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Lacanian Orders in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*

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Abstract

This paper presents a Lacanian reading of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941) by drawing on the psychic orders the well-known French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has propounded. He holds that human psyche is formed of three orders *(the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real*) which mold the unconscious mind and motivate human actions and reactions. He also argues that the *Other* has an immense impact on the formation of psychic orders, especially the *Symbolic*, and hence on one's identity. The present article attempts to investigate the three orders of the characters O'Neill has portrayed in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, besides the role of the *Other* in the formation of those orders. The reactions of these characters to the outside world are regarded here as the outer presentation of their troubled mind. It is also discussed that the mental and physical problems and disorders of these characters, such as their addiction to alcohol and drugs, are the outcome of their repressed desires which have remained unfulfilled because of the rules defined and imposed on them by the *Other* – hence the frustrating sense of lack observed in all four characters.

Keywords: psychic orders, the unconscious, the Other, desire, lack

1. Introduction

The present article is an attempt to apply Jacque Lacan's ideas to Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941). First, Lacan's seminal orders (*Imaginary, Symbolic, Real)* are explicated and then the role of the *Other* in generating desires and lacks in O'Neill's characters is discussed. It is argued here that those characters, as Lacanian subjects, are imprisoned in their *Symbolic Order*, and their desires are formed by the rules created by the *Other*. In other word, it is the *Other* that shapes their identity and orients their desires. Although the events in of the play take place in the world without, the causes of those events should be traced in the world within and the formation of characters' unconscious in its interaction with the *Other*.

The most controversial psychoanalyst since Freud, the well-known French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) has highly affected Western intellectuals since the 1960s. His reinterpretation of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, has influenced contemporary critical theory and poststructuralist philosophers. Lacan's most famous statement is that the "unconscious is structured like a language" (*S14*, 1966, p. 11)[i], which means that the unconscious comes to being through language, and works in the same way.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill (1888- 1953) is the first American dramatist who has regarded the stage as a literary medium, and as the result of his efforts, the serious American drama took form during the 1920s. He is the only American playwright who has received the Nobel Prize for Literature (1936), besides he has won the Pulitzer Prize for four of his plays: *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1922), *Strange Interlude* (1928), and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941). Critics have approached his works in different ways, and several of them have discussed the psychological layers of them, but a Lacanian analysis of his works has not yet been offered by anyone, seeing that most critics interpret his plays in the light of Freud's ideas.

The prominent critic Harold Bloom (2007) who observes a hidden ting of Freudian psychology in O'Neill's plays, considers him the "elegist of the Freudian family romance, of the domestic tragedy of which we all die daily", and contends that the "helplessness of family love to sustain, let alone heal, the wounds of marriage, of parenthood, and of sonship, have never been so remorselessly and so pathetically portrayed" by anyone else (p. 7-8). Steven F. Bloom (2007) who refers to the *Long Day's Journey* as "one of the great works of drama primarily because of the characters, their story, the issue they raise and the emotions they stir in the audience" (p. 152), argues that the play depicts a fragmented family that "spin[s] an endless cycle of guilt, blame, and denial" around itself, and "each member of the

family simultaneously contributes to, and is a victim of, the family's trials and dysfunction"(p. 160). He has also noted how O'Neill "explores many of the family dynamics that have been analyzed by Freud and his clinical disciples in the last century, including oedipal conflicts and sibling rivalry" (p. 160). And David Krasner (2007) who regards O'Neill as the one who brought "to the stage a richness of detail and psychological depth rarely seen before in American drama" (p. 142), affirms that some of O'Neill plays, especially *Long Day's Journey*, draw one's attention to his personal life: "his alcoholism … his father's disappointments, his mother's drug addiction, his brother's suicide by alcohol, and his own shortcomings" (p. 152-153). With regard to the psychological layers of the play, he states that "no doubt [it] depicts a journey into the subconscious" (p. 155).

2. Lacan's Psychoanalysis

Lacan holds that human psyche is formed of three orders (*the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real*) which mold the unconscious mind and motivate human actions and reactions. He believes that in the formation of the first psychic order, the *Imaginary*, "the child, in the presence of his mother, begins to manifest his needs. It is here that he encounters the mother as a speaking subject" (*S5,* 1957, p. 425). It is a world of satisfaction for the child where" the infant emerges from satisfaction, and not from frustration, to construct a world" (p. 424) that is the realm of ideal completeness in which the child feels no lack or loss, since it is governed by the illusive joyful unity of the child and its mother. Moreover there are no traces of language in this order. When the child is six-month old, Lacan holds, it starts to distinguish itself from its mother in a phase that Lacan terms the *Mirror Stage* in which the child sees its own image distinct from that of its mother, and thereby the illusion of unity with the mother crumbles down.

In the next stage, Lacan argues, the *Symbolic Order* is formed in the child's mind. In contrast to the *Imaginary*, the *Symbolic* is an order in which the identity of the subject is formed, since it is associated with language and signs. Whereas mother governs the *Imaginary Order*, the *symbolic Order* is the territory of father whose laws and rules shape the identity of the child. In the *Imaginary Order*, the desire of the mother is mediation necessary for the child, whereas this mediation is "precisely given by the position of the father in the symbolic order" (*S5*, 1957, p. 163). The *Symbolic Order* is also the realm of the *Other* presented by the law of the father and the ideology in which the child learns to speak. Lacan holds that the meaning of "the *Other* as another subject" is strictly secondary to the meaning of "the *Other* as *Symbolic Order*", since "the *Other* must first of all be considered a locus, the locus in which speech is constituted" (*S3,* 1955, p. 274).

Another key notion in Lacan's terminology is *Object petit a* which is the lack created by the subject's entry into the *Symbolic* – the lack which will never be compensated for and attained, since the subject has fallen into the web of language and its floating signifiers. From the moment the subject feels lack, Lacan argues, s/he is in search of what is lacked, in search of satisfying it by different means such as knowledge, love and sexual fulfillment. Regarding those means, he affirms that "the *Object petit a* ... serves as a symbol of the lack. It must be an object firstly separable and secondly that has some relation to the lack" (*S11*, 1964, p. 112). However as we live in the world of signs and ideologies, no desire can bring us back to the initial *Imaginary* world of completeness.

The *Real Order* in Lacanian terminology resists representation, as it emerges as something outside language, resisting "symbolization absolutely" (*S1*, 1953, p. 66). This remains a constant theme through the rest of Lacan's work and leads him to link the *Real* with the concept of impossibility. He believes that the "*Real* is the impossible" (*S11,* 1964, p. 167), because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to engage the *Symbolic Order*, and impossible to attain. The *Real* is an unknown zone, as Homer tries to define it: "exists at the limit of this socio-symbolic universe and is in constant tension with it" (2005, p. 81). It is the most inaccessible part of human psyche that cannot be experienced, since nothing real exists in the *Symbolic Order*, Lacan argues, and what we see as reality is just ideology imposed by the *Other* on us. However he holds that we can experiences the *Real* in the fleeting moments of joy and terror (*Jouissance*) or in our traumas which cut the process of signification and representation. These feelings of disturbance and sufferings, as Booker calls them, place the person in the *Real* which is "available to consciousness only in extremely brief and fleeting moments of joy and terror that Lacan describes as *Jouissance*" (1996, p. 35).

3. A Lacanian Reading of *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Lacan's key concepts such as *the Imaginary Order, the Symbolic Order, the Real Order,* the *Other* representing the law of the father, *Object petit a*, desire and lack are traceable in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941). The play dramatizes one day of Tyron family's life through which the personalities of its members are revealed via their memories and also their disputes with each other. O'Neill shows that the mind of all four members of the family is haunted by the past, and all suffer from some lacks they try to compensate for by such means as drinking alcohol, using morphine, acting as an actor or a man of literature, while they constantly fail to do so, as they are entangled in the web of ideology and the law of the *Other* imposed on them, though in different ways. The members of the family make efforts to escape from the unbearable reality of their life to experience the Lacanian *Real* which remains, however, impossible to experience throughout the play.

One of the noteworthy features of O'Neill's play is the fogginess of the stage throughout the play that creates a gloomy atmosphere, and signifies the delving into the unconscious mind, since fog is the symbol of unconsciousness. Lacan believes the child does not acquire the unconscious till its initiation into the symbolic world of language wherein all desires are repressed by the law of the father and hence stored in the unconscious. The fog symbolizes that process for the whole family that seems to experience the loss, lack and repression of the *Symbolic Order*. This is somehow illustrated in the play when Mary the mother of the family expresses her feelings toward the fog in this way to Cathleen

(the maid): "hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you anymore", thus it is "the foghorn I hate. It won't let you alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning you, and calling you back. But it can't tonight. It's just an ugly sound. It doesn't remind me of anything" (*LDJ*, III. P. 2044)[ii].

Mary hates the fog, because it reminds her of the past, happy times to which she cannot return. It seems that the fog has detached her and other members of the family from the rest of the world, as Jean Chothia argues that "the audience learns through references in the dialogue and through the repeated sounding of the foghorn in the latter part of the play that fog has descended on the surrounding world and presses close around the house, isolating its occupants the more thoroughly" (1998, p. 199). Considering Lacan's ideas, her annoyance of remembering the past, besides the fogginess of the stage signify loss, lack and repression – all residing in *the Symbolic Order* where the desire for return to the *Imaginary Order* is repressed and stored.

Every character of the *Long Day's Journey into Night* wishes to re-experience the lost union of the *Imaginary Order* which they ultimately find, nonetheless, impossible to regain. As the result of that wish, their mind is obsessively haunted by the past, as Mary says: "the past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us" (*LDJ*, II. P. 203). The characters seek to fill in the lack they have experienced in their life (after the *Imaginary* and through the formation of the *Symbolic Order*), via such means as poetry, alcohol, and morphine, however they fail to fill in their lack. Regarding the matter of loss in the play, it has been already been argued by Shaugnessy that it "confirms the timeless mystery of loss" (2007, p. 68).

3.1 The Mother's Desires to Return to Imaginary Order

One of the characters of the play who tries to re-experience the feeling of wholeness at the stage of *Imaginary Order* is Mary whose desires, however, are of no help to her. There are some hints in the play that signify the convent, to which she likes to return, as the symbol of *Imaginary Order* for her. She has spent a period of her life among nuns, studying religious materials. Once she had asked Mother Elizabeth to stay there and become a nun, as she felt at home and liked to stay over there for the rest of her life. Mother Elizabeth, however, was not certain that Mary could bear the situation, therefore asked her to go out and experience the world, and then, if she was still sure that she liked to be a nun, she could come back. Mary had got annoyed, as she did not expect her to reject her wish.

> **MARY**: I had a talk with Mother Elizabeth. She is so sweet and good. A saint on the earth. I love her dearly. It may be sinful of me but I love her better than my own mother ... I told her I wanted to be a nun .... But Mother Elizabeth told me I must be surer than that, even; that I must prove it wasn't simply my imagination .... I said, of course, I would do anything she suggested, but I knew it was simply a waste of time. (*LDJ*, IV. P. 2082)

As it is obvious here, Mother Elizabeth is like a mother to her – hence her desire to stay with her. After leaving the convent, she never feels at peace, even when she falls in love with James Tyson and marries him; nothing can renew the perfect life she has had in the convent. Several times in the play, she talks like a young girl or wears the same kind of clothes that remind her of the time she was in the convent. Her feeling and mood is best described in this stage direction; *"there is at times an uncanny gay, free youthfulness in her manner, as if in spirit she were released to become again, simply and without self-consciousness, the naive, happy, chattering schoolgirl of her convent days"* (*LDJ*, III. P. 2043). This shows how much she desires to return to her adolescence when she lived in the convent. This is more vivid at the end of the play when she holds her wedding dress in her hand, while not knowing what she wants to do with it, rather affirms that she wants something she has lost. Nothing can heal the wound of her desires toward an assumedly perfect past which are perpetually replaced by other desires, and thus remain floating, whereas none of them can help her reach the perfection she seeks, since she is caught up in the symbolic world of social orders where her *Object petit a* can never be fulfilled.

3.2 Unfulfilled Desires of the Sons

In the first scene of the play, the younger son Edmund talks to his mother about his illness to convince her that it is not as terrible as she assumes, after which his mother pampers him. This shows how much he needs his mother's attention and also his desires to re-experience the satisfaction the feeling of wholeness with the mother had created in him in the *Imaginary Order*. His mother tries to assure him that he would be healthy again, while referring to the fact that the only thing he needs is her nursing.

> **MARY**: *[almost resentfully]* Oh, I'm sure you don't feel half as badly as you make out. You're such a baby. You like to get us worried so we'll make a fuss over you. You need to rest all you can. Sit down and I'll make you comfortable.
>
> **EDMUND:** Grand. Thanks, Mama.
>
> **MARY:** *[kisses him—tenderly]* All you need is your mother to nurse you. Big as you
>
> are, you're still the baby of the family to me, you know. (*LDJ*, I. p. 2020)

The love and attention of the mother and the lost union he had experienced in *the Imaginary Order* are the object of his desire – what he is in search of, but would never attain. He thinks that his mother can fill the lack he has suffered from since *the Imaginary Order*, but his actual mother, as she is now, completely differs from and cannot match the mother-image he has in his mind, with which he could feel safe and secure. His mother is now an addicted person who takes drugs to pacify her pains. This incongruity causes some disorders in Edmund's personality. To fulfill his desires, he

leaves the house for a while, going on a journey on the sea where he thinks he may relax, while it does not work. Then he leans to alcohol and literature through which he thinks he might find solace.

This feeling of lack is presented in another way in the elder son Jamie whose anxieties are depicted in the disputes he has with other members of the family. As we learn through the play, he felt complete wholeness with his mother in his infancy, as no obstacle or threatening force existed in his union with the mother. Nevertheless, as he enters the world of difference and language (*the Symbolic Order*), he realizes that there is another boy to whom the attention of the mother is tended, and hence threatens his solace. This boy is his younger brother Eugene who dies early because of measles transmitted to him by Jamie who thereby causes his untimely death. He intentionally goes to Eugene's bedroom, while he has measles and is asked not to get near him, because of seeing Eugene as a counterpart in his love toward their mother and the cause of separation from her. Now Mary reproaches herself for that: "I was to blame for his death .... Jamie would never have been allowed, when he still had measles, to go in the baby's room, I've always believed Jamie did it on purpose. He was jealous of the baby. He hated him" (*LDJ*, II. ii. P. 2040).

Afterward Jamie sees no opponent in stealing the mother's attention away from him for a while, till Edmund is born, robs the attention of the mother and makes him jealous. Jamie sees him threatening his security and wholeness with the mother. To feel the lost wholeness again, he goes to whorehouses and starts drinking as the *object petit a* he assumes can fulfill his needs, while they are of no help, and simultaneously perseveres to annoy Edmund and ruin his life. Regarding his distressed case, Abbotson argues that Jamie's "bitterness is exacerbated by the loss of the guiding hand of his mother to drugs that has resulted in a life of dissipation filled with alcohol and prostitutes" (2005,p. 105). Sometimes he seemingly tries to make friends with Edmund by taking him to whorehouses and bars, while all the time he just thinks of spoiling his life. Near the end of the play, he confesses what he has tried to do:

> **JAMIE**: Nix, Kid! You listen! Did it on purpose to make a bum of you. Or part of me did. A big part. That part that's been dead so long. That hates life .... Made my mistakes look good. Made getting drunk romantic. Made whores fascinating vampires instead of poor, stupid, diseased slobs they really are. Made fun of work as sucker's game. Never wanted you to succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama's baby, Papa's pet! (*LDJ*, IV. P. 2074).

He loves Edmund, but at the same time cannot put up with him, as he seems to have caused his separation from the mother who previously loved him. As he confesses here, he has done all these things to compensate for the loss of the ideal unity with the mother as the result of Edmund's birth he has taken his revenge on by having "rotten bad influence on him" (*LDJ*, IV. P. 2074).

3.3 Entanglement of Characters in the Web of the Other

Lacan holds that the *Symbolic Order* is the stage in which the *subject* recognizes themselves as having a separate identity from that of their mothers'. Moreover the law of the father is gradually presented to and imposed on the *subject* by the social rules and ideologies engendered by *the Other* that equals the symbolic order, language, and the law of the father in Lacan's terminology. The *Symbolic Order* is the realm of *the Other* or the symbolic father that is not, however, the real father, but a function that imposes rules and regulates desires. The real father is the agent of the symbolic father that shapes desires and has a decisive role in shaping the subject's identity. There is no escape from the law of the father; it is inevitable, because "the law is the father, the thing before, the inheritance, the compulsion, the inescapable, the inevitable, and the desire for the law itself" (Mottram, 1995, p. 25). Lacan holds that the law of the father is symbolized by the phallus "the primacy of [which] is established by the existence of the symbol, of discourse and of the law" (*S5,* 1957, p. 169-170).

In the *Long Day's Journey into Night*, James Tyson represents *the Other* and his rules have a crucial impact on shaping the desires and identities of his wife and sons. He plays the role of the big Other who sets the desires of the other members of the family in motion and expects their obedience. For instance Mary is not satisfied with the place they live in, but Tyson has decided to be there. She tells Edmund that it is his father's desire to be there not hers: "not that I want anything to do with them. I've always hated this town and everyone in it. You know that. I never wanted to live here in the first place, but your father liked it and insisted on building this house, and I've had to come here every summer" (*LDJ*, I. p. 2020). And this is one of several things he has decided for Mary. The suppression of her desires gradually becomes a complex and causes her abnormal deeds at the end of the play.

Tyson also encourages Jamie to become an actor, while he does not like it, as he says here: "I never wanted to be an actor. You forced me on the stage"(*LDJ*, I. p. 2015) – hence his present unemployment for which he condemns his father. Moreover Mary blames Tyson for his role in making Jamie a drunken loafer. She believes that when Jamie was young, Tyson made him drink alcohol when he drank himself, as we read here: "you brought him up to be a boozer. Since he first opened his eyes, he's seen you drinking. Always a bottle on the bureau in the cheap hotel rooms! And if he had a nightmare when he was *little,* or a stomach-ache, your remedy was to give him a teaspoonful of whiskey to quiet him" (*LDJ*, III. P. 2050).

Even Edmund's desire to become a so-called man of literature is his father's desire, not his own. Tyson appreciates Edmund's writing and asks him to read books and write poetry to be a journalist, though he is not a good writer and the journal he works for does not like his writing. There is a dialog between Jamie and his father that shows the father's desire to make Edmund a journalist, while he has no talent for it:

TYSON: He's been doing well on the paper. I was hoping he'd found the work he wants to do at last.

JAMIE: *[sneering jealously again]* A hick town rag! Whatever bull they hand you, they tell me he's a pretty bum reporter. If he weren't your son— *[ashamed again]* No, that's not true! (*LDJ*, I. p. 2015)

Regarding the role of the father as the big Other in shaping his sons' desires and destiny, Abbotson argues that "Tyson pushes his sons to make something of their lives to compensate, but usually in the wrong direction, exploiting rather than assisting them. James despises acting and Edmund sees working on a newspaper as a waste of time" (2005, p. 104). The desires of the father for them have caused a frustrating life for them.

Another notable case regarding the functioning of the *Other* in the play is a mother's functioning as the big Other in Mary's desire to be a nun that has originally been her mother's wish that was later internalized by her – representing her wish for a perfect place where she could feel secure. Mary's mother was a strictly religious person who did not like her daughter to get married, as Mary relates to James: "My mother didn't. She was very pious and strict. I think she was a little jealous. She didn't approve of my marrying—especially an actor. I think she hoped I would become a nun" (*LDJ*, III. P. 2052). After a while, however, it becomes her own desire, as she internalizes her mother's wish. This time Mother Elizabeth acts as the big Other who decides for her by asking her to go away and experience the world for a while. Though she does not like to do so, she has to accept it as the big Other's order.

3. 4 Traumas and Jouissance of Characters

The *Real Order* is the most inaccessible part of human psyche, according to Lacan, since we live in the symbolic world where we have to adopt ourselves with ideologies and imposed on us by the *Other*. However there are times when one can experience *the Real* for fleeting moments of joy and terror, in traumas, and of course while seeing through ideologies. The symbolic world is the only world through which the *subject* has the understanding of reality, since their understanding of reality is shaped through language that is made of signs which do not represent the real essence of the things. Therefore reality, as it really is, does not have any place in the unconscious mind, instead some representations of it exist there, consequently we can experience the real only when a cut happens to the *Symbolic Order*, such as in the case of having trauma, especially a sad one.

Many times in the play, Mary experiences the trauma of being with her father. Whenever she looks at Edmund, she compares his situation with that of her father's whose trauma comes to life again, since he had tuberculosis and drank a lot, like Edmund, and that caused his death. In one scene Tyson tries to hide the truth that Edmund has tuberculosis, since it reminds her of her father: "She has control of her nerves—or she had until Edmund got sick. Now you can feel her growing tense and frightened underneath .... What makes it worse is her father died of consumption. She worshiped him and she's never forgotten. Yes, it will be hard for her. But she can do it! She has the will power now! We must help her, Jamie, in every way we can!" (*LDJ*, I. p. 2017). In another scene, she blames Tyron for letting Edmund drink, since she is afraid that he would die because of it: "did you take a drink? Don't you know it's the worst thing? You're to blame, James. How could you let him? Do you want to kill him? Don't you remember my father? He wouldn't stop after he was stricken. He said doctors were fools! He thought, like you, that whiskey is a good tonic!" (*LDJ*, I. p. 2030).

To experience *the Real*, Jamie drinks a lot and spends his time with whores in whom he looks for pleasure, for an extended *Jouissance* which never happens. To find himself out of the *symbolic* and the *big Other's* rules through this, he drinks more and more to experience and maintain the feeling of *Jouissance*, but it is just a short, fleeting moment. In one scene, his father criticizes him for spending time with the whores in the bars: "at the end of each season you're penniless! You've thrown your salary away every week on whores and whiskey!"(*LDJ*, I. p. 26), though Jamie does not care for such a loss, and only wishes to get rid of the symbolic world of the *big Other*.

The same thing is observed in the mother who uses morphine to forget her loss, and to escape from the ideologies imposed on her, as Thaddeus Wakefield argues: "Mary takes morphine to escape the reality that she has failed ... prescribed by the society in which she lives" (2004, p. 49). Moreover she uses morphine to keep herself "high" in pleasure, to forget the present situation in which she just changes desire after desire to feel real, and to experience *Jouissance*. When she is "high", she sees herself as a girl in a perfect situation in the past – free from the pains of the *Symbolic Order* and the rules imposed on her by the *Other*. Morphine alleviates her pains, as she tells Cathleen:

CATHLEEN: [stupidly puzzled] You've taken some of the medicine? It made you act funny, Ma'am. If I didn't know better, I'd think you'd a drop taken.

MARY: [dreamily] It kills the pain. You go back until at last you are beyond its reach. Only the past when you were happy is real. (*LDJ*, III. P. 2047)

Edmund too drinks a lot to forget the present situation which he suffers from, and to experience *Jouissance*, though he knows he is sick and drinking is detrimental for him. He tells his father that there is no problem with being drunk, as he forgets the pains of his conditions by drinking: "let us drink up and forget it .... Well, what's wrong with being drunk? It's what we're after, isn't it? ... We know what we're trying to forget, *[hurriedly]* But let's not talk about it. It's no use now" (*LDJ*, IV. P. 2059). Moreover there are some hints in the play that shows he has decided to commit suicide to get rid of the symbolic world and the rules of the big Other. He speaks of death as an outlet that brings permanent feeling of Jouissance: "yes, particularly the time I tried to commit suicide at Jimmie the Priest's, and almost did. ... I was stone cold sober. That was the trouble. I'd stopped to think too long" (*LDJ*, IV. P. 2067). As the result of reading books and getting aware of ideologies at work in society, he is quite aware of what he is doing when he commits suicide. Once when he speaks about the English poet Arthur Symons, he talks about the experience of real and how everything is just

a hoax granted to us: "The fog was where I wanted to be. Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is. That's what I wanted—to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself ... Who wants to see life as it is, if they can help it?" (*LDJ*, V. p. 2059).

Each of these characters has their own "method of escape", as Rogers calls it: "Mary has her drugs, Tyron and Jamie their liquor, and Edmund has poetic sense of personal dissolution" to escape from suffering that "has formed their lives and their feeling" (1965, p. 720), the suffering that is caused by ideology. Edmund is the only character of the play that has realized the point and seen through ideology, hence he wishes to go beyond, since it seems to be just a bunch of lies and craps to him, thus attempts to commit suicide.

4. Conclusion

O'Neill *Long Day's Journey into Night* dramatizes the relations of a family whose members suffer from mental problems caused by losing the desired conditions of *the Imaginary Order*. They go after some *object petit a* to divest themselves of their lacks and losses, but constantly fail to do so due to being entangled in the web of ideology and the law of the farther imposed on them by the *big Other* whose function is to repress and orient desires. The *big Other* is represented in this play by religious restrictions and also the father of the family in whose web the characters are entrapped. The only thing via which they try to satisfy themselves is the temporary pleasure they gain from unsustainable things which leave them frustrated in consequence of not bringing back the desired perfect conditions of the past. They use drugs and alcohol to escape from their bothering life, but to no avail, since nothing can help them to sustain the fleeting moments of *Jouissance.*

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Notes:

[i] The letter S with a number in front stands for the number of Lacan's Seminar

[ii] *LDJ* Stands for O'Neill's play, Long Day's Journey into Night