody truly cares about what kind of a person he will grow into.

Another person whom every young man needs in his life while growing up is a proper father. In *Ah, Wilderness!*, the man who takes on this role is Natt Miller.

### **3.2 Natt Miller, the Ideal Father**

Mr. Miller is the head of the Miller family. He is very different from his literary counterpart, James Tyrone. Unlike him, Natt is very far from being the handsome matinee idol of his era as James used to be. He is described as “a tall, dark, spare man, a little

stoop-shouldered, more than a little bald . . . His long face has large, irregular, undistinguished features . . .” (*Wilderness* 15). One may wonder why O’Neill chose to depict his idealized father less attractive than he was in reality. In my opinion, it is possible that he did it because he knew about his father’s scandals in the past which hurt and humiliated his mother considerably, especially the affair with Nattie Walsh, his lover whom he had met before he married Ella. Were his father less attractive, there would be less danger of women being attracted to him and, therefore, fewer opportunities for scandals and hurting Ella.

He is an owner of a local newspaper called *Evening Globe*. Unlike James, whose profession forced him to travel and spend a lot of time away, Natt is always close to his family, especially his wife. As well as James in *Long Day’s Journey*, he suggests that she has an automobile ride later that day. Unlike Tyrone, however, he wants to go with Essie, “What do you say to an automobile ride? I’ll get out the Buick and we’ll drive around town and out to the lighthouse and back” (*Wilderness* 19). With people around her, his wife Essie does not have to feel as lonely as Mary which reduces the chance of her looking for distraction via other means, specifically, as in Ella’s case, via drugs.

A very significant difference between the fathers is their different approach to money. In comparison with James, Natt also has a better judgement with respect to his investments, “And I told you about getting that business from Lawson, didn’t I?” (*Wilderness* 155). Both James Tyrone and James O’Neill often wasted money on nonprofitable business and, consequently, had far less money left for their wives and his sons. Natt is also not as overly obsessed with money as Tyrone is. When an important investor, Dave McComber, comes and accuses his son of having a negative influence on his daughter, Muriel, and demands his son to be punished, Natt refuses to believe the investor’s accusations and stands up for his son despite risking the fact that he may get into financial difficulties. He first wants to hear his son’s point of view and then take an appropriate action. The relationship between him and his son is more important for him than money.

Even though he has a sense of humour, he does not respond to insults passively and lets no one undermine his authority as meekly as James Tyrone does in *Long Day’s Journey* where Tyrone is openly mocked by his family members multiple times. When Miller’s youngest son, Tommy, sneers at his father during the family dinner for repeating a story which everyone heard several times, he glares at him and warns him that “one more sound out of you, young man, and you’ll leave the table!” (*Wilderness* 71). He wants

his children to have a proper role model and someone to look up to which is most probably also why he repeats the story about how he won over an older boy in a swimming competition and even saved him from drowning.

The most striking difference between the two fathers is their opposite approach to their sons' opinions and beliefs. Natt is clearly not as bigoted and narrow-minded as Tyrone is and has no difficulty to have discussions with his children. As well as Richard, he himself had a rebellious phase when he was young and, thus, he has a sympathy for his behaviour. When his mother prompts Natt to rebuke his son for reading books containing immoral ideas, he recalls his own nonconforming tendencies and realizes that Richard is at "the stage when he's out to rebel against all authority, and so he grabs at everything radical to read and wants to pass it on to his elders and his girl and boy friends to show off what a young hellion he is!" (*Wilderness* 34). Furthermore, he does not have as reactionary ideas as Tyrone does. When he reads the books which Essie tried to take away from Richard, he even acknowledges that "there's something to them" (*Wilderness* 150).

Although he respects Richard's right for his own opinions, he is, at the same time, still aware of the fact that he has to be an authority and that he must set boundaries. After being told by McComber that his son lent his innocent daughter books that might corrupt her morals, Natt realizes that he has to "do something about that young anarchist or he'll be getting [Natt], and himself, in a peck of trouble" (*Wilderness* 38). Even though Miller is on his side, he is still aware of being a parent and his responsibility to act accordingly. It does not mean, however, that he has to threaten or punish him without investigation. Unlike Tyrone, whose sons are not very trustworthy when we take into account, for instance, their stealing of their father's whiskey and their subsequent watering of it, Natt has faith in his son – their relationship is based on a mutual respect, "The only thing I can do is put it up to him straight. (With pride.) Richard'll stand up to his guns, no matter what. I've never known him to lie to me" (*Wilderness* 39).

Strong, responsible and understanding – these are the attributes that best describe Natt Miller's nature and, even though O'Neill reconciled with his father several years before his death, he probably missed these in his father and would have been happier if he possessed them O'Neill would undoubtedly have welcomed a similar set of qualities that Richard Miller's older, Arthur Miller, possesses and who is the next character to be analysed.

### 3.3 Arthur Miller, a Brother to Look Up To

Arthur Miller is the oldest of Natt and Essie Miller's children who still live in their parents' house. Arthur is everything a parent can wish for in their eldest son to be – he is strong, tall and healthy and attends Yale University.

Unlike Jamie who did not finish his studies at a university, Arthur takes great pride in being its member. He even has his own tobacco pouch and his own pipe with the letter “y” and the class numerals referring to the abovementioned university. He has a goal and his life has a significance. Jamie has no such goal nor dream which would give his life meaning and wastes his time on drinking and consorting with prostitutes. To the great disappointment of his father who hoped he would follow in his footsteps, Jamie admits that all he needs is “Broadway, and a room with a bath, and bars that serve bonded Bourbon” (*Journey* 35) to be content with his life.

Unlike Jamie, who is an infamous profligate in his neighbourhood, Arthur is a well-mannered and decent young man who has a respectable girlfriend. He is even invited for a formal dinner at his girlfriend's house, which is almost unimaginable in Jamie's case. One such decent girl, Maibelle Scott, O'Neill's former girlfriend and a model for Richard's girlfriend Muriel, recalls in Arthur and Barbara Gelb's *O'Neill* that she did not like Jamie from the beginning. In her opinion, Jamie “really was a drunk and a slob...And he had a nasty way of looking at people” (Gelb 212). Furthermore, despite being flattered by his sister's notion of being a great seducer, he does not want to reveal who she is for he “finds it beneath his dignity to reply” (*Wilderness* 13). In addition, when the family discusses Richard's favourite writers, they come across Oscar Wilde and the cause of his imprisonment. Arthur boasts that he knows the reason and claims, in a “solemnly authoritative” (*Wilderness* 27) manner that Wilde committed bigamy. He speaks about extramarital sex as if it were something condemnable which again contributes to his image as a well-mannered young gentleman.

Considering Arthur is a university student, it is somewhat surprising that he is not as fond of reading as Jamie is. Unlike his younger brother, Arthur does not find reading to be “[his] idea of having a good time in vacation” (*Wilderness* 21). On the bright side, however, there is no danger of Richard being seduced by his brother's immoral views as Edmund was. He can evaluate ideas on his own and contemplate what is right and what is wrong without the insidious influence of a jealous brother.

There is another character in *Ah, Wilderness!* who serves as a bad example for the young Richard in terms of what alcohol and licentious way of life can turn one into and eventually ruin his life. For this purpose, O'Neill created Sid Davis, Richard's uncle and Essie Miller's brother.

### **3.4 Sid Davis, the Bad Example**

Sid Davis is a short, stocky and rather immature man. Sid seems to have a weak will and is prone to succumb to the pressure of his peers, "...that's been his downfall - everyone always laughing, everyone always saying what a card he is, what a case, what a caution, so funny..." (*Wilderness* 76). In addition to attending brothels, he has always drunk abundantly which repelled Lily and prevented her from marrying Sid despite her profound love for him. In spite of the fact that he promised Lily he will drink in moderation, Sid comes back from Sachem Club picnic very drunk and behaves inappropriately during the dinner. Even though everyone, including Lily, is laughing, Sid is not pleasant to behold and Lily is disappointed in him again.

He serves as a bad example for Richard in terms of what could happen to him if he led as dissolute a life as his uncle did. After he got drunk himself and gained the experienced, he knows that it gives him no satisfaction and, therefore, he will not try it again because "it wasn't any fun. It didn't make me happy and funny like it does Uncle Sid..." (*Wilderness* 126).

### **3.5 Richard Miller, the Would-be Rebel**

Richard Miller is very similar to Edmund Tyrone in both his beliefs and sensitive nature but different in appearance. Unlike Edmund, who takes more after his mother, Richard is "a perfect blend of father and mother, so much so that each is convinced he is the image of the other" (*Wilderness* 22). For O'Neill believed in biological determinism and both him and Edmund inherited their oversensitive nature after their mothers, it is possible that by creating a balanced version of himself that takes after both of his parents he expressed a wish of not being biologically predetermined to negativity and pessimism as he believed to have been after his mother.

Beside his own books, he also cares about his education. He is good at school unlike O'Neill who did not make a real effort, "He reads his school books, too, strange as that may seem to you. That's why he came out top of his class" (*Wilderness* 21). As well

as O'Neill, Richard loathed the old world and its outdated views. He read Wilde, Swinburne and Kipling and was fond of socialist ideals. He is going through a rebellious phase. Unlike him, however, Richard's revolt is merely theoretical. His brother's friend from Yale persuades Richard to get involved with two "swift babies" (*Wilderness* 55). The bar in which he meets his paid company is dirty and shady. The place only intensifies the corruption of what young Richard is about to do, that is, to become intimate with "a typical college "tart" of the period, and of the cheaper variety" (*Wilderness* 80). By getting involved with a cheap prostitute in a cheap bar, Richard risks not only his own reputation, but also the reputation of his family, especially his father who is a well-known public figure. Although inexperienced in drinking alcoholic beverages, Richard orders more and more drinks to impress his company and, in the end, he ends up completely drunk with a subsequent feeling of self-loathing. This night is a crucial point in Richard's life for he about to make a very important decision – he can either succumb to momentary satisfaction at the cost of losing his inner dignity, or he control himself, remain faithful to his partner and maintain moral integrity. After "a great struggle going on in his mind" (*Wilderness* 87), he finally decides on the latter and leaves the bar and the prostitute, both literally and metaphorically, behind for good. This is what O'Neill probably wished he had done himself. He probably thought that it is better for one to experience situations of this sort and learn from mistakes and about the consequences of one's actions in youth rather than later in life.

Richard, under the guidance of his caring and virtuous family, eventually learned from his own mistakes and there is hope for him to lead a decent life. This is something Eugene O'Neill could not say about himself because the members of his family had always been burdened with character flaws which had a damaging impact on other people. He did not come from an environment suitable for the development of a young person, and this difficult start was imprinted in his psyche and actions in relationships with other people.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The comparison of the Tyrones and the Millers in this section showed that probably the most striking difference between the two plays is in the protagonists' belief system and functioning of relationships between the members of the two families. Both families are of middle-class status, living in neither the most luxurious nor musty old houses which



are equipped with almost identical furniture of similar quality. And yet, the atmosphere in the two households is fundamentally different. Unlike the Tyrones, who find their house below their level, which is difficult to bear especially for Mary, the Millers show no sign of discontent with the state of their housing. If James Tyrone's obsession with accumulating material wealth and their sons' hedonistic behaviour is added, it is evident that the Tyrones pursue far more materialistic values than the Millers who are fond of social interaction and morality. It is the hollow way of living, omnipresent self-pity and morbid desire to possess which undeniably deepen the suffering of the protagonists of *Long Day's Journey into Night*. As O'Neill himself explained in an interview concerning *Ah, Wilderness!*:

the America which was (and is) the real America found its unique expression in such middle-class families as the Millers, among whom so many of my own generation passed from adolescence into manhood (Gelb 762).

It is therefore obvious that, for Eugene O'Neill, these strong family ties and mutual support of the Millers is what creates the atmosphere of a real home, and is what O'Neill desired and lacked while he himself was growing up.

## Conclusion

In the first part of my thesis I focused on the information concerning the author's origin, the beginning of his career and the innovations with which he contributed to the transformation of contemporary American theatre. It was revealed how O'Neill's early childhood and adolescence, strengthened by a frequent changing of environment and the weakening faith in God, influenced his life-long feeling of not belonging. Furthermore, I provided a brief summary of the years which he spent travelling the sea and living among sailors, prostitutes and other social outcasts during which he gained experience that later served him as an important source of inspiration for his plays. Then I explained who the Provincetown Players were, what was their aim in relation to the American stage, in what way they were important to O'Neill and his career, and also why he later preferred his plays to be produced on Broadway rather than by small experimental theatres as, for instance, the abovementioned Provincetown Players. The final part of chapter one examines the features of O'Neill's work. Beside O'Neill's introduction of innovative forms as, for example, the use of masks, soliloquies, asides and sounds, the chapter also describes his preoccupation with human subconsciousness, then also what was, in his opinion, the cause of decline of the contemporary American society, how the loss of one's dreams and illusions make life meaningless, his interest in biological determinism and his proneness to incorporate autobiographical elements into his plays.

Chapter two analyses the degree of autobiographical features in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. First, I analysed Mary Tyrone's alleged isolation from the outer world and the causes of her becoming addicted to morphine. The subsequent comparison of Mary and Ella O'Neill revealed that Ella caused her isolation from the outer world to a great extent on her own by being too ambitious and haughty toward the people whom she considered below her level. Furthermore, the chapter explains that it was probably not her difficult birth after which she was prescribed morphine for the first time. The comparison of the two fathers, James Tyrone and James O'Neill proved that James Tyrone's fear of poverty and his lamentation over the wasted acting aspirations are clearly based on a real experience of James O'Neill. However, the avarice of James O'Neill was seriously questioned by the previously stated facts concerning Ella O'Neill's very high social standards and the fact that none of the members of his family, especially his sons, were able to take care of themselves which made James save as much money as he could. Then, I focused on how Jamie Tyrone resembles the author's older brother, Jamie O'Neill,

whose portrayal as a mean and embittered alcoholic leading a meaningless life seems to be the most accurate one out of all the other characters of *Long Day's Journey into Night*. The last section of chapter two I devoted to the comparison of the youngest member of the Tyrone family, Edmund Tyrone, and O'Neill himself. The goal of analysis here was to determine whether O'Neill's parents truly treated him so ruthlessly and whether he was as seriously ill as Edmund seems to be throughout the play. The analysis showed that the relationship between him and his parents was not ideal indeed. Nevertheless, the tuberculosis which O'Neill contracted in his twenties was of a very mild sort and there was a considerable amount of attention paid to him by qualified specialists. The comparison of the O'Neill's to the Tyrones proved that the degree of autobiographical elements in *Long Day's Journey* is considerably high. Nevertheless, I daresay that, for being a very emotional man, O'Neill twisted certain facts in order for the play to be more dramatic and impressive and, thus, ignited an intensive emotional response in the audience.

In the following chapter I focused on the comedy *Ah, Wilderness!* which, according to the playwright himself, was supposed to depict an ideal image of what he wished his childhood had looked like. The first one to undergo analysis is Essie Miller, the protagonist's supporting mother, who appears to be a typical mother of a family who both scolds and worries about her children's well-being because she cares about what kind of people they are going to grow into. Then there is Natt Miller, the owner of a local newspaper and a strict but, at the same time, just and understanding father who, while not being humourless, demands respect from his children. In the next part of the third chapter I described the protagonist's older brother, Arthur Miller, who, being a healthy sportsman and a university student who, on top of it all, maintains a relationship with a decent girl, is a great example for his younger brother to look up to. The only character who corresponds to neither the Tyrone nor the O'Neill family is Sid Davis, the protagonist's alcoholic and promiscuous uncle who serves Richard as an example of how he is going to end up if he indulges in the same kind of debauchery as his uncle does. The last character to be analysed is Richard Miller, a young would-be rebel who faces the first hardships of adolescence including a broken heart, excessive alcohol consumption and superficial sexual desires. With the help of his caring and vigilant family, he is set to the right path and there is no danger of him growing into a bad person. The final analysis of the two families proved that, even though both families are of similar social status and live in rather humble conditions, their mutual relationships are fundamentally different

due to the different approach toward life. The Tyrones, with their materialistic pursuits, can never lead as fulfilling lives as the virtuous and moral Millers do. The family atmosphere of *Ah, Wilderness!* is something Eugene O'Neill lacked and dreamed of, and because he was not fortunate enough to have this desire fulfilled in reality, he tried to portray this idealized vision at least via theatre to which he was (and is) so inextricably tied.

## Resumé

V první části své práce jsem se zaměřil na informace týkající se autorova původu, počátku jeho kariéry a inovací, kterými přispěl ke změnám v americkém divadle. Bylo vysvětleno, jak O’Neillovo rané dětství a dospívání, ovlivněné častým stěhováním a oslabující se vírou v Boha, ovlivnilo jeho pocit, že nikam nepatří. Tento pocit ho provázel celý život. Dále jsem poskytnul krátké shrnutí období jeho života, které strávil cestováním po moři a životem mezi námořníky, prostitutkami a dalšími společenskými vyvrheli, jenž mu později posloužilo jako důležitý zdroj inspirace pro jeho hry. Poté jsem vysvětlil, kdo to byli the Provincetown Players, jaké byly jejich cíle v rámci americké divadelní scény, v čem spočívala jejich důležitost pro O’Neilla a jeho kariéru, a také proč se později rozhodl přerušit spolupráci s malými experimentálními divadelními soubory, jako byli například výše zmínění the Provincetown Players, a přenesl své hry na Broadway. Závěrečná část první kapitoly pojednává o rysech O’Neillova díla. Kromě inovativních scénických prvků, jako byla například aplikace masek, vnitřních monologů, solilokvií a zvukových efektů, popisují jeho zájem o lidské podvědomí, dále také jeho pohled na to, co bylo příčinou úpadku tehdejší Americké společnosti, jak ztráta snů a iluzí činí život nesmyslným, zmiňují jeho zájem o biologický determinismus, a konečně, jeho tendenci k inkorporaci autobiografických prvků do jeho divadelních her.

Druhá kapitola analyzuje míru autobiografických prvků v *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. Nejprve jsem zkoumal údajnou izolaci Mary Tyronové od vnějšího světa a příčiny její závislosti na morfiu. Následné porovnání Mary a Elly O’Neillové odhalilo, že Ella si způsobila svou izolaci od vnějšího světa do značné míry sama svými příliš vysokými ambicemi a povýšeným jednáním s lidmi, které považovala pod svou úroveň. Kapitola dále odhaluje, že to pravděpodobně nebyl její obtížný porod, po kterém jí bylo poprvé předepsáno morfium. Srovnání obou otců, Jamese Tyrona a Jamese O’Neilla, prokázalo, že strach Jamese Tyrona z chudoby a jeho lítost nad promarněným hereckým potenciálem jsou založeny na skutečných životních zkušenostech Jamese O’Neilla. Jeho lakomství však bylo vážně zpochybněno již dříve uvedenými skutečnostmi týkajícími se velmi vysokých sociálních standardů Elly O’Neillové a skutečností, že nikdo z členů jeho rodiny, zejména jeho synové, se o sebe nedokázali postarat, kvůli čemuž se James musel snažit ušetřit do budoucna tolik peněz, kolik jen mohl. Poté jsem se zaměřil na to, v čem se Jamie Tyrone podobá autorovu staršímu bratrovi, Jamimu O’Neillovi, jehož vyobrazení jakožto zákeřného a zahořklého alkoholika vedoucího bezvýznamný život se

zdá být nejpřesnějším vyobrazením ze všech ostatních postav v *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Poslední část druhé kapitoly jsem věnoval srovnání nejmladšího člena rodiny Tyronů, Edmunda Tyrona, se samotným Eugenem O'Neillem. Cílem analýzy bylo zjistit, zda s O'Neillem jeho rodiče skutečně zacházeli tak bezohledně a zda byl vážně tak nemocný, jak se to v průběhu hry jeví. Analýza ukázala, že vztah mezi ním a jeho rodiči vsutku nebyl ideální. Nicméně tuberkulóza, na kterou O'Neill onemocněl ve svých dvaceti letech, byla velmi mírná a během jejího průběhu byl v péči kvalifikovaných odborníků. Srovnání O'Neillových a Tyronových prokázalo, že míra autobiografických prvků v *Long Day's Journey* je velmi vysoká. Nicméně si troufám tvrdit, že O'Neill, jakožto velmi emotivní muž, úmyslně překroutil některá fakta, aby hra byla dramatičtější a působivější, a tím pádem vyvolala v publiku intenzivní emocionální reakci.

V následující kapitole jsem se zaměřil na komedii *Ah, Wilderness!*, která byla, podle samotného dramatika, vyjádřením ideální představy toho, jak by si přál, aby jeho dětství bývalo vypadalo. Nejprve jsem analyzoval Essie Millerovou, typickou, podporující matku hlavního hrdiny, jíž záleží jak na blahu svých dětí, tak na tom, aby z nich vyrostli správní lidé, kvůli čemuž je v průběhu hry také často kárá. Dále byl na řadě Natt Miller, majitel místních novin. Je to přísný, ale zároveň spravedlivý a chápavý otec, který, ač má smysl pro humor, vyžaduje od svých dětí respekt. V další části třetí kapitoly jsem popsal Arthura Millera, staršího bratra hlavního hrdiny, jenž, jakožto sportovec a vysokoškolský student scházející se se slušně vychovanou dívkou, je skvělým příkladem pro svého mladší bratra, který tak má ke komu vzhlízet. Jedinou postavou, která neodpovídá žádnému rodinnému příslušníkovi jak v rodině Tyronových, tak v rodině O'Neillových, je Sid Davis, promiskuitní a na alkoholu závislý strýc, jenž slouží hlavnímu hrdinovi jako příklad toho, jak skončí, když povede stejně nezřízený život jako on. Poslední analyzovanou postavou této bakalářské práce je Richard Miller, mladý rádooby rebel čelící prvním útrapám dospívání, které zahrnují zlomené srdce, nadměrnou konzumaci alkoholu a povrchní sexuální tužby. S pomocí své pečující a starostlivé rodiny je veden správnou cestou a nehrozí, že z něj vyroste špatný člověk. Závěrečná analýza obou rodin dokázala, že ačkoliv mají obě rodiny podobné sociální postavení a žijí v poměrně skromných podmínkách, vzájemné vztahy členů těchto rodin se zásadně liší kvůli odlišnému přístupu k životu. Tyronovi kvůli svým materialistickým cílům nikdy nemohou vést tak naplňující život jako ctnostní a morální Millerovi. Rodinná atmosféra v *Ah, Wilderness!* je něco, co Eugenovi O'Neillovi chybělo a o čem snil, a poněvadž neměl to štěstí, aby se tato jeho touha naplnila ve skutečnosti, pokusil se vyobrazit tuto

idealizovanou vizi alespoň prostřednictvím divadla, se kterým byl (a je) tak neoddělitelně spjat.

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## Annotation

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Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of thesis: The Analysis of Autobiographical Elements in Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Day's Journey into Night: Dark Reality and Delighted Dreams*

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Abstract: This bachelor thesis explores the degree of autobiographical elements in the plays *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *Ah, Wilderness!* by Eugene O'Neill. The first chapter focuses on the author's formative years, his relationship to American theater and the typical features of his work. The second chapter compares O'Neill's family to the Tyrone family from *Long Day's Journey* and tries to determine the extent to which the game is based on reality. The last chapter compares the characters of *Long Day's Journey into Night* to those of *Ah, Wilderness!* and tries to examine to what extent the play is autobiographical and to what extent it is the author's idealized vision of his adolescent years.

## Anotace

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Název práce: Analýza autobiografických prvků v divadelních hrách *Ah, Wilderness!* a *Long Day's Journey into Night* od Eugena O'Neillů: Temná realita a vysněné ideály

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Abstrakt: Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá mírou autobiografických prvků ve dvou divadelních hrách *Long Day's Journey into Night* a *Ah, Wilderness!* od Eugena O'Neillů. První kapitola se soustřeďuje na autorovo mládí, jeho vztah k americkému divadlu a typické rysy jeho tvorby. Druhá kapitola porovnává O'Neillovu rodinu s rodinou Tyronů z *Long Day's Journey* a snaží se vyzkoumat, do jaké míry je hra založena na skutečnosti. Poslední kapitola porovnává *Long Day's Journey* and *Ah, Wilderness!* a snaží se vyzkoumat, do jaké míry je hra autobiografická a do jaké míry se jedná o autorův vysněný ideál toho, jak by bylo bývalo vypadalo jeho dospívání.