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Teaching Manual

Two by Eugene O'Neill *The Long Voyage Home* *Long Day's Journey Into Night*

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Film Interpretation (The Long Voyage Home)

The Long Voyage Home, the 1940 film adapted by director John Ford and screen writer Dudley Nichols from the four Glencairn plays, effectively transforms stage drama into exciting cinema. The Ford-Nichols picture preserves the essence of character, mood, and action of the O'Neill plays and presents them as a single unified drama. O'Neill praised *The Long Voyage Home* as "an exceptional picture, with no obvious Hollywood hokum or sentimental love bilge in it; . . . it is the best picture ever made from my stuff." At another time O'Neill wrote that "it was the talkless part of *The Long Voyage Home* . . . that impressed me the most" (Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist*, Little, Brown, 1973, pp. 505, 546). One can safely assume that the "talkless" parts of the film refer to John Ford's excellent visual drama.

Ford's direction is evident throughout *The Long Voyage Home*, most notable in the visual dynamics of the use of black and white. The careful composition of scenes in this film creates a series of visual impressions that gradually reveal the mood and character of the men of the Glencairn. The visual language of this film reflects Ford's years of achievement, reaching back to his experience with silent films. For example, the opening and closing sequences of *The Long Voyage Home* illustrate Ford's technique and show how a director, writer, and cinematographer (Gregg Toland) can interpret a dramatist's writing (e.g., the moods of O'Neill's characters and settings). The opening of the film



is hauntingly idyllic and romantic with its "caressingly illuminated" native women canoeing to the Glencairn, the rhythm of native music in the background. This contrasts brilliantly with the end of the picture, the end of the voyage at the dark fog-shrouded dock and, then, on the desolate wind-blown pier with the sailors returning to the Glencairn for yet another voyage. Andrew Sarris considers *The Long Voyage Home* Ford's "penultimate collaboration with Dudley Nichols; . . . the film is suitably moody, shadowy and romantically fatalistic for the occasion" (*The John Ford Movie Mystery*, Indiana Univ. Press, 1975, p. 99). Sarris interprets the beginning and concluding scenes of the film as an indication of the men's loss of illusion about life on shore and sees a link between Ford and O'Neill as "kindred spirits" who "share a tragic vision of life even though that vision is not as keenly articulated as that of the greatest tragedians of the past. It is a uniquely American-Irish Catholic vision in which guilt, repression and submission play a large part" (*The John Ford Movie Mystery*, p. 101). Cinematographer Gregg Toland, whose camera work helps to present the mood of the Glencairn men on the screen, explains that "*Long Voyage Home* was a mood picture. Storywise . . . it was a series of compositions of the mood of men aboard the ship. It was a story of what men felt rather than what they did. The camera *never* moved in the picture" (*The Screen Writer*, December 1947, p. 29). The result is a film that can be stopped at almost any frame and discussed.

One scene serves to illustrate how visual effects reveal the inner turmoil of a character, while capsulizing the technique used in the film as a whole. While the Glencairn is still docked in the West Indies, waiting to sail for England with a load of ammunition, Smitty attempts to jump ship. Much of the film's continuity hangs on the development of this character and this scene sustains our interest in him. We have already seen Smitty sign on the Glencairn at the beginning of the film; he is the "new man," the "outsider." During the beginning sequences



with the native women Smitty stands apart and appears troubled. He drinks alone and refuses to participate in the dancing. The scene in which he attempts to escape, then, becomes a visual correlative to the troubled state of his mind. Through this sequence we realize that Smitty is a tormented, pursued man, even though the reasons for this are not revealed until later in the film. After the captain confines the men to the ship to preserve the secrecy of their munitions cargo, the scene cuts to night and preparations for sailing. The shore patrol passes, shining a light onto the men's faces on the ship. Then, Smitty jumps to the pier, his mysterious black box (of letters) in hand. The camera sits low on the pier to heighten the stark effect of his running into a blinding white light, the silhouette of a frightened man. He drops the box, the patrol chases him and the camera cuts to an overhead shot so we can see him being pursued into the shadowy maze of cargo piled on the dock. Like a desperate animal, he is trapped, captured, and returned to the ship. The scene ends with a slow pan of the men's faces as the Glencairn moves out to sea. Strains of the song "Harbour Lights" make the scene all the more poignant because we know Smitty's confused state of mind and we can sense the men's fear and uncertainty about passing through the war zone. The play of light and dark, the shadows, the camera angles, the overall composition of the scene combine with acting and music to create mood and drama without the use of dialogue.

There are several other scenes in *The Long Voyage Home* that stand out because of their visual effects and, in a sense, summarize Ford's interpretation of the O'Neill characters and themes. In all of the scenes the emphasis falls on the men, both as individuals and as representatives of those men who lead lonely, nomadic lives. Both O'Neill's and Ford's attitudes toward the human condition become evident in these scenes:

(1) In the opening sequence of the picture Ford introduces all the characters, without dialogue, and sets a romantic mood in the idyllic tropical night as a backdrop for them. The Glencairn is at anchor in the West Indies and the men yearn for the women and rum on land. Shots of the various men on the deck of the ship, looking at the half-moonlit island and listening to the persistent native music, alternate with shots of the women on the island and in canoes on the peaceful water. The peace of the tropical night becomes an image of their wistful longings. Juxtaposed on this sensuous mood are harsh shadows of the real world. We meet Cocky, the steward, eavesdropping by the captain's quarters. What he hears, the first words of the film, is a radio broadcast about the war. (Ford and Nichols have clearly updated the O'Neill plays to World War II.) We see Driscoll stealing back on board with all the prowess of one in charge; later, we learn, he had been to the island to plan the party with the women. The dialogue of the film begins in full as Smitty signs on—Ford shoots the scene from a distance, perhaps suggesting something of Smitty's aloof nature. The romantic elements established at the beginning of the film, in many respects, reflect the men's attitudes toward life—they are easy-going and idealistic. Yet, the world in which they live includes forces that will eventually manipulate them. As later scenes will show, Ford's attitude about these forces is less brutally pessimistic than O'Neill's.

(2) The storm, which follows Smitty's thwarted escape, is perhaps one of the most violent on film, and with Yank's death and burial at sea masterfully reveals the mood of the men. As the storm builds, the tension of the men

mounts. Sound effects are used to full advantage here. The waves lash the ship and we crowd into the forecabin with the men. The ship creaks and thuds; the men fear their cargo of munitions has broken loose and is rolling freely in the hold. The violence of the sea parallels the violence of the story—the men can control neither the storm nor the war. The mood intensifies as the anchor breaks free and, at the height of the storm, Yank goes out to save it. He is wounded fatally. As he dies, the compassionate interplay between him and Driscoll shows how helplessly human these men are in the face of powers stronger than they. Yank is buried at sea—we see the men of the Glencairn massed on deck, silhouetted against the



sky as the still turbulent sea rocks the ship. The captain's words are drowned out by the noise of the wind and water. An uneasy calm returns as the sequence closes on Driscoll walking alone on deck, mute against a force that took his friend, but not beaten down by it himself. He remains confidently in control.

(3) As the film progresses, the mystery that surrounds Smitty increases. Cocky reports the intrigues of a German spy to the men, which adds to their uneasiness about being in the war zone. Because Smitty doesn't quite fit in, he arouses the men's suspicions, causing them to misinterpret even his most innocent actions. When they finally confront him, they are ready to believe the worst: that he is an enemy spy. Unlike the action of *In the Zone*, where Smitty defends himself vocally, the film sequence shows Smitty gagged and tied to a bunk. Driscoll opens the



black box, fearing it is a bomb; he finds the letters from Smitty's wife. Smitty reacts with anguish and hurt; the camera is often close up so we can feel his emotions. Ford treats Smitty sympathetically and Ian Hunter conveys all that's in O'Neill's dialogue through expressive facial and body gestures. Smitty's capacity to be hurt, here realized by all the men, underscores the bond that unites these seamen in the face of both human (war) and natural (storm) elements that they cannot direct. In the film Smitty is a deposed naval officer, an alcoholic who is running to save his family shame. The added dimension to his character in the film, his elevated social status, intensifies the bond he now shares with the "common men" of the crew. They realize how he was victimized by the same societal forces that help control their lives.

(4) As the Glencairn nears England, the men are surprised by a German air attack. We never see the planes, but again we know this is 1940—the Stukas roar overhead, bombs explode on the water, machine-gun fire rivets the deck. An incredulous crew is plastered to the deck helpless until Smitty takes command, responding instinctively to his officer's training. In this Nazi bombing raid he reacts as a hero, saving the crew (and his family), but gunned down himself. His last act is a defiant gesture skyward (he throws an oarlock at the planes), signifying his commonality with the crew. Like them, he can do only so much to overcome his circumstances.

(5) The final scene of *The Long Voyage Home* reinforces with visual cues the element

The Long Voyage Home
 (B&W) / 105 mins. / U.S. / 1940 / Dir. John Ford / John Wayne, Thomas Mitchell, Ian Hunter
 Screenwriter: Dudley Nichols



of inevitability about the lives of these men. In the film Driscoll, not Ollie as in the play (Ollie makes it home to Sweden in the film), has been shanghaied onto the Amindra. When the men realize he is gone and they can do nothing about it, one by one they come back to the Glencairn to sign on for another voyage. Ford photographs the harbor in harsh, bright light, creating an atmosphere of stark loneliness, again to reflect that of the men. Old papers whirl around the pier and few words are spoken. After a short interchange on the Glencairn between Axel and the Donkey Man ("Ollie go home . . . go home to Sweden. . . Drisc gone. Gone Amindra. He sailed on that ship Amindra. He's gone . . . he's gone."), the camera pulls out for



us to see a newspaper fall on the water reporting that the Amindra had been torpedoed. The desolation of this final scene is complete—Driscoll, the leader and reinforcement to the men, has been

overcome. Yet, the Glencairn sails again and those remaining go on with her. They may be down, but they are never shown as beaten or undignified, indicative of Ford's feelings for the ordinary man.

The use of visual humor in the film is one aspect of Ford's direction that serves to keep the characterizations of the men humane and positive. This contrasts somewhat with O'Neill's conception of them, for in the plays there is more bitterness and more of a sense of life's outcome being inalterable. O'Neill's plays are more pessimistic than the Ford film. Ford puts his imprint on the O'Neill characters by making them genuine human beings, full of foibles and problems; they are charming and never down-and-out. The many instances of visual humor in the film lighten the serious tone of the O'Neill stories, as well as reveal aspects of the men's personalities. For example, in the fight at the beginning of the film with the native women on board, Driscoll's antics balance with his leadership qualities (he offers to hold a mate's pint of rum so he can knock him down). In a scene near the end of the film, on the waterfront streets of London, Ollie collapses his buddies onto the street with one shove to keep them out of a pub. And later, in Joe's pub, Axel (John Qualen) threatens to deck Ollie (John Wayne) if he drinks and misses his ship to Sweden; the humor is due, in part, to Qualen's short stature and Wayne's well-built height. Also, in the pub scene are touches of humor that again show the fun-loving side of the men—dancing with the women, putting the gramophone on one man's head, breaking the chair, etc.

The Long Voyage Home, then, is "visually distinctive" or has what some critics call a "Fordian look." These critics argue that certain uses of visual effects are indicative of Ford's film technique and, in the case of this film, detach the cinema definitely from the stage dramas. Another aspect of Ford's direction—his strong Irish sentiment—also permeates the film and adds another dimension to his interpretation of the O'Neill characters.

John Ford was born Sean Aloysius O'Fienne,

the son of Irish immigrant parents who taught him both English and Gaelic. Growing up in American Irish communities, Ford became known as a rebel in his fight for social acceptance. Joseph McBride and Michael Wilmington describe the Irish community as a matriarchal one: "They were belligerent and chauvinistic, ruthless towards outsiders and exaggeratedly tender towards each other" (*John Ford*, Da Capo Press, 1975, p. 18). The quest for the American dream motivated Ford and shaped his attitudes toward America: "He was an outsider in search of an allegiance, hearkening back to a simpler, purer existence even as a youngster. Judging from his work, he had the newcomer's compulsion to prove his love for country, and the newcomer's anguish and disillusionment over the discovery of its flaws" (*John Ford*, p. 17). Ford maintained throughout his life a paradoxical fascination for Ireland, which was nurtured by his upbringing and his frequent childhood trips to Ireland. For Ford, Ireland was always the lush, fertile isle, full of promise, yet in reality, it was the famine-stricken place from which his family escaped. Ford's Irish sentiments are apparent in a long line of films—*The Informer*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Quiet Man*, and *The Last Hurrah* are only a few of the more obvious. In *The Long Voyage Home* Ford's almost mystical reverence for the Irish temperament is imposed upon the O'Neill characters (and parts of the story), accounting for much of the sentimentalization of the Irish in the film. One scene near the end of the Glencairn's voyage will illustrate.

Immediately after Driscoll reads Smitty's letters and the men accept him as one of them, Ford cuts to a foggy night watch and then to bright mid-day with Driscoll and Ollie lying on the deck in the sun, rocking with the sway of the ship; Axel sits nearby. They are near land; their dialogue:

Driscoll: (in a meditative mood) "Ollie . . . you not smell the land? . . . the sweet smell of Ireland . . . the fields, . . . the forests, . . . the green hills . . ."

Axel: "No. . . . That be England that way."

Driscoll: (angry) "Did I ask you!"

The fine acting of Thomas Mitchell, John Qualen, and John Wayne saves the scene from being maudlin. The dialogue reveals Ford's own affection for "the sweet smell of Ireland." However, Ford is not unconscious of his Irish sentimentality and can treat it with a great deal of self-mocking good humor. Contrast the sentimentality of Driscoll's Irish reverie with the scene in Joe's bar at the end of the film where the Glencairn men are led by Driscoll in an off-key, drunken rendition of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling." The scene, again saved by the fine actors, is a comic, ironic counterpoint to the blarney of Ford's Irish sentimentality.

Ultimately, the film version of O'Neill's Glencairn plays is more sentimental, more compassionate and less harshly realistic than the stage pieces. The film emphasizes mood, the mood of the men at sea, and focuses on the development of each character. As the camera creates various moods, insights into each man grow. One critic writes that "the sounds and shapes of a boat, the tense comradeship of its sailors, the alternating fascination and repulsion of the sea for its travelers, these things create an atmosphere that holds the picture firmly together as a tight story could" (*Theatre Arts*, December 1940, p. 867). Other critics, such as the *Time* reviewer, miss this and unfairly attack the film for lacking a tight plot structure: "there is no sustained plot to occupy the men, only sporadic incidents such as a battering storm at sea, a drunken rumpus in a West Indies port with a bevy of native girls, a tingling passage through the war zone, a long-drawn debauch in London's waterfront pubs and brothels" (October 28, 1940). Yet, the Ford film, like the O'Neill plays, studies the men, and in the delineation of their characters a story is developed. It is the high quality of the acting in the film that helps to sustain the plot and to make much of the sentimentality of the characters understandable.

Reviewers unanimously praise the acting in *The Long Voyage Home* and it deserves attention. Bosley Crowther comments for *The New York Times*: "Mr. Ford has told [his story] with magnificent sharpness. His ship is really made

of iron and his actors are really tough. Thomas Mitchell as the roaring, truculent Driscoll; Barry Fitzgerald as the viperish steward, Cocky; John Wayne as the gentle, powerful Olsen; Ian Hunter as Smitty, the heartsick, and Wilfred Lawson, Ward Bond, all the rest are truly excellent" (October 8, 1940). The characterizations are strong and realistic, yet subtle and evocative. This is apparent with the main characters, but must not be overlooked with minor roles. One scene underscores Ford's close attention to detail in characterization: the scene between Ollie (John Wayne) and Frieda (Mildred Natwick)



in Joe's bar at the end of the film. Wayne's sensitive interpretation of the gullible Swede balances precisely with Natwick's Frieda. With carefully controlled gestures and expressive facial gestures, especially the eyes, Mildred Natwick takes us into the heart of Frieda's character. Her nervously confident movements and speech reveal Frieda's humor, sensitivity, and ambivalent feelings about duping the naive Ollie, while creating an impressive and unique version of the "bar wench."

The high quality of acting in Ford's films rests largely on his use of the Abbey Players, whom he helped to bring to America, and to his repeated use of the same actors in consecutive films—his "stock company." Peter Bogdanovich comments: "every Ford movie is filled with reverberations from another—which makes his use of the same players from year to year, decade to decade, so much more than just building 'a

stock company'—and one film of his cannot really be looked at as separate from the rest." And Ford himself said in one of his last interviews, "I'm giving you something of my philosophy of acting. The best is the most natural. That's why I consider John Wayne a good actor for pictures. . . . And that's why I put together my own 'stock company' for people to joke about. I used my friends in pictures because I like an atmosphere in which people can work well together" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 6, 1973).

The Long Voyage Home is dedicated to sailing men: "Men who live on the sea never change—for they live in a lonely world apart as they drift from one rusty tramp steamer to the next forging the life-lines of Nations." The film emphasizes the bond of brotherhood among the sailors and establishes the ship as their true home. All of the transitions in the film are cuts to the ship, sometimes sentimentalized by the "Harbor Lights" music. As we follow the day to day living of the Glencairn crew, we gradually realize that they are a family. Driscoll functions as a father figure in his capacity as leader and confessor and therefore his death is more tragic. In the film Smitty has more in his past than O'Neill gives him in the plays. The fact that Smitty is more clearly set apart from the other men in the film serves to reinforce the familial bonds among them. Smitty is accepted by the men, but he is different. In a sense he finds a home and he reciprocates during the bombing raid by taking command of the ship. He not only saves the men on the Glencairn, his surrogate family, but also his real family. Smitty dies a hero and returns to land for a hero's burial.

Another character who returns to land in the film is Ollie. From the beginning of the story there is almost a single-minded effort to help Ollie return to his home in Sweden and he does; Driscoll is shanghaied in his place. It is interesting to note that in the film of *The Long Voyage Home* only two characters, Smitty and Ollie, have any real attachment to the land or any family or home away from the sea; and, in a sense, both return to the land. They return

home. The other characters may yearn for the land, as Yank did, but they are destined to live and die at sea. Their home remains the sea, or perhaps home is the long voyage.

Critics' Round Table (The Long Voyage Home)

Listed below are the sources of major film reviews. These can be used for student analysis and evaluation, and as a guide for students to write criticism:

Commonweal, Oct. 25, 1940, p. 24.
Life, Nov. 11, 1940, pp. 83-4.
New Republic, Oct. 21, 1940, p. 558.
New York Times, May 26, 1940, IX, p. 4;
Aug. 18, 1940, IX, p. 7; Oct. 9, 1940,
p. 30; Oct. 13, 1940, IX, p. 5.
Newsweek, Oct. 21, 1940, pp. 60-1.
Photoplay, Jan. 1941, p. 4.
Theatre Arts, Oct. 1940, p. 726; Dec. 1940,
p. 867; Sept. 1941, p. 627.
Time, Oct. 28, 1940, p. 82.

Here are selected excerpts from reviews and commentaries on this film. These can be used in preparation for group discussion, critical analysis, and writing.

Commonweal

"It was inevitable that John Ford, master director of mood and character, and Eugene O'Neill, master dramatist of sea and character, should get together and make a great movie. . . . England is not [the men's] home; the sea is home. As the waves dash right into the camera and as the men react to their own lonely world, you feel and smell the water and know these men who are ruled by that old devil sea. To offset the film's major fault, its episodic quality . . . , Ford has given the whole a unity through an excellently sustained atmosphere by keeping his characterizations consistent and by using imagination in visualizing the universality of O'Neill's prose."

Daily Worker

"But the harsh reality of work aboard ships like the *Glencairn* is missing. . . . Even if the film had been placed in the period of O'Neill twenty years back, that notion of marine workers would be questionable. But the sailing of the *Glencairn* on a 1940 schedule Ford and Nichols place it altogether beyond the real thing. Seamen's lives have been and still are rotten in many places, but reactions beyond drinking and fighting have been seen. . . . 'The Long Voyage Home' starts with a dedication to 'the men who live on the

sea and whose lives never change.' It just isn't so. With all its fine qualities, this movie would have achieved greatness if it had shown how these men's lives do change."

Variety

"Picture is typically Fordian, his direction accentuating characterizations and adventures of the voyage to the highest pitch of realism. . . . Story has adventurous background, on which Ford hangs development of characterizations rather than movement. It plods along at a slow tempo, making onlookers wonder when the ship will finally make an English port safely."

New York Times

". . . is one of the most honest pictures ever placed upon the screen; it gives a penetrating glimpse into the hearts of little men and, because it shows that out of human weakness there proceeds some nobility, it is far more gratifying than the fanciest hero-worshipping fare. . . .

But the very essence of the theme lies exactly in its inconclusiveness, in deliberate fumbling onward toward a goal which is never attained. Yank, the iron-muscled pal of the Irishman, Driscoll, dies at sea, but even in death he dreams of the land. Smitty, the outcast aristocrat, goes to his doom with a defiant gesture at the world which has overpowered him. Driscoll is lost to another ship, and the remaining members of the *Glencairn's* crew—with the exception of Olsen, who does go home—creep back to the sea after a spree in London. In the end, they are Mother Carey's chickens, and the only home they can ever know is the restless deep."

New York World Telegram

"And these men, it seems to me, are pictured here with a true understanding of the strange kinship which exists among men who go down to the sea in ships. They are pictured with a fine understanding of their loyalties, their courage, their dreams, their sorrows, their beefing about how they hate the sea, but whose strange hold over them they cannot divorce except through death."

Time

"Director Ford filled [the film] with respectful piety for the hard impersonality of the sea."

Vernon Young on Film

"In the case of *The Long Voyage Home*, to conceive of filming a sequence of one-act plays was daring only because it was *inartistic*; the result was as unrhythmic as might have been foreseen. It survives as a curiosity of misbegotten earnestness, heavy-handed and sentimental, its atmosphere continually vitiated by 'artiness'—which is to say calculation ill conceived."

Film Criticism of Otis Ferguson

"Where the picture excels is in the truth of atmosphere and the kind of tension that is built up in character."

Activities (The Long Voyage Home)

1. Read the reviews listed in the Critics' Round Table. With which do you agree or disagree? Why? Write your own review of the film.
2. Compare and contrast O'Neill's characterization in the Glencairn plays with Ford's interpretation of the characters in the film.
3. Analyze the main themes of the Glencairn plays. Draw some relationships between these and the themes of O'Neill's later dramas.
4. Study the use of lighting effects and the composition of the camera shots in the film. Analyze how effectively these convey the mood and theme of the film. How well does this correspond to O'Neill's mood and theme in the plays?
5. For the promotion of *The Long Voyage Home*, producer Walter Wanger commissioned several American artists to paint scenes suggested by the film (see *Esquire*, September, 1940). Compare the paintings to the corresponding scenes in the film. Discuss how cinema can inspire art.

Teaching Manual

Long Day's Journey Into Night Eugene O'Neill

Critical Background/Film Interpretation (Long Day's Journey Into Night)

Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1940) builds in emotional intensity through a series of verbal confrontations among the four Tyrones until each is brutally, but compassionately, stripped of all pretense and fully revealed. This inherent strength of O'Neill's masterful drama becomes the main strength of the 1962 film of *Long Day's Journey*, produced by Ely Landau and directed by Sidney Lumet. Religious adherence to O'Neill's script, a fine cast, and judicious use of camera effects and physical settings preserve the atmosphere and impact of the stage drama, thus making O'Neill's play available to a larger audience than otherwise would be possible. Eugene O'Neill is credited as screenwriter for the film, which means that Lumet made only slight alterations in the length of the play and in some of the stage directions. The action, as in the play, is set in the living room of the Tyrones' New London summer house on an August day in 1912. Only the brief opening sequence of the film has been moved outside the house and the first act conversation between James and Jamie is placed in a tool shed-garage. Lumet has resisted adding scenes to the film, which could take us to the spare bedroom with Mary Tyrone, to Doctor Hardy's office with the men, along the beach with Edmund, or to the bar and brothel with Jamie. Instead, we stay in the worn and lackluster parlor and realize each character's experiences through dialogue and acting, as O'Neill intended.



Because the text of the play and the script for the film of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* are virtually the same, much of what can be said

about the play applies as well to the film. As in many of his other dramas, *Ab, Wilderness!* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, for instance, O'Neill draws on his life experiences for the substance of *Long Day's Journey*. In the dedication of the play to his wife, Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, he writes that this is a play "of old sorrow, written in tears and blood. . . . I mean it as a tribute to your love and tenderness which gave me the faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play—write it with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for *all* the four haunted Tyrones. These twelve years, Beloved One, have been a Journey into Light—into Love." With this play, written near the end of O'Neill's career, the playwright unflinchingly probes his past and comes to terms with his parents, his brother, and his younger self. Yet, the play is not straight autobiography, as Jason Robards, Jr. observes in a recent interview: "O'Neill was the first to reach behind the veneer of the happy American family—to strip the masks from all his characters. . . . [*Long Day's Journey Into Night*] is simply one of the greatest American stories ever told. The Tyrones' story is the story of the American family since the 1850's. There's the hardworking father, too poor as a kid to be able to spend the bucks he's sweated to make. He's simple, believes in the American dream, has religious faith and has two sons who still want more out of life. The father says here, this is my life, what I've busted my back for, and the son wants no part of it. It's been repeated and repeated with every generation in some way" (*New York Sunday News*, February 8, 1976.)

The play and the film explore the love and hate, recriminations and weaknesses of James Tyrone, the miserly actor-father; of Mary Tyrone, the guilt-ridden morphine-addicted mother; of Jamie Tyrone, the prodigal son; and of Edmund Tyrone, the consumptive poetic younger son, the reflection of O'Neill's youthful self. The drama distills O'Neill's family history into a universal piece of stage/film realism that focuses our attention on character development rather than on plot and resolutions as we journey from the family's superficial light-heartedness of the morning into their stark soul-searching of the night.

Several commentators on *Long Day's Journey Into Night* point to one of Mary Tyrone's comments as a keynote for understanding her character. Early in the play, in one of her moments of honesty, Mary tells Edmund, "None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever." This is a statement made out of strength, not defeat, and it reveals both Mary's resiliency and O'Neill's compassion for his character. Mary, a devout Catholic who once aspired to be a nun, is trapped in her drug addiction, which becomes her escape from life. Vocally she blames her husband for her addiction by sending her to an inept doctor who gave her morphine after Edmund's hard birth, but inwardly she blames herself for her loss of religious faith. At the end of the play she is searching for "Something I miss terribly." Instead of finding her faith, Mary refuses to accept the facts of Edmund's poor health, of James' inability to provide her with the home she wanted, and retreats into her drug-induced fantasies. As the play ends, Mary is again the simple convent-bred girl, sent home to test her vocation: "That was in the winter of senior year. Then in the spring something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time."

In the film Katharine Hepburn plays Mary Tyrone as this tortured woman, slowly losing control over her life. It is the disintegration of a once-happy, strong woman, who supported the men in her family. In an interview Hepburn commented, "I wanted to show her Irishness, her touch of peasant, Irish vulgarity in her marvelous dream of what life had once been" (*Life*, October 26, 1962). Mary's attempts at lightness early in the film and her humorous comments about the maids give way to a morphine-induced fantasy world, conveyed as much by Hepburn's flashing eyes, tragic smile, and expressive hands, as by O'Neill's dialogue. In one scene midway through the film Lumet photographs Hepburn as she rolls on the floor, a pathetic indication of a strong woman caught in the throes of morphine.

At the end of the film the intensity of Hepburn's characterization of Mary Tyrone makes more understandable the empty silence of James, Jamie, and Edmund as they sit at the table and listen to Mary sink further and further into unreality. James and the sons are left to realize how final and tragic their loss of this woman actually is.

James Tyrone, modeled on O'Neill's own father, achieved success as an actor by suppressing his Irish brogue and passing himself off as an American gentleman. Now, after many years in one successful part, James realizes that he has betrayed his ideals and his talent as a potentially great Shakespearian actor. His sons call him "The Beautiful Voice" and "Old Gaspard, the miser," because of his penny-pinching ways. In a confrontation with Edmund toward the end of the play, James defends his stinginess: "My poor mother washed and scrubbed for the Yanks by

the day. . . . In those days I learned to be a miser. A dollar was worth so much then. And once you've learned a lesson, it's hard to unlearn it." James' chief conflict with Mary centers also on his miserliness, evident in her accusations of his sending her to a cheap doctor and of his failure to provide the family with a proper home. Mary's feelings of homelessness are expressed throughout *Long Day's Journey* in such remarks as, "Oh, I'm so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You won't help me! You won't put yourself out the least bit!" The theme of homelessness in this play can be related to "the common heritage" of Irish Catholic immigrants in America, further complicated in the play by James' theatrical profession. This aspect of *Long Day's Journey* parallels O'Neill's own experience; he is the son of Irish immigrants and was raised in the "homeless" atmosphere of the theatre.

Ralph Richardson plays James Tyrone in the

film with an Irish tenacity that is at once self-centered and sympathetic. To reinforce O'Neill's conception of the pompous, has-been actor, whose miserly concern for money has caused many of his family's problems, Lumet has Richardson fume and posture in a kind of "shabby elegance" that depicts James as the famous actor turned hack. Toward the end of the film, to quiet his nerves, James carefully combs and oils a stage wig, a reminder of his lost glory. At another point, dressed in a silk robe, he berates Edmund for turning on too many lights. Richardson's face, though, reveals the tenderness and goodwill at James' core. His concern for Mary and for Edmund is genuine, even if he tries to save money at their expense. We can sympathize with his reasoning that his poor childhood caused his stinginess. In the end we find James culpable, but, like O'Neill, we cannot condemn him.

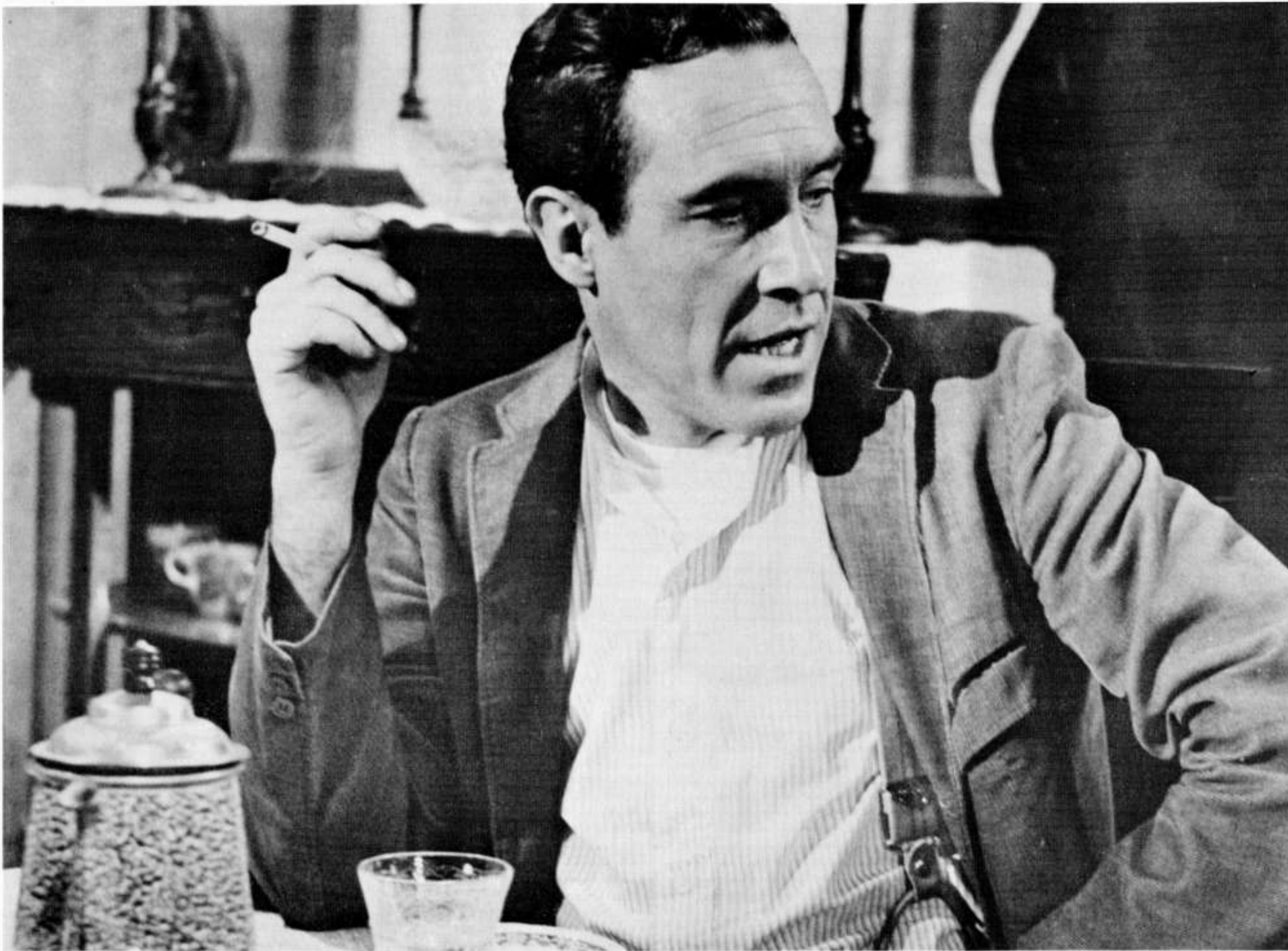
Jamie, the worldly-wise, boozing elder son, is also treated kindly by O'Neill. In the film Jason Robards recreates his interpretation of Jamie Tyrone that won him much acclaim on the stage. Robards' weary demeanor and sardonic laugh suit Jamie's cynical view of life. One scene near the end of the film illustrates, the scene in which he confesses his love-hate for Edmund. Robards tells the story of his night with Fat Violet with the right balance of tragedy and humor so that we feel we have met the woman and have been with him in his carousing. Through this, we come to know the emptiness of Jamie's life. Then, in drunken seriousness he warns Edmund of his intentions to corrupt him, how he set out to destroy his brother's successes: "My putting you wise so you'd learn from my mistakes. Believed that myself at times, but it's a fake. 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!" Robards plays this scene with enough ambiguity for us to question if he is serious, and to be taken at his word, or if this is an attempt to save Edmund from their parents. Edmund, played by



Long Day's Journey Into Night

(B&W) / 136 mins. / U.S. / 1962 / Dir. Sidney Lumet / Katharine Hepburn, Ralph Richardson, Jason Robards, Jr. / Screenplay from the play by Eugene O'Neill

(Also available in original 174 min. version)



Dean Stockwell, responds with a look that affirms the depth of his and his brother's feelings, making the scene an act of love. O'Neill's sympathy again surfaces.

The only character in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* that maintains any sense of hope is Edmund, even though he too has been disillusioned and faces a sanatorium and perhaps death. In the scene with his father near the end of the play, Edmund confides that only on a few occasions at sea did he ever find peace, what he calls "the moment of ecstatic freedom." For him it is "the peace, the end of the quest, the last harbor, the joy of belonging to a fulfillment beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams." At these times of escape, he says, "I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace

and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way." Edmund qualifies his experience, though, for it is merely transitory—"Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason!" The philosophy implicit in these comments is ultimately transcendental, hopeful, and appropriate for the aspiring artist. This view of life contrasts sharply with that of Jamie, who is cynical and materialistic. Some of O'Neill's critics regard Edmund's philosophy as a type of "tragic transcendence," which might ultimately counter the negation of life as expressed by Jamie. If we recall O'Neill's words in the dedication of *Long Day's Journey* ("a Journey into Light—into Love"), we can perhaps see that Edmund is the O'Neill who has begun to know better himself, his family, and his heritage.

Dean Stockwell's sensitive good looks and slight appearance fit the role of the aspiring, consumptive poet and reinforce O'Neill's romantic conception of his younger self. Throughout the film there is an aura of softness or mistiness that surrounds Edmund, especially at times when he is striving to understand and love his family. Stockwell's posture and eyes tend to create this look of sensitivity, as in the scene with Jamie near the end of the film. After Jamie finishes warning him about his intentions to corrupt him, the camera pulls back and we can read the love in Stockwell's face that seems to confirm Edmund's sympathy for his brother. Jamie falls asleep on the sofa and Edmund sits near him, looking at him for a long time knowing him now, but unable to do anything to help him. The role of Edmund Tyrone is a particularly difficult one because of this ambivalent and sentimental quality written into the character. O'Neill structures the other three characters with acute clarity—Mary, James, and Jamie are bold, strong personalities. Edmund, however, lacks full definition and remains the young poet moving among his family like an alien presence looking for understanding.

The fine acting in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is complemented by Lumet's and cinematographer Boris Kaufman's careful use of the camera. Confined, for the most part, to the one-room set, Lumet relied mainly on O'Neill's dialogue and the actors' skills to carry the momentum of the picture. In the beginning of the film, when the Tyrones appear to be a happy, vacationing family, Lumet photographs them in the open freedom of the outdoors. The familial closeness is short-lived, though, and the camera shots become more angular as the tension rises between family members. As the film progresses and the confrontations are more heated and are confined to the living room set, the angular shots suggest that much is off-balance in terms of family relations. During conflicts the camera will alternate between a position close to the floor and one high above the characters, showing the precarious quality of the recriminations and revelations being made. For a show of emotion, Lumet will move in for a close-up of a character and



hold it long enough for us to comprehend that person's inner turmoil. When love is expressed, though, the camera generally stays level and steady. Several scenes illustrate.

The first third of *Long Day's Journey* is a series of intercut scenes—a technique of alternating between two different scenes happening simultaneously—meant to establish and set the characters in motion. After the opening sequence in the yard, Mary follows Edmund into the house; they chat somewhat comfortably until Edmund makes a reference to his mother's drug addiction. The camera shots become angular as Mary defends herself. Her inner tension grows and the camera moves in for a close-up. As she loses control and whirls around the room, the camera follows the rhythm of her dialogue—the camera spins around the room with her. Her torrent of words is matched by the camera's movement. Then, as she calms herself, the camera levels out

and she and Edmund embrace, as they did at the beginning of the scene.

At about mid-point in the film, when Mary's use of morphine becomes more and more apparent, her guilt (for the loss of her religious faith) surfaces and she tries to pray. When the men leave for Doctor Hardy's office, Mary is alone. She expresses her loneliness and Lumet photographs her attempt to pray from above—Hepburn looks up into the camera and light radiates from her face. She has the appearance of a lost child. The technique is repeated in a similar scene after Mary returns from her ride with Kathleen. Here the effects of the morphine are more pronounced and the camera helps to reinforce Hepburn's acting. Mary and Kathleen talk and, as the drug takes hold, Mary slides out of the chair onto the floor. The camera stands immobile and close-up while Hepburn's writhing on the floor brings us to a fuller understanding of the degradation

Mary feels for herself. The static closeness of the camera to the character is embarrassing; we feel we are intruding on a very private part of this woman's psyche. Again Mary expresses her lost faith and attempts to pray—the camera cuts to a shot above her. She tries to say the "Hail Mary" but cannot. Pleadingly, Hepburn looks up into the camera, and we know better the reasons for Mary's desperation. She is indeed the lost soul.



In the confrontation between James and Edmund, about two-thirds into the film, camera angles again support the dialogue and action. The two men bait one another, arguing first about the lights and then about more personal matters—Edmund's philosophy of life, Mary's dope addiction, James' miserliness. The two men argue, drink, and attempt to play cards; the camera moves about the room at odd angles until Edmund thanks his father for his giving him a better understanding of himself. With this the camera levels off, suggesting an atmosphere of calmness and love. Now Edmund opens himself to his father, recalling his experiences at sea; James tells him he has the "makings of a poet." The photography of this scene underscores the new bond created between father and son.

The intensity of the final scene of the film is due, in large part, to the photography. Mary enters, carrying her wedding gown, lost in the cloudy world of her addiction. The camera stands far back from her, so we can see her in the hall moving into the parlor to play the piano. She is back in her school days, searching for something

she lost. Here the camera moves down so we see her from below. The single light above the table radiates off her face as she talks on, drifting further into her fantasies. Slowly, the camera moves back and above her and the men sitting at the table. Without stopping, it recedes endlessly from the scene—Mary speaks, the camera moves out, the darkness engulfs all four Tyrones. In a sense, we get the impression that this was all a dream, a memory, O'Neill's journey into the past.

Critical response to the film of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* was decidedly divided and deserves some comment. Here are two typical reviews, one negative (*Nation*) and one positive (*Commonweal*). First the negative review:

The movie is a different, a smaller, experience than the play. Long Day's Journey is not meant for the screen; it resists the camera. It is a play of talk—long-winded, repetitious, evasive, self-justifying, wounding and obscuring talk. There is almost no action. And it all takes place in two or three mildew-redolent rooms in a Connecticut shore cottage of the last century. In these circumstances, a camera has nothing to do, and, being idle, it jitters about, looking for 'interesting' shots, trotting up for pointless and disconcerting close-ups, making itself as conspicuous as the players. O'Neill wrote out of his impassioned exasperation with the evasions and delusions of his beloved family—on the screen, one's exasperation centers on the camera. (Nation, October 13, 1962)

The positive review:

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the movie version of 'Long Day's Journey' . . . is that it comes through so well in cinematic terms. It is true that the film is often static and talky. But the camera is fascinating, and director Lumet has used his camera so well that the pictures often seem to flow from sequence to sequence as the actors talk. O'Neill's speeches, seemingly repetitious, but actually more rhythmic than iterant, lend themselves very well to Boris Kaufman's beautifully fluid black-and-white photography. Under Lumet's excellent direction, the cast handle O'Neill's lengthy, bitter, sad speeches expertly. (Commonweal, October 19, 1962)

Much of the problem with the negative assessments of the film version of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* stems from the debate among critics over the effectiveness of transposing a work from one medium into another—stage drama into cinema. Ely Landau and Sidney Lumet, both having extensive experience producing and directing television drama, were entrusted with the film rights to *Long Day's Journey* by Carlotta Monterey O'Neill because she felt that they would be faithful to O'Neill's script in transferring the play to the screen. She was not disappointed. In an interview, Lumet maintained that he "let O'Neill write his own screenplay" and that all aspects of production of the film were geared to a faithful presentation of the play. Lumet rehearsed his cast for three weeks prior to filming and, then, shot the scenes in sequence (as opposed

to the usual method of shooting scenes at random) so that the actors could reach natural emotional and psychological peaks as they might on the stage. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* subsequently became the first film in history for which all four stars received "Best Actor" awards at a Cannes Film Festival (1962). In defense of his film, which some critics dismissed as "merely a photographed stageplay," Lumet contended that "the advantage of the film medium over the stage is not limited to presenting 'wide, open spaces,' but in bringing the audience into the film and its action, so as to experience each nuance of gesture, facial expression and motion, all of which are lost to the majority of the theater audience" (*Center For Film Study release*, 1962).

Critics' Round Table (*Long Day's Journey Into Night*)

Listed below are the sources of major film reviews. These can be used for student analysis and evaluation, and as a guide for students to write criticism:

America, November 24, 1962, p. 1158.
Commonweal, October 19, 1962, pp. 94-5.
Esquire, December 1962, p. 22.
Life, October 26, 1962, p. 70A.
Nation, October 13, 1962, pp. 227-8.
National Review, January 29, 1963, pp. 79-80.
New Republic, September 24, 1962, p. 26.
New York Times, October 22, 1962, II, p. 7;
 October 7, 1962, II, p. 7; October 10, 1962,
 p. 57; October 14, 1962, II, p. 1.
New Yorker, October 20, 1962, p. 215.
Newsweek, October 15, 1962, p. 109.
Saturday Review, October 6, 1962, p. 30.
Sight and Sound, Fall 1962, p. 147.
Theatre Arts, October 1962, pp. 16-18.
Time, October 12, 1962, p. 102.

Here are selected excerpts from reviews and commentaries on this film. These can be used in preparation for group discussion, critical analysis, and writing.

Esquire (Dwight Macdonald)

"The theme is one of high tragedy: the unsuccessful struggle to escape the consequences of past actions. . . . There is no escape from the past and concepts like guilt or innocence are jejune ('meager, scanty, barren, unsatisfying to the mind; fr. Latin *jejunus*, fasting') in the dramatic context. As a board member of the New York Civil Liberties Union, I disagree; people are guilty only for their own acts, even then. . . . But, as a critic, I must acquiesce. The contrast between the Tyrones' past, gleaming with hope and possibilities, and their present, fluctuating between dull resignation and the shrieking agony of disappointment, this is high tragedy because life is that way and the sins of the fathers are always visited on the children. Or, as Marx put it, 'the past weighs like an Alp on the brain of the present,' a formulation not at all jejune."

New Yorker (Brendan Gill)

"The mastery of craft embodied in the play—those stringent yet inconspicuous unities of time, place, and circumstance; the deliberate non-existence of any people, or, indeed, of any air, outside the doomed summer home of the Tyrones; the cumulative force of the reiteration of a very

Program organized and written by:
Ernest Goldstein.

Guide to *The Long Voyage Home* and
Long Day's Journey Into Night written by:
Dr. William L. Sipple.

Consultants:
Audrey Roth, Miami-Dade Community College.
Michael Flanigan, Indiana University.

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small number of very big grudges against life by four self-pitying victims of a total failure of family love—this mastery not only goes wholly to waste in the film version but is the chief reason for its failure. By his piety in preserving the play nearly intact, the director, Sidney Lumet, fixes our attention firmly on the original work and invites us to measure, minute by minute for a hundred and fifty-four minutes, the extent to which any attempt to be true to one medium in terms of another betrays both."

The Reporter

"Unfortunately, the dynamics of the legitimate theater (which are preeminently a matter of language, as opposed to the cinema's movement) are not transferable to the screen when the static physical structure of the theater is retained. The filmed version of *Long Day's Journey* thrashes around ponderously at first, and then stretches out at grotesque length, gray and inert, like a whale hauled bodily from its natural element."

Time

"Translated to the screen by Director Sidney Lumet, who has added nothing to O'Neill's playscript and taken very little away, *Journey* provides a raw red slice of family life, liberally garnished with rotgut, morphine, vitriol and sour grapes, that takes more than three hours (allowing intermission) to digest. But it feeds the inner man . . . the play is stronger than the players. In his anguished sincerity, in his dogged loyalty to his own experience, O'Neill sees deeper perhaps than any other dramatist has even seen into family life. He sees its animal warmth, its blessed monotony, its healing private humor. And he sees all the terrible things people do to each other in the name of love."

Films and Filming

"*Long Day's Journey* is a great play, and if Sidney Lumet's belligerently faithful film of it is less than great cinema there is no valid resistance on that ground to the power of the words and the superlative acting of the remarkable cast he has assembled. Come to that, it is much more cinematic than might have been expected: Lumet has been at evident pains to make it so, panning restlessly around the constricting parlour after

the tormented Mary, seizing every pictorial advantage to be gained from her husband's fussy economy with the light bulbs, and heightened the angle effects when argument is rife. But chiefly the film is played in close-up, whereas the work demands the breadth and distance of a theatre. At this range it can, and often does, become too over-powering."

Life

"*Long Day's Journey* is a trip into greatness and a distinguished document of a doom-haunted family. . . . Sidney Lumet's spectacular achievement, therefore, is that he has contrived to maintain the difficult balance between victor and vanquished in each of the Tyrones. Nothing is final. No one is ever conclusively right or wrong. Nobody is finally hateful or lovable. All need our help, we come to feel, so that the three hours we spend in their company are not a moment too long."

Sight and Sound

"[Sidney Lumet] has approached the original with respect, even reverence, and the original is of sufficient quality to justify his treatment. While mother, father and two sons—desperately dependent, united by a resentment that turns love into hate—tear at each other's sensibilities and expose pretence after pretence, the steady intensification of emotion is as overpowering in the cinema as it can be on stage. The film remains theatrical, but in the best sense of that word."

Activities

1. Research the reviews listed in the Critics' Round Table. With which do you agree or disagree? Why? Write your own review of the film.
2. Using the play or film *Long Day's Journey Into Night* as your source, compare its main themes to those in O'Neill's other works.
3. Analyze the conflicts between and among the four Tyrones. What do their conflicts reveal about the nature of American family life?
4. Why is *Long Day's Journey Into Night* considered by many critics to be O'Neill's "masterpiece"?
5. Write a character analysis of one of the Tyrones. Compare and contrast your conception of the character with the interpretation of that character by the actor in the film.

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34 MacQuesten Parkway So.
Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550
914-664-5051

3868 Piedmont Ave.
Oakland, Calif. 94611
415-658-9890

8400 Brookfield Ave.
Brookfield, Ill. 60513
213-485-3925

1619 North Cherokee
Los Angeles, Calif. 90028
213-463-1131

2512 Program Drive
Dallas, Texas 75220
214-357-6494