Comedy in Eugene O'neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night.

Martin Kich

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COMEDY IN
EUGENE O'NEILL'S
LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

by
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Professor in Charge

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Abstract

Surprisingly scant critical attention has been given to Long Day's Journey Into Night. As a very peculiarly realistic drama, it does severely test its readers' sensitivity to tonal complexities. It has usually been regarded either as excessively melodramatic, or as so intensely pathetic that it somehow transcends conventional melodrama and approaches classical tragedy. Yet these readings ignore the often wild comedy everywhere apparent in the play. The comedy is rooted in the eccentricities of the characters and serves as a counterpoint to their pathetic circumstances. The comedy allows us to appreciate the Tyrones as complex personalities, to appreciate their pathos as something more broadly compelling than an intensely realized aberration.

James is the most obviously comic of the Tyrones. An actor who has made his reputation and his fortune in a single, melodramatic role, James tries to play too many roles off the stage to succeed at any of them. He is part patriarch and part buffoon—outrageously mundane and sympathetically eccentric. With Mary, he is reduced hopelessly to husbandly banalities. With Edmund, morbidly sensitive and consumptive, he is overly emotional and awkwardly defensive. With Jamie, his debauched namesake, he is comfortably, if heatedly, at odds.

Edmund usually takes Jamie's part against James, but Jamie increasingly finds Edmund's loyalty more bothersome than reassuring.
Jamie enjoys debauching himself; he promotes James' reproach in a comically masochistic way. On the other hand, Edmund feels superior about his milder debaucheries; he feels that his sensibilities as a sort of poet-philosopher are beyond reproach. So these brothers cling transparently to their childish loyalties, even as they increasingly regard each other's postures with an undercurrent of smug derision. Neither, however, has much to feel smug about. Jamie, for all his cynicism, is acutely, self-destructively emotional. Edmund, for all his mordant superiority, is desperately naive.

Finally, despite the obvious pathos in her addiction and in her sentimental yearning for her girlish innocence, Mary is quite comically schizophrenic and pettily sadistic. The more that she slips into her relapse and ostensibly distances herself from her family, the more she actually manipulates their guilt and melancholy to hold them as a captive audience.
INTRODUCTION

John Henry Raleigh has called Long Day's Journey Into Night O'Neill's "finest play (and tragedy) as well as perhaps the finest play (and tragedy) ever written on this continent."¹ I do not think that Raleigh's is a minority opinion, and yet very little critical attention has been paid to this masterpiece. (Indeed, of O'Neill's late plays only The Iceman Cometh has received anything approaching substantial attention.) We can account for this surprising lack of attention by considering the sort of masterpiece that Long Day's Journey Into Night is.

First, it is a very contemporary masterpiece, as far as masterpieces go. Although it was written largely in 1940, it was not published until 1956. Furthermore, O'Neill was just three years dead; despite the stir caused by the posthumous production and publication of five of his late works, the new generation of playwrights and critics were not about to abandon their ten years¹ struggle to unburden themselves of his influence and reputation. So Long Day's Journey Into Night has been acknowledged only grudgingly as the best of an already intimidating body of work.

Second, in the last 25 years, American drama and to a lesser extent, American poetry have fallen into the category of lesser forms. From a critical standpoint, the novel has developed, for better or worse, as the major native form—with cinema, a troubled upstart, as its distant challenger. Granted, previous to the last half-century, American drama hardly existed as a native form. So, on this account, the reputations of O'Neill, Williams, and Miller might be considered suspect. But, on the other hand, the works of these playwrights have never been subjected to the same sort of close analyses that have been given to major novels. In particular, the possibilities of tonal complexities in the dramas have been largely ignored.

Third, Long Day's Journey Into Night is a peculiar drama, even among O'Neill's works. Only Moon for the Misbegotten is comparable to it, and that play is very much a coda to the masterpiece. In Long Day's Journey Into Night, O'Neill achieved a sort of realism that reaches beyond the usual perimeters of literary realism. Event is submerged into character, which is diffused by the impossibilities of time. This play does not have a climax; it is a vortex. Its opening and its close are not so much arbitrary in design as entirely inconsequential in themselves. Even as the past overwhelms the present in this play, it is, as well, overwhelmed by the future.

In such a play, any symbol becomes arbitrary; any fact becomes ambiguous. The only measure of character becomes tone, and
it is a floating measure. The drama reduces life to something manageable, but the reduction is finally an illusion. The inexplicable is finally only more clearly inexplicable. The characters outdistance our conventional expectations of the form, become fully human—cause us to wonder not how they signify our visions of ourselves, but rather just how much vision we can have or expect of ourselves. We listen to the Tyrones, hear their words more clearly than they do and yet feel them less intensely than they do. This gap between hearing and feeling creates the various possibilities of tonal complexity that must be central to any understanding of the play. Still, if we look at the limited critical attention that has been paid to this play, we notice just how little attention has been given to its tone.

Critics such as Louis Scheaffer, Grant Redford, Doris Alexander, and Travis Bogard take an autobiographical approach to


the play. This, of course, amounts to drawing parallels and making distinctions between the art work and its real-life sources or models. Tonal complexities become flattened, ironically, in the care taken with fact and fabrication. For instance, Scheaffer refers to Edmund's story about the feud between Shaughnessy and Har-ker as "an episode that provides a bright touch of background before the shadows start to thicken around the self-tormented Ty-
rones."\(^6\) This analysis ignores the context of Edmund's story: the story might be just "a light touch" if Edmund were not telling it as he does and if the rest of the Tyrones were not responding as much to his telling as to the story itself. There is comedy in this scene, but it is not "light" and it is not exclusive to this scene. Likewise, Alexander, who takes a generally melodramatic approach to O'Neill's life and work, is content with passing off Long Day's Journey Into Night as the embodiment of "all his old anguish."\(^7\) She seems just to assume that this "anguish" naturally reaches us in an undiluted form. She ignores the filtering, the inexactness, of language. Bogard is even more superficial in this regard. He asserts: "Whiskey and morphine effectively remove all disguise . . . The Tyrones suffer and the spectators are convinced that when suffering is the only reality, life is truly as it is depicted in the play."\(^8\) Although drunks and dope-addicts

\(^6\) Scheaffer, p.261.

\(^7\) Alexander, p.289.
might sound straightforward, their addictions are themselves dis-
guises; so such addictions must complicate rather than simplify
our understanding of such characters. Likewise, if "suffering"
were "the only reality" in the play, the effect would surely be an
overwhelming pathos—a tone that only the worst sort of matinee
audience would find convincing. So Bogard seems to tell us final-
ly more about his own tastes than about the play.

Critics such as Judith Barlow\textsuperscript{9} are, somewhat differently,
mORE interested in the process of composition than in the real-
life sources of the play. The distinction often becomes vague,
however, and we have to wonder whether the process or the product
should be of greater interest to us, whether we can understand the
product through the process when the product is more definitive,
for us if not for O'Neill. In short, Barlow never satisfactorily
explains why the composition of this play should come to interest
us in the first place.

Critics such as Egil Tornqvist\textsuperscript{10} focus more on the process of
production than on composition. Tornqvist seems to start with an

\textsuperscript{8}Bogard, p.425.

\textsuperscript{9}Judith E. Barlow, "Long Day's Journey Into Night: From Early

\textsuperscript{10}Egil Tornqvist, A Drama of Souls, (New Haven: Yale Univer-
interest in the concrete details of the play—the physical appearances, the mannerisms, the usual props, the stage movements of the characters. But Tornqvist's approach takes him out of the drama being enacted and into the realms of Jungian symbolism. On the other hand, critics such as David McDonald and Albert Rothenberg seem to have started with a conceptual mold into which they could fit the play, or some part or version of the play. Titles such as "The Phenomenology of the Glance in . . ." and "The Defense of Psychoanalysis in . . ." warn us that the complexities being analyzed will be illustrated by rather than inherent to the play. Moreover, regardless of how he composed it, or regardless of what concepts he might have consciously drawn upon or intuitively applied, O'Neill's play seems tonally premised on the futility of trying to understand intimacies through concepts.

Finally, critics such as Leonard Charbrowe, Henry Hewes, and John Henry Raleigh do acknowledge the importance of tone in


this play, although they generally seem to assume as a sort of
given that the play must be pathetic. How else could O'Neill
have treated a family—his own at that—of alcoholics with a dope-
addict mother as its central figure? Charbrowe asserts that "by
a purely aesthetic means he was able to bring about a greater re-
lease of tragic pathos than ever before."16 But Charbrowe goes on
to delineate only surface motives, causes and effects. He never
questions the adequacy or accuracy of anything that the Tyrones
say, disregarding that by halfway through the play they are all
on their way to getting very high. He seems, in short, to be more
interested in the Tyrones' pasts than in their present. He has an
eye for the symbolic, but no ear for tone. Hewes similarly notes
"the terror it inspires"—its "torment and violence."17 But this
is as far as he goes toward specifying why he calls the play "a
grim dance of death."18 In his book published in 1965,19 Raleigh
seems mostly just to change Hewes' metaphor, to become more figur-
ative. He calls the opening of the play "the grim hint that the

16Charbrowe, p.xxiii.
17Hewes, p.218.
18Hewes, p.217.
19Raleigh, The Plays of Eugene O'Neill.
Tyrones on this sunny morning in August 1912 are poised on the knife-edge of the insubstantial happiness of a tenuous present, with a darker past behind them and a darker future to come."\textsuperscript{20} Raleigh then delineates all that oppresses the Tyrones, without seeming to consider at all how we should find such an incredibly oppressed family at all convincing. For addictions, alcoholisms, dead infants, attempted suicides, youthful debaucheries, and mortal illnesses are the stuff of melodrama, not of realistic drama. Raleigh seems to have forgotten what he himself wrote in his essay published just a year earlier: "And the considerable talent for humor that manifested itself in \textit{Ah, Wilderness!} is here joined to a somber plot; so that we have the final paradox that this darkest of tragedies is continually breaking into wild comedy."\textsuperscript{21}

Raleigh never does go on to define the substance and effects of this tonal paradox in the play. To do so is the purpose of this paper. For it is the comedy in \textit{Long Day's Journey Into Night} that gives us some essential distance from the Tyrones' pathos and, paradoxically, convinces us that their pathos is real--that they are complex personalities rather than stick figures. I will necessarily focus on the comedy in the play, since few seem to have any difficulty recognizing the pathos.

\textsuperscript{20}Raleigh, \textit{The Plays of Eugene O'Neill}, p.199.

Chapter 1: James, A Paradoxical Butt

James is the most obviously comic of the Tyrones. We generally respond to the comic in him and then sense the pathetic. For instance, at the very beginning of the play he comes across as a caricature of the middle-aged, bourgeois husband, giving Mary "a playful hug" and saying, "'You're a fine armful now, Mary, with those twenty pounds you've gained.'" Then shortly he says about himself, "'I hope I'm not as big a glutton as that sounds . . . But thank God, I've kept my appetite and I've the digestion of a young man of twenty, if I am sixty-five!'" (p. 14). The "'if I am sixty-five!'" is a nice touch; to make the point about his youthfulness he has to tell how old he is but can't quite bring himself to be conclusive about it. Very similarly, he forces a joke about his sons' remaining behind in the dining room, "'It's a secret con-fab they don't want me to hear, I suppose. I bet they're cooking up some new scheme to touch the Old Man!'" (p. 15). That James should even colloquially refer to himself as "'the Old Man!'" shows not only how much he has forced this joke, but also suggests how careless he can sometimes be with language, even at his own expense.

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James' carelessness with language has an odd obverse. While his attempts at good humor usually fall flat and his grousing usually makes him the butt of a joke, he does occasionally say something clever. It is pathetic that no one else seems to acknowledge his cleverness, but it is at the same time comic that he does not notice it himself. For instance, when Mary complains about the foghorn, he says, "'Yes, it's like having a sick whale in the back yard'" (p.17). Yet, neither Mary nor he even smile pointedly at this remark.

But James in other ways fits the stereotype of the middle-aged, bourgeois husband. For one thing, he snores and his wife and sons tease him about it mercilessly. They also make a lot of jokes about the embarrassing old clothes he wears gardening—and about his preoccupation with the hedges. Of course, he does spend as much time gabbing with the neighbors as he does actually trimming those hedges, which only makes his clothes the more embarrassing. And, despite his continual boasting about his hearty appetite, he forgets about mealtimes once he gets talking. Yet, in all of these respects he is so contentedly himself that the stereotyping does not seem derisive.

James appreciates small pleasures, but he's ridiculously pretentious about their being small. For instance, he says, "'There's nothing like the first after-breakfast cigar, if it's a good one, and this new lot have the right mellow flavor . . . . I got them dead
cheap" (p.15). Regardless of whether the cigar is any good, James, while intending the opposite, presents himself as a sucker for a "great bargain" (p.15).

James clings pathetically to his small successes, but he is so quick to remind others of them that he comes across as at least a boor, if not a braggart. When Mary talks snidely about McGuire, James says, "After all, he was the one who advised me to buy that place on Chestnut Street and I made a quick turnover on it for a fine profit" (p.15). Defending McGuire is the equivalent of defending himself, which is the equivalent of congratulating himself.

Later, however, James defends his faith in Doc Hardy by saying, "I can't afford one of the fine society doctors who prey on rich summer people" (p.31). James manages to call himself both poor and wealthy in one sentence. In addition, his self-defense is so ridiculously over-stated and self-convinced that even Jamie is momentarily surprised: "Can't afford? You're one of the biggest property owners around here" (p.31). And James responds with incredible guilelessness, "That doesn't mean I'm rich. It's all mortgaged--" (p.31). James simply sees nothing incongruous in his keeping himself impoverished to escape the poorhouse. His attitude toward his land is logically indefensible, but as Jamie knows, it is in practical terms unassailable. Yet their argument is the more comic because its result is so predictable.

James is haunted by his impoverished childhood in Ireland, and yet he is oppressively proud of having endured it, until he is
finally defending impoverishment by way of defending Ireland. When Jamie insinuates that James has a peasant's superstitions about consumption, James bristles, "'keep your dirty tongue off Ireland, with your sneers about peasants and bogs and hovels!'" (p.34). But "'hovels!' is comically James', addition.

James is justifiably proud of his status as a landowner, but he sees nothing incongruous about his crying poverty at the same time. Almost symbolic of this incongruousness is his arrangement of the lighting in the living room: "At center is a round table with a green shaded reading lamp, the cord plugged in one of the four sockets in the chandelier above" (p.12). Using a chandelier in this way is more a sign of a lack of 'class' than having no chandelier at all. In fact, James comically can't decide which class he belongs to—the gentry or the peasantry. Nowhere is this more comically apparent than when Edmund tells the story of the continuing feud between Shaughnessy, James' pig-farming tenant, and Harker, James' millionaire neighbor. At first James calls Shaughnessy "'a wily Shanty Mick'" (p.22) and a "'dirty scallywag'" (p.24), but at the punchline of the story he blurts out, "'The damned old scoundrel! By God you can't beat him!'" (p.25). The feud involves a broken fence between Shaughnessy's farm and Harker's ice pond, and James just can't decide what side of that fence he ought to be on.

James wants to be a proper influence on his derelict sons, but he is so opinionated he cannot distinguish between guidance and
pettiness. For instance, not content with having an impressive "glassed-in bookcase" filled with bound sets of the classics, he has hung "a picture of Shakespeare" above Edmund's puny bookcase crammed with the works of the moderns (p.11).

James knows very well what his sons find ridiculous about him and yet obstinately invites their continued abuse by being himself. When Jamie and Edmund are laughing mysteriously in the dining room, James grumbles to Mary, "It's on me. I'll bet that much. It's always on the Old Man" (p.18). In a way he's right. Edmund's story about the feud between Shaughnessy and Harker doesn't directly have much to do with James. But his behavior during the telling of the story—his inability to refrain from making transparently contradictory, paternal remarks—finally turns much of the joke on him. His earlier comment to Mary becomes a self-fulfilled prophecy.

James and Jamie: Comfortable Animosities

James is thoroughly an actor. He assumes roles reflexively. He counts on others to know their parts. Mary and Edmund simply don't know theirs well enough for him to remain comfortable with them. That leaves Jamie, who seems to know his part too well. He plays the wastrel to the hilt. So James finds it easiest to communicate with Jamie, but they communicate mostly in rehearsed insults.

It is a conventional irony that father and first-born son (and namesake here) should be very much alike and very much at odds. But
O'Neill dramatizes more than this conventional irony. James and Jamie actually seem to enjoy insulting each other, as long as their feelings about Mary aren't brought into it.

For instance, in Act One, James comically lists all of Jamie's failures from his schooldays to the present and finishes with an incongruously "indignant appeal": "'You're young yet. You could still make your mark. You had the talent to become a fine actor! You have it still. You're my son--!'" (p.33). And Jamie, showing just how much talent he has, "boredly" takes his cue and responds, "'Let's forget me. I'm not interested in the subject. Neither are you!'" (p.33). The argument has become, it seems, soothingly formulaic; for Jamie, who is so upset about Edmund's illness that he has even blurted out his feelings in front of Mary, now says quite "casually," "'What started us on this? Oh, Doc Hardy. When is he going to call you up about Edmund?!'" (p.33). The argument about Doc Hardy's qualifications has gotten lost in the familiar recriminations between this father and first-born son, and similarly, the subsequent argument about the seriousness of Edmund's illness gets lost in a comically tangential debate about who is more responsible for Edmund's debauchery. The result is a brief, very qualified, and very comically unexpected agreement that Edmund himself is more responsible for his poor health than either of them is. James even says, "'You're a healthy hulk like me—or you were at his age—but he's always been a bundle of nerves like his mother!'" (p.33).

James' vain qualification—and it is at least as vain as snide—
should not distract us from the broader comedy of his even making such a comparison between himself and Jamie in the middle of one of their familiar arguments. Edmund's behavior of late has exasperated both of them, to the point that only the connection they see between his illness and Mary's "nervousness" seems to prevent them from taking some brief, mutual satisfaction in his illness.

James and Jamie are both high-strung and fair-minded, an oddly reciprocal combination of qualities that is ironically threatened by each relapse Mary suffers.

James and Jamie become markedly uncomfortable with each other only when they bring up Mary's addiction. Only then does their animosity become pathetic, for it prevents them from talking reasonably to each other when they both wish to be reasonable. Their animosity confuses them, whereas usually it is the one thing they are not confused about. Their insults become half-stated accusations neither wants to complete, for each accusation turns easily back on the accuser. If anything, their daily animosities have kept each of them from seeing himself too clearly, through the other. In this sense, their relationship has become dangerously fixed. It cannot develop.

For the sake of Mary's good humor, James and Jamie occasionally manage to put aside their animosities, if only briefly. For instance, when Jamie and Edmund first enter the living room, Mary giddily compares James' and Jamie's snoring, and neither of them balks at all at the comparison. Then, when she gets self-conscious
about her giddiness and worries over her appearance, they com-
pliment her like two chums. But Edmund joins in, returns to the
subject of James' snoring, and forgets or ignores Mary's comparison.
And Jamie jumps in on cue, "'The Moor, I know his trumpet'" (p.21).
This is all too much for James. It is bad enough for him to have
been compared to Jamie, but to have that comparison ignored and to
have Jamie make a worse joke at his expense is too much for him to
bear. He blurts out, "'If it takes my snoring to make you remem-
ber Shakespeare instead of the dope sheet on the ponies . . .'" (p.21).
James not only inadvertently extends Jamie's joke by ex-
tending the connection between Shakespeare and snoring, but he also
utters the ominous word---"'dope.'" James tries hard to get in the
last word, but the moment belongs to Jamie.

Yet, the next time that James and Jamie temporarily become
chums, James clearly gets the upper hand. Jamie makes the mistake
of saying in front of Mary: "'It's not just a cold he's got. The
Kid is damned sick'" (p.26). James and Jamie do manage to smooth
things over, but Jamie has to deny his anxieties that James will a-
bandon Edmund to a cheap sanitorium and that Mary is showing all of
the signs of a relapse. Worse, after Mary goes blithely off to
check on the maid, Jamie has to swallow James' calling him "'a fine
lunkhead'" (p.29), which is probably the funniest epithet in all of
O'Neill.

There is a third moment in Act One that seems to form a se-
quence with the two that I just mentioned. Again James comically
gets the upper hand. After James and Jamie try unsuccessfully to discuss Mary's and Edmund's conditions, Jamie hears Mary enter the next room, and to allay any suspicions she might have that they are talking about her, he attempts the most ludicrous deception of the play; he almost shouts, "'Well, if we're going to cut the front hedge today, we'd better go to work!'" (p.39). It's an archetypically comic moment, made pathetic only by Jamie's being so unsettled that he has contradicted the one role that he plays well. James inevitably feels compelled to take advantage of this open opportunity to goad Jamie. Immediately buoyed by his ability to soothe Mary, James says, "'Come on, Jamie. Your mother's right to scold us. The way to start work is to start work. The hot sun will sweat some of that booze fat off your middle!'" (p.41). Indeed James immediately leaves the room before Jamie can respond in kind --though Jamie would not likely do so for fear of upsetting Mary. On top of it all, Jamie's self-restraint is self-defeating. When he doesn't grumble about James and instead transparently patronizes her, Mary rebuffs him scathingly. We wince for Jamie like we often do for other comic bumbling.

In Act Two, Scene One, the more obvious evidence of Mary's relapse adds a new dimension to the animosities between James and Jamie. Since James doesn't appear until late in the scene, Jamie has time to play the situation against him; the comedy in this maneuver works against the pathos of Edmund's and Mary's refusals to admit her relapse. Jamie can't work himself up to berating Mary.
He feels too much vague guilt about her addiction, and Edmund and Mary manage to put him on the defensive. The most that he can do is to make very bitter insinuations, particularly when Edmund has briefly left the living room. So Jamie needs some sort of scapegoat for his frustrations, and James as usual is the most convenient possibility. He sneeringly refers to James as "'the famous beautiful voice'" (p.60). When Mary denies him even this satisfaction, he has to content himself with grumbling, "'I wish the Old Man would get a move on. It's a rotten trick the way he keeps us waiting, and then beefs because they're spoiled'" (p.61). Comically, Jamie is biding his time until his target presents himself in person. When he enters, James does predictably offer a transparent excuse for his lateness, "'Sorry I'm late. Captain Turner stopped to talk and once he starts gabbing you can't get away from him'" (p.65). It's the perfect opening. Jamie retorts, "'You mean once he starts listening'"—then adds, when James predictably glances at the bottle on the table, "'It's all right. The level in the bottle hasn't changed'" (p.65). Edmund breaks in, and Jamie doesn't have another clean opportunity to jibe James until James groused in his usual style with him, "'You got the drink you were after, didn't you? Why are you wearing that gloomy look on your mug?'" To which Jamie responds with the perfect wryness of a patient antagonist, "'You won't be singing a song yourself soon'" (p.66). But, for all of this comedy, despite all of this easy release, Jamie has to force a jibe at James near the end of the scene: "'For God's sake, let's"
eat. I've been working in the damned dirt under the hedge all morning. I've earned my grub'" (p.68). In a different way, this remark is as comically ill-timed as Jamie's earlier, falsely enthusiastic wish to "'get to work!'" (p.39). He doesn't want to eat now any more than he wanted to work then. He doesn't bolster Edmund's spirits now any more than he reassured Mary then. Yet, whereas he then opened himself up to being the butt of James' jibes, now he just confronts the limitations on his rescuing anyone or any situation through a smart-remark. His remark would indeed seem pathetically desperate if we did not have the strong sense that he has been saving it, or something like it, since he went outside to work on that hedge.

After lunch, James tries ineffectually to reach Mary—first through sarcasm and then through compassion. Mary silences him by responding to his words while completely ignoring his tone. Jamie, at the same time, remains absolutely silent, as if he is equally oppressed by Mary's behavior and by James' and Edmund's half-baked responses to it. But when Mary leaves, Jamie immediately exclaims with brutal cynicism, "'Another shot in the arm!'" (p.75). He knows the sort of response that this will draw from James, and he welcomes it, the release that it will bring. James doesn't fail him: "'Hold your foul tongue and your rotten Broadway loafer's lingo! Have you no pity or decency!'" (p.76). It is a rebuke practised on Broadway, however; there is as much pleasurable flourish in it as there is outrage. Moreover, James, not content with Ed-
mund's siding with him to rebuke Jamie, takes the opportunity to preach to both his sons about their lack of religious beliefs. Even after his sons point out how ludicrous his posturing religiosity is, he continues to complain until he finally blames Mary's relapse on her forgetting to pray! But James' preaching is fatalistic. So Jamie, surprised first by Edmund's siding with James to berate his cynicism, then relieved by the opportunity to join Edmund in mocking James' preachiness, is finally forced into silence by his inability to disagree with James' fatalism—his inability to agree with Edmund that there is still hope for Mary.

The alliances here are so volatile and yet transitory that they comically make us forget—at least momentarily—what Mary is doing upstairs. The tensions among the three male Tyrones are ostensibly rooted in Mary's relapse, but they really involve uncertain conflicts of personality previously masked, simplified, by uncertainties about Mary. The male Tyrones are now struggling as much, if not more, to readjust themselves to each other, as they are to readjust themselves to Mary's addiction. Mary increasingly becomes a specter they anticipate like quarrelsome guests waiting out their suspense in a blithely haunted house. O'Neill comically targets their self-indulgence, their impulse to play their situation like a theatrical melodrama. Between this comedy and the broader pathetic perimeters of their lives, O'Neill seems to suggest a tragedy inherent to any life lived beyond infancy. The
conventional tragedy of Eugene Tyrones’ death is, in a wry irony, the only escape from the tragedy that O'Neill came to see as otherwise inevitable. James Tyrone is the most obviously comic of the Tyrones precisely because he has an acute sense of this real tragedy but has thoroughly trained himself to behave, even to think, melodramatically. And Jamie, reacting against his father in a conventionally melodramatic way, has, in effect, trained himself similarly as a cynic. So the more they try to comprehend, to respond to, the pathos of their situation, the more they behave in an essentially comic way—the more they exasperate those very sensibilities that lie at the center of their experience.

After Mary and Edmund have in turn gone upstairs after lunch, James and Jamie lapse rather comfortably into their usual animosities toward each other. They are not capable of the sort of renewed perspective that a moralist might expect of them, but they are capable of reestablishing some, albeit idiosyncratic, sense of their selves. After a terse exchange about the details of Doc Hardy’s call about Edmund, they begin to play on each other’s nerves—and ‘play’ is not a wholly figurative description of their behavior with each other, for neither of them has ‘nerves’ in the sense that Mary and Edmund have them. While they find dealing with Mary and Edmund very ennervating, they find dealing with each other a wry relief, an energizing experience. James comically takes the opportunity to sigh, "I never thought a child of mine—It doesn’t come from my side of the family. There wasn’t one of us that didn’t
have lungs as strong as an ox" (p.79). Jamie responds comically, for he is less exasperated by than sarcastically inured to such mordant vanity: "'Who gives a damn about that part of it!'" (p.79). From this point on, they argue ostensibly about James' ability to pay for Edmund's treatment. But the argument is marked by the comical phrasing of their rejoinders: "'don't give Hardy your old over-the-hills-to-the-poorhouse song about taxes and mortgages!'; "'I'm no millionaire who can throw money away!'; "'he'll know it isn't the truth--especially if he hears afterwards you've . . . let that flannel-mouth, gold-brick merchant sting you with another piece of bum property!'"; "'Keep your nose out of my business!'"; "'What . . . with your Irish bog-trotter idea that consumption is fatal!'"; "'keep your dirty tongue off Ireland! You're a fine one to sneer, with the map of it on your face!'"; "'Not after I wash my face!'" (pp.79-80). Indeed, by the end of this argument, it is very clear how much they have recovered their selves—how relaxed they have become with each other. Jamie says, "'I've done all I can do on the hedge until you cut more of it. You don't want me to go a-head with your clipping. I know that!'" (p.80). We can hear the comic emphasis on "'your!'"—and James contentedly responds, "'No. You'd get it crooked, as you get everything else!'" (p.81). Now, when Mary reenters the living room, she says to James, "'What's the matter with Jamie? Have you been nagging at him again?'" (p.81). The fact of the matter is that Mary's reappearance, after she has given herself another fix and is showing obvious signs of it, has
suddenly undercut the better mood that Jamie has come to through arguing with James!

James and Mary: A Chaplinesque Sadness

James wants desperately, especially in Act One, to be a supportive husband to Mary, but pathetically he can't decide whether to believe in her or to suspect her. In reassuring her of his belief in her, he is in effect testing her. When she perceives he is testing her and reacts strongly against it, she increases his suspicions even as he tries to reassure her that he has none. In short, James does a lot of reassuring and he really isn't sure about anything.

He works himself into corners that he lamely escapes with comic banalities. At one particularly awkward moment he says to Mary, "'So keep up the good work, Mary!'" (p. 17).

Indeed, early in the play, James often has such a hard time keeping Mary at ease with him that he reflexively relies on insulting Jamie to bring her around to her "normal" self again. But this ploy usually backfires comically. For instance, shortly after Mary's first disquieting reference to the fog, which follows on one of James' failures to reassure her that he is not suspicious of her, he groused about Jamie and does redirect her attention. She says maternally, "'He'll turn out all right in the end, you wait and see.'" And on cue, James responds paternally, "'He'd better start soon, then. He's nearly thirty-four.'" Mary ignores this, as any 'good' wife would. But James lacks the composure to let
the jibe lie. He grumbles, "'You'd find excuses for him no matter what he did!'" (p.18). Whatever vindictiveness he exhibits here is obviously childish, for Mary "pats his hand" and quickly reprimands him, "'Shush!'" (p.19). So James, in trying to get Mary to act like a normal wife and mother, manages to behave like both her husband and her child in the space of just a few moments. She's composed. He's confused. His success is at best comically qualified.

To his credit, James acknowledges Mary's relapse when the evidence of it becomes quite conclusive. And he does not make an especially big fuss over what he has expected would happen sooner or later again, much as it has happened repeatedly in the past. His first expression of his "dull anger" seems perfectly natural for him: "'I understand that I've been a God-damned fool to believe in you!'" (p.69). But even so, James does start acting a bit, and this is at least a little bit comic. He needs an appropriate prop; so he pours himself an especially "big drink." Almost despite himself, he slips into a grief-stricken appeal that, unfortunately, takes the form of a personal cliche: "'For the love of God, why couldn't you have the strength to keep on?"' (p.70). And Mary's incredibly incredulous response is comic because its impetus is at least partly his cliche: "'I don't know what you're talking about. Have the strength to keep on what?"' (p.70). So when James says, "'Never mind. It's no use now!'" (p.70), our sense of the pathos in his resignation is at least somewhat qualified by our realiza-
tion that he has once again trapped himself comically in a posture.

When Mary reenters the living room, having gotten herself a
fix upstairs, James tries at first to be curt with her, responding
whenever he can almost monosyllabically: "'No, Mary!'" (p. 81); "'I
did not!'" (p. 82). But just as he cannot refrain from taking any
opportunity to grouse with or about Jamie, so he cannot prevent
himself from being lulled into a husbandly self-defensiveness by
Mary's wifely teasing. When she suggests that he'll get drunk
this night, he says "resentfully,." "'I won't. I never get drunk
... I've never missed a performance in my life. That's the
proof!'" (p. 83). Such "'proof!'" is comically lame--vain--and in-
congruously so in this context. A bit later, he tries to encourage
her to take a ride in her automobile, but slips into bemoaning how
much the car has cost him: "'Waste! The same old waste that will
land me in the poorhouse in my old age. What good did it do you?
I might as well have thrown the money out the window!'" (p. 84). He
simply forgets why he has brought up the car to begin with; and
when Mary turns the word "'waste!'" against him, he exclaims, "'It's
one of the best makes! Everyone says it's better than any of the
new ones!'" (p. 84). But James, who knows what "'Everyone says
... I'" is not aware that Smythe, the chauffeur, is cheating him:
"'I don't believe it! He may not be a fancy millionaire's flunky
but he's honest! You're as bad as Jamie! You suspect everyone!'"
(p. 85). But Mary isn't Jamie, and James comically can't hold his
own with her. She wears him down to a sort of masochistic resigna-

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tion: "'Are you back with Eugene now? Can't you let our dead baby rest in peace?'" (p.87). It's not your run-of-the-mill dead baby joke, but considering what has preceded it, it is a joke. Then, when Edmund enters shortly afterwards, James feels compelled to put up a front that is not any more convincing than Jamie's earlier professed enthusiasm for working on the hedge: "'Well! You look spic and span! I'm on my way to change, too!'" (p.89). Comically, the diction is very much James', even as the enthusiasm is very transparent.

When James comes home late in the day, Mary keeps him comically off-balance so that he can neither ignore her nor rebuke her with any force. At one point, she reminds him, in front of Edmund, about how his theater friends brought him home drunk on their wedding night. James exclaims self-defensively, "'I don't remember! It wasn't on our honeymoon! And I never in my life had to be helped into bed, or missed a performance!'" (p.113). His exclamations only emphasize the ridiculousness of his predictable self-defense. A bit later, when Mary's reminiscing is getting too much to take, James wryly jokes, "'Well, if I can't eat yet, I can drink. I'd forgotten I had this!'" (p.115). Again, however, Mary has the laugh on him—he shouts, "'Who's been tampering with my whiskey?'" (p.116). Still later, James comes back to the living room, flushed with gratification that Jamie hasn't been able to pick the new padlock on the door to the cellar where he keeps his whiskey. But Mary has driven Edmund off with her babbling, and now James has no one to drink
with. Indeed, James no sooner announces that he's "hungry as a hunter" (p.123) than Mary blankly announces that she's not hungry, that she's going back upstairs. So James, who has finally arrived on time for a meal, ends up eating alone. The Act closes with James sinking with a Chaplinesque sadness into his chair.

James and Edmund: Exaggerated Affection

James, early on, connects Edmund's illness with Mary's 'uneasiness.' And, just as he suppresses his suspicions about her relapse, so too he suppresses his forebodings about the seriousness of Edmund's illness; just as he skirts Mary's uneasiness with a forced, husbandly joviality, so too he skirts Edmund's provocative asininity by blaming Jamie for it. Both strategies backfire—for Mary uses his husbandly joviality to conceal her relapse for as long as possible, and Edmund scolds him for abusing Jamie unfairly! But when Mary's relapse and Edmund's consumption become incontrovertibly obvious, James compensates for his failure with Mary by indulging Edmund—by giving Edmund the same sort of good-cheer support that has failed with Mary. His manner toward Edmund becomes comically exaggerated, a sort of desperate fatherliness that becomes incongruously mixed with his usual, ridiculously platitudinous paternalism. When Edmund "dryly" tells James that he needs carfare to Doc Hardy's, James first lectures—"'You'll always be broke until you learn the value—'" (p.89). Catching himself, James slips Edmund a ten-spot, but has to prompt Edmund sarcastically—first with "'Thank
you!" and then with Shakespeare, ""How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is—"" (p.89). When Edmund finishes the quotation, James is "embarrassed by his generosity" and babbles, "'You'll probably meet some of your friends uptown and you can't hold your end up and be sociable with nothing in your jeans!" (p.90). Edmund is going to Doc Hardy's to have his consumption confirmed, not to pal around with his friends! James has gone too far, and Edmund "cynically" asks, "'Did Doc Hardy tell you I was going to die?'" (p.90). And we have to feel that James, comically deserves this. Then, James and Edmund finally "hug" only to have Mary burst in late, "'I won't have it . . . Do you hear me, Edmund! . . . Saying you're going to die!'" (p.90). James is simply doomed to endure this sort of burlesque situation.

When James and Edmund return home and find Mary quite high, they resolve to ignore her. But James has had a bit too much to drink, and so he ignores the crazy edge to Mary's motherliness toward Edmund and indulges himself in some fatherly advice: "'All the same there's truth in your mother's warning. Beware of that brother of yours, or he'll poison life for you with his damned sneering serpent's tongue!'" (p.109). Of course, the ten-spot hasn't driven a wedge between Edmund and Jamie; it has just brought James and Edmund a bit more amicably together. So, it's no surprise when Edmund responds, "'Oh, cut it out, Papa!'" (p.109). Still, later, when Edmund cannot "control his bitterness" toward Mary, James counsels him, "'Now, lad. You know better than to pay attention—!'"
But Mary meanders on with her reminiscing, tracing Jamie's drunkenness back to James' "giving him a teaspoonful of whiskey to quiet him" when, as a child, he had a toothache (p.110). This is too much for James: "'So I'm to blame that lazy hulk has made a drunken loafer of himself? Is that what I came home to listen to?'" (p.111). No, he came home to listen to his own counsel—Edmund reminds him, "'Papa! You just told me not to pay attention.'" Furthermore, Edmund again implicitly takes Jamie's side, "'Anyway it's true. You did the same thing with me!" (p.111). Indeed, Edmund has to shout "'Papa!'" to keep James from exploding when Mary connects his belief in the medicinal effects of whiskey to his "'people'"—"'the most ignorant kind of poverty-stricken Irish!'" (p.111). Moreover, Edmund soothes his father with a very comic gesture of support: "'Are we going to have this drink, or aren't we?'" (p.111). James, for his part, accepts the gesture and says, "'Drink hearty, lad!'" (p.111), forgetting that he has just advised him against drinking—forgetting that drinking is one of the worst things, if not for Edmund's heart, then certainly for his respiratory tract in general. Indeed, a good while later, after Mary teases him about his keeping the house dark, James lamely defends himself, finally turning to Edmund—"'I'm a fool to talk reason!'" (p.117)—for support. When this falls flat, James takes another tack—"'I'll get a fresh bottle of whiskey, lad, and we'll have a real drink!'" (p.117). Then, when James comes back with the fresh bottle, Edmund, as usual, has taken off in a tantrum.

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When Edmund returns home for the second time, he is drunk. He finds James sitting alone, drunk. The two of them sit together for quite a long while, until Jamie returns home, drunk. Because they are both drunk, James' and Edmund's behavior toward each other is more exaggerated than ever. James first says that he's glad to see Edmund, but then he complains that Edmund has left the light on in the hallway: "I told you to turn out that light. We're not giving a ball. There's no reason to have the house ablaze with electricity at this time of night, burning up money!" (p.126). This leads predictably to a heated argument, with Edmund bringing into it James' belief that both Shakespeare and the Duke of Wellington were Irish Catholics! Finally, James explodes: "there's a straw that breaks the camel's back. You'll obey me and put out that light or, big as you are, I'll give you a thrashing that'll teach you—" (pp.127-128).

Then, for some unexplained reason, James "remembers Edmund's illness" and reverses his tone entirely, jumping onto his chair and childishly turning in all the bulbs in the chandelier, exclaiming, "We'll have them all on! Let them burn! To hell with them! The poorhouse is the end of the road, and it might as well be sooner as later!" (p.128). When Edmund, naturally surprised by this incredible gesture, says, "You're a wonder, Papa!" (p.128), James "sheepishly grumbles," "That's right, laugh at the old fool! The poor old ham! But the final curtain will be the poorhouse just the same, and that's not comedy!" (p.128). No, but this certainly is.
After this outburst, father and son settle down over the bottle on the table. James wonders if Edmund hasn't already had enough to drink, especially considering his condition, but this argument is moot: Edmund drinks and James toasts, "'Drink hearty'" (p.130). Edmund then recites Dowson and rambles about what it was like walking in the fog on this night. James, drunk as he is and predisposed as he is to look kindly on Edmund, acknowledges the "'poet'" in Edmund, with only a joking qualification about Edmund's "'morbid'" tone: "'Devil take your pessimism. I feel low-spirited enough'" (p.131). James also inevitably recites Shakespeare, and Edmund parodies the quotation, "'Fine! That's beautiful. But I was not trying to say that. We are such stuff as manure is made on, so let's drink up and forget it. That's more my idea'" (p.131). It is a cynically witty idea, but it's not Edmund's; he's being as pretentious here as always, and James is unable to break through that pretentiousness. Shortly, Edmund recites the Symons' translation of a Baudelaire prose poem, and after asking who wrote it, James says simply and comically, "'Never heard of him'" (p.133). But it does not end there.

Eventually, James and Edmund get into another circular argument about the relative merits of Shakespeare and the moderns. Edmund says "'provocatively'" about the former, "'They say he was a souse, too!'" (p.135). James shouts this down, "'They lie! I don't doubt he liked his glass—it's a good man's failing—!'" (p.135). He echoes this later, but with a twist, describing Mary's father: "'It's true
he never touched a drop till he was forty, but after that he made up for lost time. He became a steady champagne drinker, the worst kind. That was his grand pose, to drink only champagne!" (p.137).

In short, what killed Mary's father was his extravagance! James is irrepressible, and eventually Edmund turns the conversation back on James, accusing James of planning to send him to the cheapest State Institution. Ostensibly Edmund is angry because his father has no pride, but clearly Edmund is worried about the damage to his own pride. Edmund isn't really talking to James; he's manipulating him and abusing his sensibilities. He even forces his suicide attempt into the conversation. James is forced to recite his pathetic anecdote about Booth's praise of his acting, to get a game of Casino going, and finally to plead, "'The glare from those extra lights hurts my eyes. You don't mind if I turn them out, do you?!'" (p.151). Edmund claims that, after they have had it out, he knows James "'a lot better now!'" (p.151). But near the end of the scene he oppresses James with a long, poeticized speech "'about not being wanted and loving death!'" (p.154). James exits on Jamie's noisy entrance not because he is afraid to face Jamie, but because he can't take any more of Edmund, who will surely side with Jamie—who will surely force his taking sides, intentionally or not.
Chapter 2: Jamie and Edmund, The Cynic & The Kid

The relationship between Jamie and Edmund is probably the most complex and the most wryly comic of the play. Jamie sees himself as Edmund's role-model. He enjoys playing Edmund's "big brother." But Edmund doesn't have the right temperament for debauchery as Jamie practises it. Jamie's motto is—"'I'll stick to Broadway, and a room with a bath, and bars that serve bonded Bourbon!'" (p.35). Edmund, on the other hand, appreciates Broadway by way of "the Symons' translation of Baudelaire's 'Epilogue'" (p.133). Jamie appreciates vice as a luxury. Edmund regards it as an expression of despair. Jamie debauches himself because he enjoys playing the wastrel—because when he is drinking and whoring he can be more himself than he is otherwise, without feeling vulnerable. Edmund debauches himself to prove to the world what a corrupting place it is—to corrupt himself beyond self-reproach. Jamie's debauchery is essentially masochistic: he measures his enjoyment by the amount of general reproach, and especially self-reproach, that it generates. Edmund's debauchery is essentially naive: he measures the pains of the world by his own. Jamie, by debauching himself, protects himself from his real lack of illusions. He can play the cynic, and his tone of voice stands effectively between his sensitivity and the susceptibility to despair that it holds. Edmund, by debauching himself, protects his illusions. He can play the cynic, mock the illusions of others and divert any critical attention from
his own. Jamie is a capitalist by impulse. Edmund is a socialist by his own assertion. Neither of them really has any active interest in politics beyond the level of barroom talk.

What all of this amounts to is mixed feelings about each other. Jamie takes some pride in having introduced Edmund to 'the world,' but he also resents any suggestion that he is responsible for Edmund's mordant posturing. At the same time, he respects Edmund's independence and potential, while he resents Edmund's pretensions about his experience and talent. Edmund's illness only complicates Jamie's attitude toward him. At times Edmund seems to use his illness, and at others to underestimate its seriousness. Jamie is all the more uncertain whether he ought to coddle Edmund or slap some sense into him, and yet he feels all the more pressed to establish something decisive between himself and 'The Kid.' On the other hand, Edmund both respects his "big brother" and yet can't quite take him seriously. He wants to take Jamie's side and yet he doesn't understand him, is almost embarrassed for him. In short, Edmund doesn't often know whether he ought to laugh with Jamie or at him. Most of all, Edmund can't fathom why Jamie should so readily, so easily, accept James' abuse, while Jamie can't fathom why Edmund should allow himself to get so upset about it.

So the comedy in Jamie's and Edmund's relationship is rooted in confused sympathies, vague misunderstandings, and finally incomprehensible gestures, all of which become evident from the moment that Jamie and Edmund enter the living room. Edmund responds
to Mary's ominous nervousness about her appearance by pressing the joke about James' snoring: "'I'll back you up about Papa's snoring. Gosh, what a racket!'" (p.21). This incites Jamie to ham Shakespeare— to goad James to a predictably scathing response. Yet, Edmund, having pointedly reintroduced a touchy subject, acts as if James has no reason to grouse: "'for Pete's sake, Papa! The first thing after breakfast! Give it a rest, can't you?'" (p.21). Edmund, in effect, takes the fun out of it for Jamie by taking his side as he does, for Jamie "boredly" interjects, "'What's all the fuss about? Let's forget it!'" (p.21).

At least partly to avoid more of this incomprehensible bickering over bickering, Jamie generally keeps his mouth shut during the telling of the story about the feud between Shaughnessy and Harker. He says "dryly," "'Don't look at me. This is the Kid's story!'" (p.22). He only breaks his silence once, and then early on, to goad James: "'I'll bet the next time you see Harker at the Club and give him the old respectful bow, he won't see you!'" (p.23). But Edmund picks up on this goad and turns it into rhetoric: "'Yes, Harker will think you're no gentleman for harboring a tenant who isn't humble in the presence of a king of America!'" (p.23)—and Jamie is uncomfortable with this sort of pretentiousness. A fair-minded cynic, he resists goading James any further to avoid the impulse to mock Edmund. And there is much to mock in Edmund's telling of the story. He turns a folksy anecdote into a socialist parable, smugly interjecting commentaries such as "'If I needed any further proof
that our ruling plutocrats, especially the ones who inherited their boodle, are not mental giants, that would cinch it" (p.24) and "I told Shaughnessy he should have reminded Harker that a Standard Oil millionaire ought to welcome the flavor of hog in his ice water as an appropriate touch" (p.25). Still, James gets so frustrated by all of this "'gabble'" (p.23) that he seems almost relieved to find such an easy target as Jamie's laughter. Jamie doesn't seem surprised by James' outburst against him, but Edmund, who has gotten James so riled to begin with, "jumps up" and says "disgustedly," "'God, Papa, I should think you'd get sick of hearing yourself--'" (p.26). Ostensibly, Edmund is defending Jamie. But, in fact, he is just being childish, for he retreats to his unnamed book and leaves Jamie to deal with James and Mary, who for different reasons are sure to be upset by his tantrum. As much as Edmund wants to make this situation seem pathetic, it simply isn't --especially because of his behavior.

When Jamie comes back inside after working on that hedge and enduring James' chatty show of neighborliness with passers-by like the Chatfields, he has little reason to feel especially good-natured. Of course, he looks forward to a surreptitious glass or two of James' whiskey, and beyond his liking to drink, he gets some satisfaction at James' expense. But this sneaking drinks from James' bottle is an almost daily ritual; James is always late for lunch it seems. So, after all that's gone on throughout this particular morning, Jamie's cheeriness as he enters the living room
has to strike us as comically exaggerated. He immediately addresses Edmund, smiling "cynically* and yet too chummily for him: "'Sneaking one, eh? Cut out the bluff, Kid. You're a rotter actor than I am'" (p.53). When he adds, "'Why kid me? We're pals, aren't we?" (p.53), we know that he is hammering it up about more than the drinks from their father's bottle.

Indeed, because Jamie and Edmund are "'rotter'" actors than they intend to be, the scene that follows is comic, despite the tensions that accompany the need to acknowledge the more obvious symptoms of Mary's relapse. Jamie and Edmund can kid like pals about Cathleen. Jamie says, "'Our wild Irish lark! She ought to be a train announcer!'" and Edmund adds, "'That's what drove me to drink. Why don't you sneak one while you've got a chance?" (p.54). Likewise, they can kid like pals about replacing James' scotch with water. Jamie says, "'And now to cover up from his eagle eye. He memorizes the level in the bottle after every drink!'" and Edmund adds, "'Fine! You don't think it will fool him, do you?'" and Jamie winks, "'May-be not, but he can't prove it!'" (p.54). But Jamie can't tell Edmund flat out that he almost surely has consumption; the most he can do is to play the big brother very obviously and almost apologetically—"'Listen, Kid. You know me. I've never lectured you, but Doc Hardy was right when he told you to cut out the redeye!'" (p.55). And Edmund, after playing the kid-brother to Jamie, feels compelled, it seems, to defend his illusions about Mary with childish obstinacy. He responds to Jamie's "'experience" with stubborn,
but trite exclamations: "'And she promised on her sacred word of honor--!'"; "'It does this time!'"; "'She didn't! You're crazy!'" (p.57). And Jamie, locked in by the role-playing that he has initiated, simply cannot find a way to reason with Edmund. He finally has to say half-heartedly, "'I guess I'm a damned suspicious louse!'" (p.58). They hold on to their chumminess only lamely. Jamie mutters, as their mother enters, "'Damn! I wish I'd grabbed another drink!'" (p.58). And Edmund adds, very much like a much younger kid brother, "'Me, too!'" (p.58).

Still, when Jamie fails to be cheery with Mary, she gains Edmund's sympathy by very oddly echoing their long conversation of that morning. Then, she said that Jamie was right to feel embarrassed by James, received an argument from Edmund, and reversed her opinion. Now, she teases Jamie with Edmund's argument as if it were hers all along: "'Oh, I'd forgotten you've been working on the front hedge. That accounts for your sinking into the dumps ... What a big baby you are! Isn't he, Edmund?'" (p.59). Edmund, in a typically kid brother fashion, sides with his mother—although the adult male in his tone is all the more comically ironic, for now his agreement with Mary almost exactly echoes what he has previously said arguing against her. Then he said, "'Jamie's a fool to care about the Chatfields!'" (p.43). Now he says, "'He's certainly a fool to care what anyone thinks!'" (p.59). Yet, Edmund takes Mary's side against Jamie, even as Mary's behavior seems to prove Jamie's suspicions about her. So Edmund, as if to save the situa-
tion, leaves the room to get his father away from Captain Turner. Perhaps he thinks that a good lunch is just the thing to set things right. Ironically, when he left the room that morning after his telling the story about Shaughnessy's feud with Harker had degenerated into bickering, he saved himself, worsened the situation, and felt the repercussions in his subsequent, private talk with Mary. But even more ironically, when he now leaves the room, he gives Jamie the opportunity to confront Mary alone. And, when Edmund returns, he is forced to say childishly, "'He's a liar! It's a lie, isn't it, Mama?'" (p.64). Mary responds maternally, as if he's referring to some childish bother, "'What is a lie? Now you're talking in riddles like Jamie!'" (p.64). Edmund is left to sulk, falling back on his kid brother posture with Jamie, whereas Jamie finally gets some paradoxical satisfaction out of playing the big brother. Jamie says, "'Well?"' (p.64). Edmund answers snivellingly, "'Well, what? You're a liar!'" (p.64). So, quite comically, the confirmation of Mary's relapse gets reduced to an essentially childish contest between her sons. And as long as they quiet down, Mary maternally ignores their bickering! In itself, any aspect of this scene might be pathetic, but as a whole the scene is more a parody of pathos than an exploration of it.

When Jamie finally returns home, Edmund, ostensibly taking on James' authority, says "'Sharply," "'Nix on the loud noise!'"
Jamie, for his part, "blinks" and announces, "'I'm drunk as a fiddler's bitch'" (p.155). Won over, Edmund sits down with Jamie, instead of directing him upstairs to bed, and they drink. Edmund somewhat defends James against Jamie's extravagant sneers, but his defense is hardly intended to stifle Jamie. Edmund too much enjoys being able to play both sides. Eventually, Edmund turns the conversation to Mamie Burns' whorehouse, knowing that Jamie can be counted on to visit it when he's out on the town. For all of his earlier snide remarks to James about Jamie's whoring, Edmund now has, at least initially, the lewd curiosity of a younger brother.

Jamie certainly exceeds Edmund's expectations with his hilarious account of his taking on Fat Violet. Jamie, at one point, says in a deadpan, "'I like them fat, but not that fat. All I wanted was a little heart-to-heart talk concerning the infinite sorrow of life!'" (p.160). But finally he had to tell Violet that he "'loved her because she was fat'" and had to stay "'with her to prove it!'" (p.160). The consequence was that Mamie Burns thought he'd "'gone bughouse!'" (p.160). Edmund takes the opportunity, like James might, to recite a derisive verse about whore-mongering, and Jamie works himself up to hamming, "'I'll be the lover of the fat woman in Barnum and Bailey's circus! . . . Me! Who have made some of the best-lookers on Broadway sit up and beg!'" (p.160-161).

But Edmund is too superior to appreciate the comic effort, and Jamie becomes maudlin. He jeeringly quotes a song about a de-
voted mother. Edmund predictably demands, "'Shut up!'" (p.161). Jamie just becomes more incited: "'Where's the hophead? Gone to sleep?'" (p.161). Edmund slaps Jamie, and Jamie says, almost literally, thanks, I needed that. Jamie, after all, drinks to provoke this sort of cutting reproach. But he also doesn't know that Edmund himself has earlier called Mary, to her face, "'a dope fiend!'" (p.120). So Edmund is, quite simply, a hypocrite—and Jamie wouldn't stand for it if he knew it. He's more a fair-minded masochist, while Edmund is more a self-righteous sadist. And nowhere is this clearer than in this scene.

Jamie melancholically and melodramatically tries to explain to Edmund how he both loves and hates him. Granted, it is a ridiculous gesture, but it is only the more comic because Edmund is stymied by it. He responds almost in monosyllables, with a mixture of angry condescension and boyish amazement: "'What the hell put that in your nut?'" (p.163); "'You crazy nut!'" (p.164); "'You're the limit. At the Last Judgment, you'll be around telling everyone it's in the bag!'" (p.165); "'Shut up! I don't want to hear—!'" (p.165); "'Cut it out! You're crazy!'" (p.166); "'Jesus, Jamie, you really have gone crazy!'" (p.166); "'Shut up! I'll be God-dammed if I'll listen to you anymore—!'" (p.166). Jamie could not have a less sincerely compassionate audience, and yet for all of his scrambled sincerity, Jamie seems to know his audience very well—to be making it impossible for Edmund to take him seriously. For he doesn't really want to upset or depress Edmund as much as he
wants to reproach himself—by way of some belated good intentions toward Edmund.

What all of this amounts to is an extension of, rather than a resolution to, all of the confusions that have long marked the relationship between these two brothers. The scene ends farcically, rather than climactically—with Jamie passing out on the phrase, "The last drink—the old K.0." (p.167), and James suddenly popping in to interject, "A sweet spectacle for me! My first-born, who I hoped would bear my name in honour and dignity, who showed such brilliant promise!" (p.167). We'd be more convinced of his sense of pathos if he said nothing.
Chapter 3: Cathleen, A Proper Maid for the Tyrones

The Tyrones' two maids are obvious caricatures. Yet they provide more than simple comic relief to the play. Granted, they do seem dull-wittedly unaware of the fresh turmoil in the Tyrone household. But we never do hear them talking discreetly about the Tyrones; in fact, we never even see Bridget, who from all indications is more perceptive than Cathleen. Yet, instead of just accepting Cathleen's dull-wittedness for its obvious comedy, we might also use it to put the Tyrones' turmoil in an unaffected perspective. For Cathleen is not so dull-witted that she would not notice very melodramatic behavior or very intensely expressed emotions. If anything, she shows herself very susceptible. So, just on this basis, we might consider carefully—against our instincts—just how extraordinary this day is for the Tyrones. In fact, we should notice that much of the comedy involving the maids derives from the Tyrones' pointedly mundane, seemingly habitual exchanges with them.

Gushy with James' persistent compliments about her hair, Mary feels very wifely and decides to check up on the maid, "'Bridget is so lazy. And so sly. She begins telling me about her relatives so I can't get a word in edgeways and scold her. Well, I might as well get it over'" (p.29). So her wifely dutifulness becomes a wifely complaint, which becomes wifely resignation. Then, returning, Mary reports with an air of humorous defeat, with some sense of
having made a self-fulfilling prophecy, "That Bridget! I thought I'd never get away. She told me about her second cousin on the police force in St. Louis" (p. 41). This is, first of all, the sort of perfectly minimal, anecdotal banality that Thurber cherished. But, beyond that, Mary, despite all of her earlier matronly remarks, shows herself girlishly incapable of supervising the daily workings of her household. And as long as she chatters about it, her family accepts it as a reassurance of her recovery. They forget how quickly Mary's lightheartedness on these matters can turn to bitterness, and how much that turn is a sign of another relapse. Of course, the maids would be quite unaware of all this, for it seems clear that they run the household whether the "mistress" is standing about in the kitchen or lying upstairs on the bed in the spare room. The regularity of the Tyrones' meals owes nothing to Mary.

Furthermore, Cathleen's familiarity with Edmund at the opening of Act Two demonstrates that the maids behave improperly for "help" not just because of the terms of their employment, but primarily because none of the Tyrones—starting with Mary—demands a proper attitude from them. Cathleen behaves more like an opinionated poor cousin than like a maid. Garrulously she says to Edmund, "'Here's the whiskey. It'll be lunch time soon. Will I call your father and Mister Jamie, or will you?'" (p. 51). When this fails to get a rise out of him, she adds, "'It's a wonder your father wouldn't look at his watch once in a while. He's a divil
for making the meals late, and then Bridget curses me as if I was
to blame. But he's a grand handsome man, if he is old. You'll
never see the day you're as good looking—nor Mister Jamie, either'"(p.51). Beyond the fact that her opinion is uncalled for in a
maid, and in a more general way just irritatingly boorish, her
unself-conscious non-sequiturs and qualifications are very comical.
Indeed, the small vestige of propriety in her referring to Jamie
as "'Mister Jamie'" is rendered pointedly ludicrous when she
"chuckles," "'I'll wager Mister Jamie wouldn't miss the opportunity
to stop work and have his drop of whiskey if he had a watch to his
name!'" (p.52). And Edmund just grins and agrees. The conversa-
tion that follows covers all the archetypically comic rationaliza-
tions for taking a drink. Except for the fact that Cathleen doesn't
now take a drink, she and Edmund sound like two comically proper
alcoholics sitting down, as if by accident, over a bottle. Cath-
leen says without too much pause, or perhaps with just the right
pause, "'Still a drop now and then is no harm when you're in low
spirits, or have a bad cold!'" (p.52). And she says this as if she
has forgotten that every day at this time she sets the bottle on the
table. When she does remember that she is the maid, that she per-
forms these regular duties, she takes the opportunity to utter a
comically self-indulgent complaint: "'No wonder my feet kill me
each night. I won't walk out in this heat and get sunstroke. I'll
call from the porch!'" (p.53). Then, with her out of earshot, Ed-
mund exclaims, "'God, what a wench!'" (p.53). It is a joke that
is funny because there is no one to hear it except himself; he becomes as much the object as the source of the joke.

While she is off-stage, Cathleen becomes the butt of more comically contrived abuse. Jamie, as I've mentioned, jokes that she has the voice of a "'train announcer'" (p.54). Mary complains, "'I've told Cathleen time and time again she must go wherever he is and tell him. The idea of screaming as if this were a cheap boardinghouse!'" (p.60). Of course, Jamie is playing too obviously at being Edmund's big brother and pal, and Mary, for an incongruous moment, slips into her failed posture as the bourgeois mistress of the household. So the easy humor at Cathleen's expense becomes a broader joke on all of the Tyrones. For they would be very happy to have nothing on their minds but Cathleen's voice. When Cathleen enters the living room to report, she lies incredibly, "'I went down to Mister Tyrone . . .'" (p.62). But no one even notices the lie, nor takes pleasurable advantage of the opportunity to grouse at her long-windedness: "'he said he'd come right away, but he kept on talking to that man, telling him of the time when---'" (p.62). Indeed, because of what he does confront when he finally comes inside, James would probably prefer that she had finished her story, that he could have been just the butt of his family's teasing.

Cathleen has her biggest moment in the opening of Act Three. She's gotten drunk, at Mary's encouragement—which makes only more comic Cathleen's earlier teasing of Edmund about his sneaking a
drink and Mary's earlier wifely complaints about the quality of her household help. Here, Mary pours out her heart to her generally oblivious maid, a circumstance that would be pathetic except that it is of Mary's making—for she wants Cathleen drunk, wants to talk with the satisfaction of not being understood. Likewise, Cathleen's attitude about her own situation, exposed as it is while she is drunk, seems to become more analogous to, than a ridiculous contrast to, Mary's attitude about her life, elaborated as it is while she is high. Granted, Cathleen has no real sense of Mary's addiction; she simply enjoys her sense of insult at being treated "like a thief" (p.103) at the drugstore. But, at the same time, Mary herself has, now, very little real sense of her addiction; she is simply enjoying her unchallenged and eventually uninterrupted sense of her girlhood. So Cathleen's generally homely observations and Mary's generally rhapsodic reveries seem to function as much more comic than pathetic counterpoints.

In any case, Cathleen is so funny that Mary seems almost to function as her straight man. But even this comedy is tinged with Mary's essential loneliness. Mary brings up the foghorn, and Cathleen agrees, "'It's like a banshee!'" (p.98). Mary continues, "'Last night it drove me crazy!'" (p.98). Cathleen picks up mostly on the word "'drove!'" and gives an hysterical account of her terror at Smythe's driving—"'I thought that ugly monkey, Smythe, would drive us in a ditch or against a tree . . . If I'd been in front with that monkey—' He can't keep his hands to himself. Give him half a
chance and he's pinching me on the leg or you-know-where—asking your pardon, Ma'am, but it's true!'" (p.98). So her terror is essentially regret expressed as resentment. When Mary says, "'I really love fog'" (p.98), Cathleen again turns the subject from nature to the body—"'They say it's good for the complexion,'" and this time Mary follows her, lapsing into a reverie about the fog that ends—"'No one can find you or touch you anymore!'" (p.98). Again, Cathleen picks up mostly on one word, "'touch,'" and expresses her transparent disdain for Smythe's lecherous interest in her: "'I wouldn't care much if Smythe was a fine, handsome man like some chauffeurs I've seen—-I mean, if it was all in fun, for I'm a decent girl . . . I've warned him, one day I'll give him a clout that'll knock him into next week!'" (p.99). When Mary reflects pleasantly on her teasing James about his snoring and about the possibility that she herself snores, she continues the theme of sex and love into the marriage bed, and Cathleen reassures her that marriage is the stable center of sexual life, with what is essentially a non-sequitur statement: "'Ah, sure, everybody snores. It's a sign of sanity, they say!'" (p.96).

When Mary and Cathleen try to replace the whiskey that Cathleen has drunk—to replace it with water as Jamie and Edmund have done—to fool James, they fail utterly. Cathleen complains about Bridget, decides to bribe her with a drink, and finally has to pry herself away from Mary to deliver the bribe. The one moment of tension between mistress and maid occurs when Cathleen asks innocuously,
"'Speaking of acting, Ma'am, how is it you never went on the stage?' (p.101). Mary rebukes her with an account of her "'pious'" upbringing, ending with--"'I even dreamed of becoming a nun. I never had the slightest desire to be an actress'" (p.102). Cathleen manages to deflate this hostility with what is essentially an insult: "'Well, I can't imagine you a holy nun, Ma'am. Sure, you never darken the door of a church, God forgive you!'" (p.102). It is, comically, such an open, unconsidered insult that Mary, at this point of her relapse, has to ignore it to preserve her sense of her girlhood--just as she has to ignore the matter of her getting the morphine at the drugstore. Indeed, one of the quiet comic touches to this scene is that Mary, for all of her torturing James and Edmund about her going to the drugstore, lacks the capacity to enter the drugstore herself. Cathleen's simple-mindedness is no less ludicrous than this variously ironic, 'ladylike' incapacity.

In any case, with her last appearance, Cathleen behaves very much like Mary--comically putting James (who else?) on the spot with a sudden shift in her tone. She says first, "'Dinner is served, Sir'" (p.122). Then, almost as if she just sees him--as if she had been addressing someone else, she adds, "'So you're here, are you? Well, well. Won't Bridget be in a rage! I told her the Madame said you wouldn't be home!'" (p.123). And before James really has a chance to put her in her place, she exits, "'huffily," saying, "'Don't be looking at me that way. If I've a drop taken, I didn't steal it. I was invited!'" (p.123). If ever
a maid belonged in a household, Cathleen belongs in the Tyrones'.
Chapter 4: Mary, A Pitiful Bitch

Mary's relapse into her morphine addiction is obviously central to the pathos of the play. Yet, in itself, it is too paradoxical to be only pathetic. She tortures herself about it, and yet it provides a sure relief from that torture. Her relapse confirms to her all her failures as a wife and mother, even as it eventually distances her from them. Indeed, it allows her to incriminate her husband and sons in her failure, even as it removes her emotionally to a time when her sense of guilt was personal, simple, and spiritual. So, beyond all of her momentary behavior, Mary is eager to indulge herself in her present, inexplicable sense of guilt to drive herself emotionally back to her girlish, palatable sense of guilt.

Likewise, her recriminations against her husband and sons seem purposefully paradoxical in their effect. Early on, they have a self-defensive tone that prevents her family from openly admitting their suspicions of her. This allows her the time that she needs to drift emotionally into her relapse, the time that she needs to rationalize the relapse as a necessary relief from their inevitable suspicions. A bit later, when she can no longer conceal the physical symptoms of her relapse, her recriminations against her family have more the tone of accusations. They prevent her family from interfering, from shadowing her or even committing her to another asylum for another cold-turkey 'cure.' Indeed, she exasperates
her family's attempts to reach her by schizophrenically incriminating them in her relapse and denying that she has suffered a relapse. Still later, when she comes almost completely under the influence of the morphine, her recriminations become half-stated, half-hearted. She becomes almost indulgent of her family, even as she has removed herself emotionally from them.

Of course, the Tyrones have a bitter sense of pathos about all of this. We cannot expect them to recognize the comedy in Mary's behavior. But that comedy is everywhere apparent. It is rooted in at least four general circumstances. First, this is not Mary's first relapse. Indeed, her relapses have become pathetically predictable. So the whole emotional process that each of the Tyrones goes through—from the suppression of suspicions to the stupor of resignation—has the tone of something played through almost to the point of being played out. Even Mary seems often on the verge of saying, 'What, after all, is all the fuss about? Can we just skip over this and get on with it?' Such exasperation is comic because it stunts the pathos that feeds it.

Second, in terms of the time-frame of the play, Mary's relapse occurs quite gradually. Granted, in the space of one day, she does suffer a full relapse. But the play develops moments of that day so that they can figuratively hold the whole history of the Tyrone family. So the pathos of Mary's relapse competes with the more diffuse pathos of other matters. Mary's relapse generates emotional complexities not like a widening whirlpool, but rather like
water running from a spigot into a full bucket. Against the pathos of Mary's relapse, the pathos of the other matters often seems ridiculously petty—distracting rather than contributory.

Third, the structure of the play works against the melodramatic possibilities in the Tyrones' personalities, particularly in Mary's susceptibility to a relapse. Very early on, in Scene One of Act Two, we are certain that she has suffered the relapse, eliminating the possibility of a predictable climax. Moreover, in that scene, the Tyrones' staggered, lethargic entrances into and exits from the living room work to distract their attention from Mary's relapse to each other. As I've already mentioned, Jamie takes much satisfaction from the fact that Jamie's habitually late entrance for lunch makes him the last to discover Mary's relapse. Indeed, only in the opening and closing Acts of the play are the Tyrones all together for any appreciable length of time, and after the discovery of Mary's relapse and aside from the comparatively minor issue of where Edmund's consumption will be treated, they share no single, immediate interest except for getting high. (Oddly, the Tyrones do get together for several meals, but we never even hear about what goes on at them.) And, except for Mary when she is between relapses, the Tyrones make a regular, if not daily practise of getting high. So the play moves along mundanely rather than melodramatically, and this structure mutes the pathos of Mary's relapse by allowing comic distractions from it.

Finally, and most obviously, Mary's schizophrenic behavior
is generally comic. Although we can never disregard the pathos of her addiction, the structure of the play insures that we will not be overwhelmed by it. We never share any single point of view on the events of the play, not even a collective one, and particularly not Mary's. So as much as we might want to sympathize with her, we can never really understand her or even feel comfortable with her. At best, we can only sustain a sense of pity for her. In this way, we are like the other Tyrones. But unlike the other Tyrones, we have not spent a lifetime with Mary. Their sense of the pathos of Mary's relapse, accumulated over years of dealing with her addiction, is something that the structure of the play allows us poignantly to sense but not to really feel. So her sudden reversals of tone of voice, her sudden movement from one conversational subject to another, her sudden lapses into near-soliloquies, all must strike us as very odd and comic, in the same way that we are apt to laugh reflexively at any sustained, unthreateningly imbecilic talk. For Mary's schizophrenic behavior poses no real threat to anyone, not even to herself. Her relapse into her addiction is suicidal only in the broadest sense; this concern is very much on the periphery of the play. Even on a first read, a sensitive reader will not anticipate anything so melodramatic as even her accidental suicide. (Perhaps, such a reader might anticipate something suicidal from Edmund, but he is even less near the center of the play than Mary is. In fact, if there is anything at the center of the play, it is a general emptiness, which might
give us an impression of some vaguely suicidal air about the Ty-
rones' world.

Especially early on, Mary demonstrates that she can play the
middle-aged, bourgeois wife and mother convincingly—quaintly.
The comedy here is rooted in her having to reduce herself to a
near-caricature to reassure her family and herself that she is her
normal self. Her quaint behavior is the only antidote to their
suspicions, even as it allows her safely and unself-consciously
to relapse further into her addiction. Her quaintness is comic
to us because it reassures both her family and herself—when
neither her family nor she has any reason to feel reassured by it.
For it is never as reassuring as it is distracting. Her innocence—
when it is most effective, when it makes them happiest with them-
selves—allows them to think about themselves without any connec-
tion to 'Mary the morphine addict.' Mary herself doesn't want to
be reminded about this truth about herself until it paradoxically
allows her a full escape into the more sustainable innocence of
her girlhood. The irony that the Tyrones never sense is that her
innocence early in the play is very close to the sort of innocence
that she retreats to through her addiction.

The irony for us is that we should be naturally inclined to
respond to Mary's quaintness like the Tyrones do—to indulge our
sentiment for the quaintly humorous and even to be reassured by it.
We are apt to feel some sense of regret, as well, when that quaint-
ness is undercut by the unsettling truths it cannot mask. We are
apt to sense only pathos beneath the quaintness, as if we, like the Tyrones, have a stake in Mary's being quaint—as if we want to be convinced that it is representative of her normal self. But, of course, we have no way of defining Mary's self except by her addiction. The real pathos of Mary's situation is not that she cannot maintain a normal self, but rather that her self has become so largely and simply defined by her addiction. All the rest is essentially comic because it suggests that what is unacceptable is incomprehensible, that even momentary normal behavior is preferable to truth. It equates redemption with farce that comes out of a despair of redemption. So our sensitivity to the humorous quaintness of Mary's behavior should allow us to appreciate not only the pathos central to Mary's situation, but also the broader comedy manifest in all of the Tyrones' responses to the vagaries of that situation.

Mary is in control early in the play only because she appeases the mundane insecurities of her family, especially James—and thereby allows them to suppress their deeper vulnerabilities. Very quaintly, she worries over her weight and then teases James self-defensively, "'Oh you! You expect everyone to eat the enormous breakfast you do. No one else in the world could without dying of indigestion'" (p. 14). James can easily salve his self-consciousness about his age by dwelling on the youthfulness of his digestion, a goofy pretension that Mary diplomatically acknowledges, "'You surely have, James. No one could deny that!'" (p. 14). He indulges
himself in that "good," "dead cheap" cigar, and, in wifely fashion, she cautions him just a "trifle acidly" about his weakness for a "'good bargain'": "I hope McGuire didn't put you on to any new piece of property at the same time. His real estate bargains don't work out so well!" (p.15). Then she reassures him with a teasing show of resignation, "'Never mind, James. I know it's a waste of breath trying to convince you you're not a cunning real estate speculator" (p.15). In addition, Mary wonders if "'the boys" are keeping the maid from her work, and she worries over Edmund's health, even as she minimizes his illness, "'Of course, there's nothing takes away your appetite like a bad summer cold . . . it does seem a shame he should have to be sick right now" (p.16). When James starts to patronize her worrying, she responds with a stereotypically wifely near-hysteria, meant to convey self-control: "'I'm not upset. There's nothing to be upset about. What makes you think I'm upset?" (p.16). A bit later, Mary says, referring to James' snoring, "'If you could only hear yourself once--"" (p.17). Indeed. The joke throughout this scene is that neither James nor Mary wants to hear anything but the banality in their conversation. It is not merely that they fail to recognize their banalities, but rather that they resist such a recognition.

In fact, the Tyrones' general predisposition for valuing the banal in Mary's behavior covers the first instance of her schizophrenic behavior. She wants her sons to leave the dining room to the maid, but when they enter the living room, their presence un-
settles her. In her posture as a conventional, middle-aged bourgeois wife and mother, she has rationalized the symptoms of her relapse as a natural anxiety about the condition of her hands and the arrangement of her hair. At least momentarily, she seems to believe this rationalization, compelled as she is to make her family believe it. In any case, she does convince them, though, unknown to her sons, she suddenly reverses her attitude toward James. He has been grousing about the boys ganging up on him, laughing at him behind his back, and about her always taking their side. As if to calm matters between her husband and sons, she has very maternally patted his hand and told him to "'Shush!'" (p.19). But when their sons enter the living room, she immediately announces, "'I've been teasing your father about his snoring!'" (p.20). In effect, she makes a mockery of all James' seemingly confidential grousing; she suddenly turns from being a pacificator to being an instigator, and she does it with an air of complete innocence. As if this isn't all ludicrous enough, after her husband and sons do start wrangling, she reprimands them all, saying finally to James, "'You must have gotten out of the wrong side of the bed this morning!'" (p.24). And James tries to be a "good sport"! Being quaintly bourgeois is, for the Tyrones, never more the equivalent of a comic masochism than it is here.

James certainly gets the abuse that he comically seems to want during the telling of the anecdote about Shaughnessy's feud with Harker. Not at all the focus of attention, Mary relishes the op-
portunity to show both naivete and superiority about all of this new childishness. She is probably more relaxed in this scene than in any other except the last, but at the same time her innocence is probably never more transparent and comically paradoxical. She pretends to be shocked by Shaughnessy's behavior, and yet she impatiently says at one point, "'Get on with your story, Edmund!'" (p.23). Indeed, at the first mention of Shaughnessy, she exclaims, "'That dreadful man! But he is funny!'" (p.22). And at the first mention of Shaughnessy's feud with Harker, she says, "'with amused dismay,' goading James, "'Oh, Lord! James, you'll really have to do something--!'" (p.23). She continues to interject observations such as "'Good Heavens!'" and "'Oh, Lord!'" In short, she is having a grand time on the sidelines, and nowhere is this more apparent than when she responds, "'shocked but giggling,'" to Shaughnessy's threatening to sick his dog on Harker, "'Heavens, what a terrible tongue that man has!'" (p.25). If her family wants her to play a quaint stereotype, she certainly succeeds here. But the underlying irony is that they are not really trying to entertain her; she is entertaining herself, and they hardly seem to notice. In fact, they are all so peevishly self-involved that this scene is, typically, a parody of a pleasant, familial after-meal chat; James and the boys provide Mary with the opportunity to play her maternal role to the hilt, and then they ridiculously wreck the mood.

Of course, Mary's posture fails her in the first Scene of Act
Two, when her schizophrenic behavior becomes obvious. Before James enters, Mary makes three fairly long speeches within a few moments time. In the first, she berates Jamie for "sneering" at James, for failing to appreciate James' accomplishments. In the second, she reflects fatalistically on life in general. In the third, she complains heatedly about the circumstances under which she has had to live during her married life, sneering herself at James. She has no perception of her own abrupt shifts in behavior, but she does finish up her third speech with an accurate, futile and "yet amused" observation: "'It's really funny, when you come to think of it. He's a peculiar man!'" (p.62). But naturally, no one but Mary laughs. All Edmund manages is a preposterously self-delusive confusion: "'What makes you ramble on like that, Mama?!'" (p.62). And Mary in the most comically "casual" moment of the play, pats his cheek and coos, "'Why, nothing in particular, dear!'" (p.62).

Still, what Mary has done to Edmund here pales in comparison to what she does to James at the end of the Scene. When he makes no bones about admitting that she has suffered another relapse, she first reproaches him "bitterly" about his drinking. Then she pleads with him for his understanding, "'Oh, James! Please! You don't understand! I'm so worried about Edmund! I'm so afraid he--!'" (p.69). When he responds quite coldly--"'I don't want to listen to your excuses, Mary!'" (p.69)--she seems almost to collapse "piteously." She beseeches him, "'Oh, you can't believe that of
me! You mustn't believe that, James! . . . James! I tried so hard! I tried so hard! Please believe--!" (p. 69). Finally, when James breaks down, moved by her appeal, she tells him that she doesn't know what he's talking about! As I've mentioned, the comedy here is typically at James' expense; but Mary quizzicalness at being accused of anything starts to seem, at this point, more exaggerated by than caused by her addiction. It starts to seem much more a comic trait than a pathetic aberration of her character.

After their lunch, Mary entertains herself in the living room. Her family is, comically, a captive audience; for her performance, which they can no longer appreciate, is initially better than even her performance after breakfast. The scene opens on her saying with bourgeois comicality: "'It's no use finding fault with Bridget. She doesn't listen. I can't threaten her, or she'd threaten to leave. And she does her best at times. It's too bad they seem to be just the times you're sure to be late, James. Well, there's this consolation: it's difficult to tell from her cooking whether she's doing her best or her worst!'" (p. 72). She does drift from this into other general observations and complaints, directed more specifically at her husband and each of her sons. They, sitting literally in pathetic resignation to her babbling, nevertheless respond comically on cue at the breaks in her talk. She loses this ironic control of the situation only when Doc Hardy calls. Still, after a violent outburst, she recoups herself by saying non-chalantly that she has to go upstairs to "'fix'" her hair, and
then to find her glasses. And when James tries ineffectually to stop her, she says without changing her tone, "'You're welcome to come up and watch me if you're so suspicious!'" (p.75). In effect, her consistency of tone here achieves the same effect that her abrupt shifts in tone achieved at the end of the previous Scene. Indeed, her intimation about her addiction is comic because in its tone it is almost coy, even as it demolishes any hope that James still has for her.

When Mary reenters the living room, she is emotionally high from another fix and blithely ignores Jamie's disdain. Alone with James she manages to put him on the defensive, both teasing him in a quaintly bourgeois sort of way and complaining pathetically about the emptiness of her life with him. For instance, she says, "'You're not much of a weather prophet, dear!'"—then just a bit later, adds, "'Don't go yet, dear . . . you have plenty of time . . . You know you boast you can dress in one-tenth the time it takes the boys!'" (p.82). She is lulling James, even with her teasing about his drinking: "'Oh, I'm sure you hold it well. You always have. It's hard for a stranger to tell, but after thirty-five years of marriage--'" (p.83). When James tries to reach her, however—when he tries to persuade her at least to take a ride in her automobile—she turns on him with "detached calm"; she says, "'Yes, it was a waste of money, James. You shouldn't have bought a second-hand automobile. You were swindled again as you always are, because you insist on secondhand bargains in everything!"
There is too much of a sadistic edge to her maneuvering the conversation in this way for us to find her pathos convincing. She is making James suffer through her pathos, while pretending that his lack of understanding is at the center of it. In fact, his peculiarities are so convenient a target for her at times like this, that we have to find her attitude comically incongruous. At one point, she "defiantly" tortures him with—"'Come to think of it, I do have to drive uptown. There's something I must get at the drugstore!'" (p.86). But when James bitterly responds, reminding her of the night when she went crazy without a fix and tried to throw herself off the end of the dock, she first "tries to ignore this," saying nonchalantly, "'I have to get tooth powder and toilet soap and cold cream—'" (p.86). Then "she breaks down pitifully," wailing, "'James! You mustn't remember! You mustn't humiliate me so!'" (p.86). Yet, when James reneges and asks her to forgive him, she says blankly, "'It doesn't matter. Nothing like that ever happened. You must have dreamed it!'" (p.87). In light of this sort of exchange, it's very hard to see her as a victim. Her relapse into her addiction, even with her unsatisfactory marriage to James as a backdrop, doesn't account enough for her behavior. She is too much a victim for us to regard her simply as a bitch, but she is too much a bitch for us to pity her without a smirk.

This becomes all the more apparent at the end of Act Two; Mary is alone in the house at last. She has hurried everyone's departure, even as she has beseeched everyone desperately to stay.
She "whispers to herself," "'It's so lonely here!'" (p.95). It's the perfect gesture of self-pathos. Then, schizophrenically, "her face hardens into bitter self-contempt" and she snarls, "'You're lying to yourself again. You wanted to get rid of them. Their contempt and disgust aren't pleasant company. You're glad they're gone!'"(p.95). And finally "she gives a little despairing laugh," "'Then Mother of God, why do I feel so lonely!'" (p.95). Of course, just earlier, she has admitted to Edmund, "'with Her help it will be so easy. I will hear myself scream with agony, and at the same time I will laugh because I will be so sure of myself!'" (p.94).

Ostensibly, she has been describing to Edmund her eventual recovery from her addiction; but at the end of the Scene, the same rationale seems to apply to her slipping fully into her addiction. So if we feel a sense of pathos for her situation, we can find justification for that feeling only far under her behavior here. For her behavior here is comically incongruous both on the most immediate, physical level and on the next most immediate level of its motivation. Mary is acting for herself; she is actor, audience, and critic—and in this sense everyone is enjoying the melodramatic show.

Mary's behavior in the next scene is, however, even more strikingly schizophrenic and comic, for as I've established in the previous Chapter, Mary is very much at ease with Cathleen. She encourages Cathleen to get drunk so that she can indulge her girlhood sense of herself without being interrupted, without being understood. The one instance in which she gets perturbed with Cathleen,
she is obviously posturing. Cathleen asks why she never went on
the stage, and Mary is very taken back: "'I? What put that absurd
notion in your head? I was brought up in a respectable home and ed-
ucated in the best convent in the Middle West. Before I met Mr.
Tyrone I hardly knew there was such a thing as a theater. I was a
very pious girl. I've never had the slightest desire to be an ac-
tress'" (p.102). Strictly speaking, Mary is indeed being truthful
--she has probably never had any interest in being an actress.

Yet, her whole posture here—her respectable aloofness from
any unladylike worldliness—undercuts her truthfulness. For her
posture comically requires an audience of one drunk, uneducated
maid. And Cathleen, when tipsy, is especially susceptible to the
sentimentality into which Mary eventually lapses: "'He had the rep-
unguation of being one of the best looking men in the country. The
girls in the convent who had seen him act, or seen his photographs,
used to rave about him'" (p.105). Her girlish vanity, resurrected
as it is through another relapse into her addiction, is just too
transparently self-indulgent to be wholly, ingenuously pathetic.
Even Mary seems finally to sense this. She ends this scene on an
even more comically bizarre note than the previous one. After
Cathleen leaves, Mary addresses herself: "'You sentimental fool!
What's so wonderful about that first meeting between a silly roman-
tic schoolgirl and a matinee idol?'" (p.107) Then she reverses the
sort of mature logic that we might expect: "'You were much happier
before you knew he existed, in the convent when you used to pray
to the Blessed Virgin!" (p.107). In short, she doesn't want to learn from her experience with James, or even to consider it fully; she simply wants to undo it, erase it. So she tries to pray to the Holy Mary, but she is not far enough gone yet; so she sneers at herself, "'You expect the Blessed Virgin to be fooled by a lying dope fiend reciting words! You can't hide from her!'" (p.107). But this is less self-condemnation than a self-inducement: "'I must go upstairs. I haven't taken enough. When you start again you never know how much you need!'" (p.107). The sudden practicality in her tone makes a mockery of her previous distress. Moreover, it is comically ironical that this is the first demonstration of Mary's capacity to be practical.

Still, when James and Edmund come home, Mary calls to them liltingly, "'I'm here ... In the living room. I've been waiting for you!'" (p.108). Of course, when she tries to sustain this tone, she inevitably babbles, leaving Edmund to say "miserably," "'Stop talking, Mama!'" (p.109). And James to add "dully," "'Yes, Mary, the less you say now--'" (p.109). But Mary is irrepressible in her reminiscing, and James and Edmund take turns advising each other not to pay attention to her. Mary's tone is too odd a mixture of whimsy and mordancy to be ignored. At one point, she says of Jamie: "'He was always smiling or laughing. He hardly ever cried!'" (p.109). Then she adds, apparently without changing her pitch: "'Eugene was the same, too, happy and healthy, during the two years he lived before I let him die through my neglect!'" (p.109). She
simply continues in this way until she needs another fix.

Mary and Edmund: Selfish Coddlers

Just as James and Jamie seem to ignore grousing against each other, so Mary and Edmund seem to enjoy—especially early on—being pathetic about each other. Yet their mutual pathos is ineffectual in a way that makes it very comic. Mary wants to hover pathetically over Edmund to reassure him that his illness is not serious! And she very much resents his attempts to reciprocate, for they imply that she is unfit to mother him. Likewise, Edmund wants to hover pathetically over Mary to encourage her to resist a relapse that he himself won't admit is possible! And he finds her concern about his illness very exasperating, for it interrupts and even sabotages his attempts to encourage her. Of course, all of this is posturing: Edmund knows that Mary has already suffered the relapse, and Mary knows that Edmund is seriously ill with consumption. So Mary and Edmund are just trying to stave off admissions of unsettling realities that they already recognize, but their attitudes toward each other sabotage their common interest—make those unsettling realities more difficult to ignore.

After James and Jamie go out to work on that hedge, Edmund enters, saying, "'I waited until they went out. I didn't want to mix up in any arguments'" (p.42). The comic irony is, of course, that he and Mary create a great deal of tension between themselves trying to avoid arguing with each other. Their only means of re-
ducing this tension is to utter comic banalities, which are all the more comic for how they tonally strike against the grain of and so emphasize their tension. Mary, "forcing a laugh," says, "'Heavens, don't you see how fat I've grown! I'll have to have all my dresses let out!'' (p.43). This attempt at gay reassurance falls so flat that Mary herself changes the subject to relieve Edmund of the burden of having to make some response. Then, when Edmund unexpectedly takes James' side by saying that "'Jamie's a fool to care about the Chatfields!'" (p.43), Mary, "with satisfaction," reverses herself, "'You're quite right, Edmund. Big frogs in a small puddle!'" (p.43). Finally, as the Act closes, Edmund "forces a laugh in which she makes herself join in!'" (p.49). And what are they laughing about? For lack of anything else to say, Edmund has said, "'I'll go down and help Jamie bear up. I love to lie in the shade and watch him work!'" (p.49). The joke is more on Edmund, however, than on Jamie; for Jamie later points out that Edmund had nothing else to do but keep an eye on Mary and got suckered into leaving her alone. In a way that would twist James' mind to distraction, the work ethic has paid off for Jamie.

As I've mentioned, Edmund, in the first scene of Act Two, initially tries to encourage Mary to be her "normal" self—to prove Jamie wrong about her relapse. But again, she only follows his lead in fits and starts, and Jamie won't let Edmund ignore what he should have already recognized and admitted before he went outside and left Mary alone "to rest." So Edmund is finally driven by his
frustration with Mary to saying, "Mama, stop talking! Why don't we go in to lunch?" (p.67). Even Mary, if only momentarily, seems to sense that Edmund's concern for her is becoming ludicrously selfish. She replies, "Yes, it is inconsiderate of me to dig up the past, when I know your father and Jamie must be hungry!" (p.67). Her omission of Edmund from "the hungry!" is a sneer at his simple-minded obsession with making things right for himself by getting them all to sit down to this lunch—which, by the way, is already literally as well as figuratively ruined. Then, when she suddenly changes her tone—saying, "I do hope you have an appetite, dear. You really must eat more!" (p.67), her genuinely "fond solicitude" only impresses upon Edmund that he must make her stop talking. Edmund, comically—because he won't admit his motives, would rather not communicate with his mother than have her prove him wrong about her. His perception of the world is being proved out to his family, and he most of all won't accept it. So, in continuing to deny Mary's relapse, he makes a mockery out of any special intimacy that he supposes is between them.

Indeed, in the next scene, Edmund's cry—"Mama! For God's sake, stop talking!" (p.74)—stops her outburst against Doc Hardy, calms the situation, but also seems to impell her upstairs for another fix. Yet, the pointedly comic turn in this scene is Edmund's response to Jamie's brutally cynical remark; Edmund growls, "'Cut out that kind of talk!'" (p.76). What kind of talk does Edmund want to hear? Well, he can parody Jamie's cynicism, but this
is as much a reaction against even implicitly admitting Mary's re-

lapse as it is a criticism of Jamie. When Jamie defensively refers
to Nietzsche as Edmund's "'pet with the unpronounceable name!'" (p.76),
Edmund can only answer lamely, "'You don't know what you're talking
about. You haven't read him!'" (p.77). Edmund's posture of despair

is undermined as decisively as Mary's posture of bourgeois respec-
tability.

Before Edmund goes off to Doc Hardy's, he makes one last,
straightforward attempt to reach Mary. But, of course, Mary is too
far gone to be reached by straightforwardness; Jamie has told Ed-
mund so much earlier. But Edmund persists in the face of sure fu-
tility. It's almost as if he needs something self-indulgently

painful to balance James' unexpected generosity with the "carfare." It's almost as if he can't bear the thought of getting Doc Hardy's
bad news in an even poignantly good frame of mind. Mary doesn't
disappoint him. She starts by mothering him, a posture that has
comically gone stale for both of them. She says first, "'You can
telephone Doc Hardy and say you don't feel well enough!'" (p.92),
and then she apologizes for this perfect idiocy. She is left to
explain her relapse, but all of her rationalizations sound even
to her like "'excuses'"; they are too vague. So she finally be-
comes exasperated as much by Edmund's presence (a comic irony
since she initially has wanted to keep him home with her) as by
her own embarassed fumbling for words. Finally, she tortures Edmund
much as she earlier tortured James: "'I have to go to the drug-

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store. You would hardly want to go there with me. You'd be so ashamed!" (p.94). Edmund cries, "'Mama! Don't!'" (p.94). But the "'Don't!' is hopelessly open-ended, and when Mary suddenly advises him to heed Doc Hardy and not to drink, Edmund responds with the childish petulance so characteristic of him: "'I thought he was an old idiot!'" (p.94). Still, Mary sees him off as if this were just any other day: "'Goodbye, dear. If you're coming home for dinner, try not to be late. And tell your father. You know what Bridget is!'" (p.95). Oh, it's just the right touch; now Edmund can see Doc Hardy in just the right frame of mind.

After he returns from Doc Hardy's, Edmund tries to get Mary to realize, to admit, just how sick he is. When she won't, he gets spiteful with her. And his spitefulness is so deadpan and childish that it is comic—especially in the face of her effective astonishment. For instance, and this is just the most obvious and dramatic of several similar instances, Mary rebukes him for mentioning that her father died of consumption! And Edmund responds, "'It's pretty hard at times, having a dope fiend for a mother!'" (p.120). But just a look from her makes him beg her forgiveness. Indeed, there is evidence all along that Edmund has been looking for this sort of self-torture in a confrontation with Mary. For even before he is alone with Mary, he tries to incite it. Mary whimsically reminisces about him, in his mordant presence—"'Everyone used to say, dear, you'd cry at the drop of a hat!'" (p.110). Edmund retorts, "'Maybe I guessed there was a good reason not to laugh!'" (p.110). This is
the same Edmund who, before going to Doc Hardy's, had insisted to James and Jamie that he wouldn't give up hope for Mary. What he seems to be looking for here is just an excuse, a necessarily self-satisfied excuse, to go out again and get self-destructively and yet unreproachably drunk. Mary herself gets the hint, saying at one point, "I'm afraid you're not very sensitive, after all!" (p.119). Of course, neither is she, so the unintended joke is double-edged.
Conclusion

The last scene of the play brings all of the Tyrones together again. The effect is haunting because it is so comic. The three male Tyrones have become inebriated to the point of almost complete exhaustion. Mary's much anticipated entrance rouses them, and their drunken weariness gives a crazy edge to their reactions. Yet, at the same time, they behave predictably. None of them says anything that should at all surprise us. Indeed, our being sober witnesses would seem to account largely for the surprise that we do feel. We can't help but feel that this scene is bizarre, and yet we have to recognize that for the Tyrones it is more mundane than bizarre. The male Tyrones have gotten this drunk many times before, and Mary has suffered at least several previous relapses. If anything we should appreciate that the male Tyrones have had drunken rows much worse than this one, and that Mary has behaved much more crazily under the influence of morphine. So this last scene is a toned-down version of the Tyrones' worst nights together, even as it seems extraordinary to us. So, in a very paradoxical way, if we fail to appreciate the comedy in this scene—its predictability and mundanity, we, in effect, minimize the broad pathos at the center of the Tyrones' lives.

The scene opens with Jamie announcing Mary's entrance: "'The Mad Scene. Enter Ophelia!'" (p.170). It is a very apt description of her entrance—her descending the half-lighted staircase,
trailing her wedding gown behind her. We have to wonder why she has come downstairs to begin with. She seems oblivious to her family, and yet she knows that she has an audience. We have to conclude that she is indulging herself by punishing her family. Granted, she is too high to be mean-spirited in a well-thought out sort of way, but she has demonstrated this tendency enough in previous scenes to qualify the teary pathos that we might sense otherwise in her near-soliloquies. In fact, she tells us nothing here that she has not told Cathleen earlier. The detail is simply more florid and the tone more distracted, even aloof. She has, after all, slipped very much into her girlish sense of herself, which is marked as much by vanity as by innocence.

In any case, Jamie's remark not only conveys his anguish about Mary, but is also a pointed goading of James, who at this point probably feels as much loyalty to Shakespeare as to Mary. Edmund, again, hypocritically slaps Jamie. James applauds the gesture, perhaps as a sign that he has touched Edmund's sensibilities earlier in the evening. Jamie masochistically accepts the reproach, though his weeping seems largely due to Edmund's, rather than James', slapping him.

When Jamie recovers himself, he starts to recite mordant passages from Swinburne, which are as much a comic as a pathetic counterpoint to Mary's babbling. After quite a long while, James finally says, very comically: "'Pass me that bottle, Jamie!'"—adding almost as an afterthought, "'And stop reciting that damned
morbid poetry. I won't have it in my house!" (p.175).

Finally, Edmund, who has so superiorly slapped his brother for referring derisively to their mother, rushes up to Mary and says, like "a bewilderedly hurt little boy," "'Mama! It isn't a summer cold! I've got consumption!" (p.174). Of all of the Tyrones, he is really the only one who is playing this scene for all it's worth. And Mary, with perfectly unintended comedy, rebukes Edmund as if he's a would-be Lothario: "'No! . . . You must not try to touch me. You must not try to hold me. It isn't right, when I'm hoping to be a nun!' (p.174). Indeed. If Edmund is O'Neill's parallel in the play, O'Neill has saved the most sardonic joke of the play, ironically, for himself.
Bibliography


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