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The Tragic Fate in O'Neil's *Long Day's Journey into Night*

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Abstract

O'Neil made an excellent use of Greek tragedies and also adapted modern theories and thoughts in his plays. In this way, he represented the spiritual crisis and predicament of human beings through fine description of psychology and sufferings. This paper will try to explore O'Neil's modern understanding of tragic fate in *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

Introduction

The play *Long Day's Journey into Night* won O'Neill brilliance and glory. The play, a tragedy in fact, has neither grand scenes nor noble characters, nor a complicated and touching plot in it. But it has won the recognition and celebration of the dramatic and literary circle across the world. The important reason is that O'Neil shows the audience, and the readers, a tragic story of an ordinary family which reveals the difficult living circumstances of every modern man. For O'Neil, it is a "play of old sorrow, written in tears and blood," as he described when dedicating it to his wife, Carlotta.

The tragedy moves or even shocks the modern world. Why? I think the tragic fate which possesses both the Greek tradition and O'Neil's own modern explanation is a significant point of this play. The Nobel Prize commission, in its address, claimed that O'Neill has won the prize "for the power, honesty and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy" (2006, 188)

In this paper, I'm trying to explore O'Neil's own understanding of tragic fate in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. I will mainly focus on his assimilation of Greek tragedy and his development of modern tragedy.

Determinism

In the play, he did not follow the Greek tradition to choose a great figure of noble birth about which the fates would unravel their mystery. Rather, he was deliberately democratic and American, choosing an ordinary American