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MODERN THEATER FROM AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVES: NEGATION, AESTHETIC TRUTH, AND TEMPORAL DIALECTICS IN EUGENE O'NEILL'S *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT*

Abstract

Modern aesthetics is fascinated by the quality of empirical expressions in art, where the most unattainable forms of experiences seek refuge to survive through temporal dialectics. Whereas modern art endeavors to transcend its inherent experience of suffering through negating the sociopolitical reality of the imposed suppressive pain, Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* associates itself with the study of a non-discursive form of experience that refers to the transient nature of a multilayered truth, compromising a self-reflexive and subjectively temporal essence, to which all aesthetic questions terminate. Correspondingly, the current paper aims at approaching Eugene O'Neill's mental theater from a new perspective, acknowledging the significance of temporal dialectics in modern aesthetics. Accordingly, the current research studies Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* based on the

elements of temporal dialectics and aesthetic negation, confirming the significance of these elements in detecting the ultimate aesthetic truth in the works of literature.

Keywords: *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Eugene O'Neill, Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, negation, truth, temporal dialectics

Introduction

Modernism in chronological discussions proved to be a revolutionary aesthetic aversion from the romantic values of the previous century, following the celebrated theories of Henri Bergson's, which proposed that the concept of time cannot be reduced to a merely continuous succession of events. Rather, it holds that temporal "[d]uration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future, and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation" (qtd. in Dettmar 1). As a matter of fact, any work structured in dialectic form, enjoys temporal significance, where resides "in the midst of dialectics . . . the temporal core of art's truth content" (Adorno 219). In social spheres, truth content stands as an "antithesis to existing society," operating on its own lawfulness, as positioned "contrary to those of society; and in real history it is not only repression that grows but also the potential for freedom, which is unanimous with the truth content of art" (Adorno 195). Tom Huhn refers to modern art as it "becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art" (14). The "unsolved antagonisms of reality" thus return to the artworks as the immanent problems of form.

Being fundamentally concerned with human suffering and the influential role of modern society, Theodor Adorno, as a pioneering intellectual, proposed that oppression is created and imposed through social indexes of culture, economy, and politics, and is maintained through the individual's consciousness. Therefore, consciousness forms the action. Adorno was most notably influenced by the social theories of Karl Marx and controversial philosophies of Georg Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche in aesthetics, which were concerned with an intended divergence toward a mode of dialectics in nature-individual relationships. Correspondingly, Adorno argued that there are certain unbalanced relationships between nature (modern society) and an individual, holding that such unbalanced relationships are the source of suffering in individuals. Adorno further acknowledged that all forms of artistic expressions contribute to a

form of knowledge and consciousness about human suffering as a result of the unbalanced social relationship, which may lead to applying changes in order to minimize an individual's suffering.

Adorno perceived suffering as a bipolar experience of negative and positive expression, central to an understanding of aesthetic expression. Evoking individual suffering beyond artistic expressions, as Adorno points out, is the true content. Regarding this, as "[a]ll aesthetic questions terminate in those of the truth content of the works," Nathan Ross writes and asks, "is the spirit that a specific work objectively bears in its form true?" More significantly, since the truth content associates itself "with a form of experience that is non-discursive, riddle-laden and reticent to communication, it places his aesthetics in tension with later strands of critical theory that depart from the ideal of communicative rationality" (269).

Truth content makes a work of art simultaneously autonomous and dependent on its surrounding atmosphere. Adorno calls it "art's own understanding; the presentation of its truth content" (13), acknowledging that the truth content is a multidimensional concept. It means that it resides both in its objective stylistic form and its subjective thematic content, and the duality helps the audience decide what the truth is and what it is not. Ross concludes that the "form of an artwork can best be understood as 'true' in relation to other forms of thought and feelings that exist in society" (194). An "artwork is true to the extent that it takes up by way of mimesis what is false in society and so renders consciousness capable of transforming or escaping the spell of false consciousness" (Ross 194). This aesthetic negation is highly in line with what critics believe to be the transient nature of truth, bringing the truth into false. However, the necessity of autonomic and illusory touches in literary and artistic endeavors makes it the "social antithesis of society" (Adorno 50).

The empirical aesthetics "deal affirmatively with the negativity of experience . . . held to be nothing more than the mark of that process of repression that obviously goes into the artwork" (Adorno 8), acknowledging the preliminary experience of absence and loss as the mighty operative agent in creation and development of the subjective unconscious. Critics recognize at least "four fundamental forms of time, chronological time, historical time, the time of the artwork and phenomenological time" with chronological time as "a social form of cosmological time, and . . . historical time and the time of artwork . . . more

modern forms of constructed temporality" (McPherson 113). The subjective characteristic of time, rooted from the theory of relativism, was followed by the majority of the twentieth-century scholars, each coming up with controversial, and sometimes opposing definitions of the term. For instance, Paul Ricœur specifically defines phenomenological time as the "lived time" through narratives, while reflecting on chronological time as the cosmological "time of the world" (McPherson 113) associated with calendars and world clock.

Alan McPherson proceeds this discussion toward a certain categorization of the concept, in line with Adorno's philosophical mentality as:

The Chronological time is the base level form of time in contrast with which historical, phenomenological and the time of the artwork make sense . . . Adorno sometimes called it empirical time . . . Historical time is the expanded perspective of human history. It too is ultimately based on chronological time in terms of calendars and dates and datable events. Its phenomenological basis may well be in the everyday involving longer horizons both forwards and backwards in time, year, decade, lifetime, century . . . Sequences that start with birth and end in death . . . The construction of any history [in form of narrative life story] is always carried out from the standpoint of a present moment and the social interests inherent in that present can determine the historical interpretation . . . Phenomenological time on the other hand is the experimental time of subjectivity . . . Memory and expectation are built into this ordering of events of everyday life . . . There are variations in experience, waiting, boredom, concentration, activity, interpersonal relationships—all have different experiential temporal registers. (114)

Time and space in temporal discussions "are not encroachments upon experience but are instead the boundaries within and according to which experience is made possible in the first place" (Huhn 7). A work of art lives through different lives—that is, through the chronological time as an event and through the historical time—since the artwork has "a 'life' in the culture for which they were created . . . within the history of the art-form it exemplifies" (McPherson 114). However, the attentions to an artwork's chronological and historical time must be associated with its phenomenological time—namely, as the time that relates the works of art with "the person experiencing them" (McPherson 115) and finally the time of an artwork. Time as a subjective concept in modern aesthetic negotiations has been viewed as a creative agent in artworks. Art "is temporal in

itself, it participates in time that is individualized in the particular; by doing so, it gains the possibility of becoming objective in artworks" (Adorno 193). Correspondingly, the truth content becomes the objectified true consciousness in artworks recognizes that "the truth content of artworks is the unconscious writing of history bound up with what has until now been repeatedly vanquished" (Adorno 192).

Modern aesthetics' nonconformist approach in confrontation with reality dissonances resulted in its self-negation. Art in this era was "a protest of the individual against social regimentation and rationalization" (Miller 30). Modern art was a socially oriented concept in the control of political powers as well as of cultural conventions, and it was not since the advent of modernism in that the art turned "against itself, in opposition to its own concept, and thus become uncertain of itself right into its innermost fiber . . . [by] attacking what seemed to be its foundation . . . ," so that the "art has been qualitatively transformed . . . " toward the "qualitatively other" (Adorno 2).

Art in this sense could only be comprehended according to its self-lawfulness and its "relation to what it is not," as it "is what it has become, its concept refers to what it does not contain" (Adorno 3), as it best proves to be the case with Eugene O'Neill's dramatic endeavors, in which the protagonist rise against the previously plausible foundations and questions the integrity of the tolerable principles. Modern aesthetics seemed "hostile to what the jargon of authenticity calls the 'message' " (Adorno 32), a recurrent issue followed by O'Neill's modern American drama. Thus, Ryan Crawford reflects on modern aesthetics and terms it "[w]hat Adorno calls the 'shock of incomprehensibility' " (38).

It seems true that the artworks inherently seek a level of self-identity, achievable "by virtue of separation from empirical reality . . . ," since the "[a]rtworks are afterimages of empirical life insofar as they help the latter to what is denied them outside their own sphere and thereby free it from that to which they are condemned by reified external experience" (Adorno 4). The reality separation occurs in almost all characters in O'Neill's works, as they are intentionally exposed to a world alien to their internal world, against which they seek a desperate refuge. A work of art "is always itself and simultaneously the other of itself . . . the critical problem posed by the work" (Adorno 283).

Accordingly, when O'Neill's protagonists acknowledge the imposed external world hostile to their existential and spiritual reality, they knock on every door

to free themselves, while simultaneously deepening their bond with the belligerent environment. The art revolves around its own spirit, through "the determinate negation of the reality of spirit" (Adorno 88), believing that the art refers to the experimental reality in antithetical approach, as a result of a "determinate negation of the existing order of the world" (Adorno 89). In a stylistic sense, the art's "complete negation of style seems to reverse dialectically into style" (Adorno 207). Corresponding to O'Neill's theater, almost each character embraces negation as an escape route from the socially imposed reality.

They are very "suppressed and unsatisfied needs that resonate in their aesthetic negation and make artworks more than empty patterns" (Adorno 11). Conforming O'Neill's autobiographical mental theater that goes beyond a thematic analysis, techniques, and characterizations, what surpasses spatial and chronological domains in arts proves to be "the self-negation of the contemplator who is virtually extinguished in the work" (Adorno 265). Furthermore, an artwork's negation of real empirical institutions demands a "protests against the image of the father and is to this extent revolutionary" (Adorno 255).

The truth content manifests itself in the form of its own existential negation and determined critique, since the concept "not external to history but rather its crystallization in the works. Their un-posited truth content is their name . . . Artworks say what is more than the existing" (Adorno 133). O'Neill's protagonists' distance themselves for the sake of preserving their inherent truth content, although they do not make it evident whether the very negativity leads to the truth or whether it limits it; yet, the aesthetic truth "comes down to the constitution that an artwork, being something 'only for itself.' " It is, at the same time, an antithesis of "being for something else," feigning its own autonomy or simulating its being only for itself, so that it "goes against this principle" (Czekaj 127).

In a discussion of truth and autonomy in art, Rafał Czekaj proceeds while noting that each work of art which opposes traditional taste in aesthetics manifests resistance toward capitalism and commercialization (127); however, for Adorno (133) and O'Neill, such resistance seems illusory. On the pages of the *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill argues that the rebellious and critical power of art originates from its autonomous nature and its antithetical attitude toward reality. Thus, O'Neill detects that his rebellious protagonists' efforts are doomed to existential suppressions, even though he founded his modern theater on the baseline of extensive social criticism.

However, in a more recent survey, Peter Hohendahl refers to Adorno's insistence on the necessity and centrality of formal articulations and their sociopolitical relevance in aesthetic discussions, while other critics put more emphasize on the experimental domains of aesthetic endeavors by artists, along with its political significance and aesthetic relevance (*Fleeting Promise of Art*). Even so, both works show strong concerns and commitment toward the critical dialogue between aesthetic experience and artwork associated with it, a philosophically aesthetic dialectic that evasively resides in the heart of O'Neill's modern theatre.

The experimental potentiality with new drama, made modern theatre capable of conveying the intended maturity and seriousness in modern subject matters. O'Neill's revolutionary techniques applied on length and style pondered on the tragic nature of life, as a social reality, being conveyed through the life of socially marginalized characters. O'Neill puts his doomed protagonists in social and/or psychological dilemmas, while their sufferings only bury them deeper in miseries. Enjoying an audacious tone, O'Neill's individualistic point of view, stemming from his tragic familial experiences has made his serious drama tangible and popular to the American public, thus a literary success.

Following a great interest in modernist apprehension of aesthetic negation and the role of time in critical views, *Long Day's Journey into Night* has been nominated to be studied accordingly, as one of the most prominent O'Neill's works. The work covers a wide range of timespan, scoping from a single day to the decades of past memories. The paper aims to discuss the subjectivity of time in literature and its respective characteristics in modern aesthetics, as very few studies have been conducted in other fields of art with this regard. So, the current study enjoys a great deal of novelty due to its comparative approach (aesthetic theory and literature) and its illuminative viewpoint toward critical art and literary discussions with respect to the relative notion of time and truth.

Aesthetic Negotiations in the *Long Day's Journey into Night*

O'Neill characterizes bipolar worlds: "one, the external world of physical reality, the other, a world of malcontents and concupiscent ambitions" (Fathima 5). Ruminating on the idea of aesthetic truth, O'Neill seeks refuge in a dramatic disillusionment of artwork's disguised engagement, with an experience of loss and repressed desires brought about by social institutions. *Long Day's Journey into Night* is therefore believed to be a "painfully autobiographical" modern ref-

erential tragedy, in which "there is still one person in this play who is still alive" (Kerr 116). Many literary critics consequently recognize the play to be "O'Neill's emotional response," as the creation of this O'Neill's play strongly suggests "his own attempt at an intergenerational exorcism, his attempt to differentiate" (Kerr 117). The work thus provides O'Neill, in his auctorial capacity, with a desired response to his "emotional need to resolve past and present demons through the catharsis of artistic creation" (Kerr 117).

Act One is equipped with similar spatial features and a phenomenological setting as those applied to the *Strange Interlude*'s scenery—that is, it highlights Professor Leeds' abode, a "summer home on a morning in August 1912" (*Long Day's Journey* 1.9), in which O'Neill does not bother the audience with an "undue technical or special elaboration" onstage, or with theatrical settings (Kerr 117). However, the author consistently calls up to the underlying bipolarities and residing psychological dialectics through applied to the "[t]echnical stage directive [which] seems to establish a recurrent metaphor of this family's isolation and emotional lability as the drama unmasks itself upon the stage" (Kerr 118). The intended dialectic lives through the collision of characters' bright exterior side with that of the dark, negated, and most remotely "windowless" dimensions, as follows:

> SCENE. At rear are two double doorways with portieres. The one at right leads into a front parlor with the formally arranged, set appearance of a room rarely occupied. The other opens on a dark, windowless back parlor, never used except as a passage from living-room to dining-room. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.9)

The other instance lies in the taste of world literature and the choice of English and Irish books, while we, as the audience, are concerned with a discussion of modern American drama, or characterizing Mary as enduring Nina Leeds' analogous psychological traits. Analyzing Mary as mother, on the other hand, "we find the character who is acted upon rather than acting; the character of loneliness, the character of maladjustment; woman, weak and innocent, wronged by those she loved and those who love her" (Logan 110), like in these passages:

> SCENE. Farther back is a large, glassed-in bookcase with sets of Dumas, Victor Hugo, Charles Lever, three sets of Shakespeare, *The World's Best Literature* in fifty large volumes, Hume's *History of England*, Thiers' *History of the Consulate and Empire*, Smollett's *History of England*, Gibbon's

> *Roman Empire* and miscellaneous volumes of old plays, poetry, and several histories of Ireland. The astonishing thing about these sets is that all the volumes have the look of hewing been read and reread.
>
> What strikes one immediately is her extreme nervousness. Her hands are never still. They were once beautiful hands, with long, tapering fingers, but rheumatism has knotted the joints and warped the fingers, so that now they have an ugly crippled look. One avoids looking at them, the more so be-came one is conscious she is sensitive about their appearance and humiliated by her inability to control the nervousness which draws attention to them. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.9–1.10)

Very soon during the first act, the bits and pieces of negated realities emerge through Mary's nervous reactions, as a self-reflective critical nature, justifying its "antithetic attitude to reality" (Czekaj 121), evidently inherited by Edmund as the same "extreme nervous sensibility that the likeness of Edmund to his mother is most marked" (*Long Day's Journey* 1. 18), further exemplified as follows:

> MARY. (quickly) I'm not upset. There's nothing to be upset about. What makes you think I'm upset?
>
> TYRONE. Why, nothing, except you've seemed a bit high-strung the past few days. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.14)

This is where O'Neill applies an "[u]nsentimental perspective on characters" (Kerr 117), for Tyrone, Jr., and Jamie cling to forgetfulness as a weapon of strong truth negations, although Mary and Edmund insist on an impossibility of fugitive forgetfulness that seems accessible through drinking, sleeping, and intended negation in the revelation of truth content, aesthetically reflected in Mary's insomnia. Negation's dubious orientation toward the transient nature of reality rationalizes its indeterminate fluid character, where "[n]o one is exempt from the evils of alcohol, but where alcohol serves as one unifying agent . . . A more constant and reliable unifying force is the common desire of all to escape from whatever realities their worlds represent" (Logan 76), as in this dialogue:

> JAMIE. {Boredly.} What's all the fuss about? Let's forget it.
>
> TYRONE. {Contemptuously.}. Yes, forget! Forget everything and face nothing! It's a convenient philosophy if you've no ambition in life except to— (*Long Day's Journey* 1.19)

What is more, the same progression can be followed here too:

> TYRONE. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.
>
> EDMUND. We know what we're trying to forget. [hurriedly] But let's not talk about it. It's no use now.
>
> TYRONE. {Dully.} No. All we can do is try to be resigned—again.
>
> EDMUND. Or be so drunk you can forget. {He recites, and recites well, with bitter, ironical passion, the Symons' translation of Baudelaire's prose poem.} "Be always drunken. Nothing else matters: that is the only question. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time weighing on your shoulders and crushing you to the earth, be drunken continually. Drunken with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you will. But be drunken . . . Be drunken, if you would not be martyred slaves of Time; be drunken continually! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you will." {He grins at his father provocatively.} (*Long Day's Journey* 4.114–15)

Yet, apart from reality negations, Tyrone, Jr., attempts at soothing himself by defining a different scenario of the latent memories of the past, developing false answers to an unproposed question:

> TYRONE. And what could the finest specialist in America do for Edmund, after he's deliberately ruined his health by the mad life he's led ever since he was fired from college? Even before that, when he was in prep school, he began dissipating and playing the Broadway sport to imitate you, when he's never had your constitution to stand it. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.29)

Christine Kerr notes the characters' "constant alteration of mood," as "every character speaks in two voices, two moods—one of rage, the other apology. This provides a kind of moral schizophrenia" (118). Kerr proposes that "[s]uffering remains foreign to knowledge," although "knowledge can subordinate it conceptually and provide means for its amelioration," since "knowledge can scarcely express it through its own means of experience without itself becoming irrational" (Adorno 18).

O'Neill mimetically typifies an autobiographical character in the form of a negating role model and a destructive force, responsible for the provided mess

within the plot. The play seeks to assimilate itself with the underlying social realities it embodies, as a way of reconciliation. Following Adorno, O'Neill testifies that oppression, apart from its psychological dimension, is loaded with sociopolitical factors, maintained most significantly through the modern man's unconsciousness:

> TYRONE. It's the truth! You've been the worst influence for him. He grew up admiring you as a hero! A fine example you set him! If you ever gave him advice except in the ways of rottenness, I've never heard of it. You made him old before his time, pumping him full of what you consider worldly wisdom, when he was too young to see that your mind was so poisoned by your own failure in life, you wanted to believe every man was a knave with his soul for sale, and every woman who wasn't a whore was a fool! (*Long Day's Journey* 1.29–30)

However, when Mary finds herself desperate to deal with Edmund's diagnosis of tuberculosis, she clings to negation while recollecting the good old memories and following her husband, Tyrone, Jr. O'Neill approaches the latent truth content during the second act by virtue of a dialogue exchange between Mary and Tyrone, Jr., concerning the loss of baby Eugene and Edmund's illness, reflecting on the "family's collective failure" (Logan 109):

> MARY. I was so healthy before Edmund was born. You remember, James. There wasn't a nerve in my body. Even travelling with you season after season, with week after week of one-night stands, in trains without Pullmans, in dirty rooms of filthy hotels, eating bad food, bearing children in hotel rooms, I still kept healthy. But bearing Edmund was the last straw. I was so sick afterwards, and that ignorant quack of a cheap hotel doctor—All he knew was I was m pam. It was easy for him to stop the pam.
>
> TYRONE. Mary! For God's sake, forget the past!
>
> MARY. {With strange objective calm.} Why? How can I? The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that, but life won't let us. {Going on.} I blame only myself. I swore after Eugene died; I would never have another baby. I was to blame for his death. If I hadn't left him with my mother to join you on the road, because you wrote telling me you missed me and were so lonely, Jamie would never have been allowed, when he still had measles, to go into the baby's room. {Her face

> hardening.} I've always believed Jamie did it on purpose. He was jealous of the baby. He hated him. {As Tyrone starts to protest.} Oh, I know Jamie was only seven, but he was never stupid. He'd been warned it might kill the baby. He knew. I've never been able to forgive him for that. (*Long Day's Journey* 2.2.75–76)

O'Neill acknowledges Mary and Tyrone, Jr., as major characters with artistic occupations, holding that being a musician or an actor contributes to the idea of self-negated identities and multilayered masks that covers the truth beneath, pertaining to the people who "love to make a scene out of nothing so you can be dramatic and tragic" (*Long Day's Journey* 3.104). For O'Neill, "[n]either faith nor hope, neither strength nor desire, stand up to the irrevocable conclusions that he draws that life is without value, that struggle is senseless" (Logan 109). Following this, a constant presence of fogs "also represents the blessed loss of identity" (Kerr 117), as explicated here:

> MARY. It hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you anymore. (*Long Day's Journey* 3.84)

Correspondingly, Edmund aesthetically refers to the concept of fog as an escape route toward self-negation and the dialectic that resides between the seaside and the land, as discussed in the previous plays. The montaged image of the sea, fog, and the land, though seemingly disjointed, interconnects the microstructural details with an intended dramatic framework, thus providing an organic unity; however, although O'Neill's characters "had sunk to low depths," an exception to it is O'Neill's own fog-shrouded life, as O'Neill himself "had never completely explored the possibilities of the lowest place of humankind" (Logan 75). This idea is circumstantiated here:

> EDMUND. {Staring before him.} The fog was where I wanted to be. Halfway down the path you can't see this house. You'd never know it was here. Or any of the other places down the avenue. I couldn't see but a few feet ahead I didn't meet a soul. Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it was. That's what I wanted—to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue, and life can hide from itself. Out beyond the harbor, where the road runs along the beach, I even lost the feeling of bang on land. The fog and the sea seemed part of each other. It was like walking on the bottom of the sea. As if I had drowned long ago.

> As if I was a ghost belonging to the fog, and the fog was the ghost of the sea. It felt damned peaceful to be nothing more than a ghost within a ghost . . . (*Long Day's Journey* 4.113)

O'Neill then reflects on the ongoing dichotomy between the sea and the land and the issue of immigration to modern America and the effects' identity negations on Tyrone, Jr., during his early years of life, beautifully noted through Edmund's lines.

> EDMUND. You've just told me some high spots in your memories. Want to hear mine? They're all connected with the sea . . . I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself—actually lost my myself. I was set free. I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moon-light and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life . . . (*Long Day's Journey* 4.134)

Once more, the author tries to amend the forgotten truth of the lost child Eugene that resembles the author's negated existentiality and his brother's suffering from tuberculosis, where parent's self-negation leads to child negations and further horrible circumstances. The whole story is a mimesis of O'Neill's dead self, although he is allegedly liberated from the past oppressive forces, while the "repetitiousness of guilt alternating from character-to-character builds into a frenzy of final conflict, denunciation, and confession" (Logan 108), as follows:

> TYRONE. 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!
>
> MARY. I know why he wants you sent to a sanatorium. To take you from me! He's always wanted to do that. He's been jealous of every one of my babies! He kept finding ways to make me leave them. That's what caused Eugene's death. He's been jealous of you most of all. He knew I loved you most because— (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 3.94, 3.103)

The play thus "acquires its specificity by separating itself from what it developed out of," proposing that "doubtless artworks became artworks only by negating their origin" (Adorno 3). The final act is the instance where O'Neill introduces the audience to another form of self-negation, occurring while Edmund cites

the atheist lines from an epilogue, describing "a society of men living in a 'pipe dream,' that their shallow beliefs in a brighter future and in worth-while lives are their only means for clinging to life . . . and that the wasting of life itself is no great loss; life is nothing" (Logan 85). This is also visible in this excerpt from the play:

> TYRONE. Another atheist, I suppose When you deny God, you deny hope. That's the trouble with you.
>
> TYRONE {Vaguely—his voice thick.}. It's madness, yes. If you'd get on your knees and pray. When you deny God, you deny sanity. (*Long Day's Journey* 4.116–17)

In addition, one can find other instances of painfully dramatic existential negations in the closing parts of the play, in the brothers' dialogue exchange with all confessions, "made in the company of alcohol," whereby "alcohol is a cause for man's misery in the world," as it "assists in bringing out the heart of any confession which is the guilt complex" (Logan 101–02), as exemplified by this O'Neill's passage:

> EDMUND. It was a great mistake, my being born a man, I would have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish. As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death!
>
> JAMIE. Or part of me did A big part. That part that's been dead so long That hates life. My putting you wise so you'd learn from my mistakes. Believed that myself at times, but it's a fake . . .
>
> JAMIE. The man was dead, and so he had to kill the thing he loved. That's what it ought to be. The dead part of me hopes you won't get well. Maybe he's even glad the game has got Mama again! He wants company, he doesn't want to be the only corpse around the house! {He gives a hard, tortured laugh.} (*Long Day's Journey* 4.135–46)

The play approaches the end with the characters' extensive accusations and resentful expressions covered by self-defeating negations that attempt to forget the ebullient truth contained in the shadows of Mary's morphine addictions and Jamie's alcoholism. Hereby, the representative characters mime the author's adumbrated world. Thus, the *Long Day's Journey into Night* is the "real life exemplification of Schopenhauer's description of tragedy," a "struggle and woe for

the purpose of revealing to the tragic characters the true nature of the world" (Logan 107). A circumstantiation for it is corroborated by these lines:

> EDMUND. Yes. It's pretty horrible to see her the way she must be now. {With bitter misery.} The hardest thing to take is the blank wall she builds around her. Or it's more like a bank of fog in which she hides and loses herself. Deliberately, that's the hell of it! You know something in her does it deliberately—to get beyond our reach, to bend of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!
>
> EDMUND. {His face grows hard, and he stares at his father with bitter accusation.} It never should have gotten a hold on her! I know damned well she's not to blame! And I know who is! You are! Your damned stinginess! If you'd spent money for a decent doctor when she was so sick after I was born, she'd never have known morphine existed! Instead, you put her in the hands of a hotel quack who wouldn't admit his ignorance and took the easiest way out, not giving a damn what happened to her afterwards! All because his fee was cheap! Another one of your bargains! (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 4.120-121)

Temporal Dialectics in *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Long Day's Journey into Night enjoys an inherent temporal dialectics, since the work was chronologically composed in 1942, having been published for the first time in 1956. It is interesting to note that the action of the *Long Day's Journey into Night* opens and unfolds during the twenty-four hours of a summer day in August 1912. For Adorno, this signifies that the previously permanent philosophical concepts of time and truth now reside on a shaky foundation of individual subjectivity. Adorno clarifies this further, noting that

> [t]he distinction is between the experiential time of the person experiencing the artwork and the time of the artwork in terms of the ways in which that artwork manipulates the experience of time—"aesthetic time"—because of the method of its construction. The time of the artwork is the internal time structure of artworks but of course this can only be experienced in phenomenal times. Many artworks . . . involve time, internal time, the time of the artwork. This is because they have been structured by their makers so as to alter the perception of phenomenological time, and therefore also of chronological time. (qtd. in McPherson 115)

Pursuant to this postulate, O'Neill's current masterpiece is concerned with three drastic dialectics: fourteen years of a chronological gap between the composition and the publication date, thirty years of a phenomenological and chronological interval between the intended time during which the catastrophic phenomena are revealed, and the actual historical time of the play. This illusively distances the work and its *dramatis personae* from the timeframe of the actual realities of O'Neill's characters of his family members, depicted by the intended practice of a generation gap. Let us emphasize that Adorno observes the artwork "as being historically located" (McPherson 117); nevertheless, time plays the role of a harmonizing and unifying agent in *Aesthetic Theory*, as it possesses an inherent transient nature.

Contrary to the previous plays, the *Long Day's Journey into Night* chronologically opens early in the morning and continues to midnight, while the provided quality and quantity of data transferred within twenty-four hours is equalized with other plays that include many years of phenomenological and chronological events. O'Neill masterfully challenges the institutionally accepted concept of time in his work, since each act is divided according to the hours and minutes instead of a passage of years and seasons, as if the two could be perceived as modern symmetrical equivalents.

O'Neill suggests the same circadian cycle of an individual's lifetime, holding that the truth is time-based. Hence, the aesthetic experience can be attained only through aesthetic time, so the first act begins at 8:30 a.m., and the second act follows at approximately 12:45 p.m. The third act, however, happens at 6:30 p.m., to be continued around midnight in the final act. The provided truth in this context would also enjoy a "temporal basis," but it is worth insisting that "[t]here are no eternal truths for Adorno," and "the nearest thing to an eternal truth would be negative, that there are no eternal truths," so it is only a matter of historical orientations (McPherson 115).

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill introduces a determinant agent of time span that pushes the setting and all formal theatrical devices to the margin, believing that "the truth holds no perpetual reality predetermined," since the concept "is always historically mediated" (McPherson 127). The time in Act 1 chronologically approaches that of "around 8:30," for a quotidian lifestyle normally commences at that time, to be united with the phenomenological time soon, as the "[s]unshine comes through the windows at right" (*Long Day's Journey* 1.10), when the curtain rises to introduce the family members:

> SCENE. As the curtain rises, the family have just finished breakfast Mary Tyrone and her husband enter together from the back parlor, coming from the dining room. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.10)

Still, significant attention was paid to the role of spatial analysis in modern drama, as a new form proved to be "static," as well as "spatially rather than temporally organized," so it is obliviously pointing out that "these sections are successive in chronological time" (McPherson 127). In this sense, time and space establish a mutual correspondence, where one resides on the other. In the *Long Day's Journey into Night*, all characters are to be evaluated on the basis of time and the qualitative effects thereof in their lives, as in Mary's and Tyrone, Jr.'s cases. Furthermore, the author takes an artistic care of phenomenological effects of time on the characters' physical existentiality, writing that Mary is still recognized as a once beautiful woman, or that Tyrone, Jr., looks much younger than suggested by his actual age:

> SCENE. Mary is fifty-four, about medium height. She still has a young, graceful figure, a trifle plump, but showing little evidence of middle-aged waist and hips, although she is not tightly corseted. Her face is distinctly Irish in type. It must once have been extremely pretty and is still striking. It does not match her healthy figure but is thin and pale . . . She uses no rouge or any sort of make-up. Her high forehead is framed by thick, pure white hair. Accentuated by her pallor and white hair, her dark brown eyes appear black . . . (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 1.10)

> SCENE. James Tyrone is sixty-five but looks ten years younger. About five feet eighty broad-shouldered and deep-chested, he seems taller and slenderer because of his bearing, which has a soldierly quality of head up, chest out, stomach in, shoulders squared. His face has begun to break down, but he is still remarkably good looking—a big, finely shaped heady a handsome profile, deep-set, light-brown eyes. His grey hair is thin with a bald spot like a monk's tonsure. (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 1.11)

Accordingly, comparing Mary's distressed and James's bold, self-satisfied characteristics, O'Neill proposes a connection between the imminent effects of time on the sensitive personalities, believing the play to be temporally oriented, as follows:

> SCENE. What strikes one immediately is her extreme nervousness. Her hands are never still. They were once beautiful hands, with long, tapering

> fingers, but rheumatism has knotted the joints and warped the fingers, so that now they have an ugly crippled look. One avoids looking at them, the more so because one is conscious, she is sensitive about their appearance and humiliated by her inability to control the nervousness which draws attention to them. She is dressed simply but with a sure sense of what becomes her. Her hair is arranged with fastidious care. Her voice is soft and attractive. When she is merry, there is a touch of Irish lilt in it.
>
> SCENE. He has never been really sick a day in his life. He has no nerves. There is a lot of stolid, earthy peasant in him, mixed with streaks of sentimental melancholy and rare flashes of intuitive sensibility. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.9–11)

Next, Tyrone, Jr., and Edmund are introduced. James is characterized as the elder brother, a premature boy "nearly thirty-four" years of age, who will hopefully "turn out all right in the end" (*Long Day's Journey* 1.15). In contrast, Edmund, chronologically approximately ten years younger, outperforms in his physical and phenomenological attributes:

> SCENE. Jamie, the elder, is thirty-three. He has his father's broad-shouldered, deep-chested physique, is an inch taller and weighs less, but appears shorter and stouter because he lacks Tyrone's bearing and graceful carnage. He also lacks his father's vitality. The signs of premature disintegration are on him. His face is still good-looking, despite marks of dissipation, but it has never been handsome like Tyrone's, although Jamie resembles him rather than his mother.
>
> SCENE. Edmund is ten years younger than his brother, a couple of inches taller, thin and wiry. Where Jamie takes after his father, with little resemblance to his mother, Edmund looks like both his parents . . . Edmund's hands are noticeably like his mother's, with the same exceptionally long fingers. They even have to a minor degree the same nervousness. It is in the quality of extreme nervous sensibility that the likeness of Edmund to his mother is most marked. (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 1.16–17)

Mary's sensitive characteristic makes it much easier for O'Neill to ponder on her innermost reality by setting the chronological and invariable concept of time in confrontation with the fluid and subjective phenomenological time:

> TYRONE. {He gives her a kiss. Her face lights up with a charming, shy embarrassment Suddenly and startlingly one sees in her face the girl she had once been, not a ghost of the dead, but still a living part of her.} (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 1.24)

In a follow-up, the author insists on the transitory nature of time through a mother-son dialogue once more. Accordingly, the illusive idea of a "time passing quickly" is centralized on the aesthetic use of "[t]he abbreviation of time through the static repetition of motifs" in an artwork (McPherson 132), as they revolve around "their temporal nucleus, [and] devote their own life to the instant of the appearance of truth, and tracelessly vanish without thereby diminishing themselves in the slightest" (Adorno 177). The temporal kernel aims at protecting its existential reality by forming a resistant shell of negation, without which the artworks would be ignorant demonstrations of shallow pretentious aesthetics, as demonstrated here:

> MARY. {Kisses him [Edmund]—tenderly.}. All you need is your mother to nurse you. Big as you are, you're still the baby of the family to me, you know. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.37)

In addition, Act One intentionally reminds us of an impossibility of forgetfulness with regard to the characters' memories, as in previous plays. Parallel to this, *Aesthetic Theory* notices an extensive "tendency to negate time" in the late modern works in comparison to that of the early modern period, "where the concept of the developing variation still operated" (McPherson 136). O'Neill has a similar line:

> MARY. {Her bitterness receding into a resigned helplessness.} . . . How can any one of us forget" {Strangely.} That's what makes it so hard—for all of us. We can't forget. (*Long Day's Journey* 1.42)

The second act follows the same original setting, as the day approaches to noon, and the clock shows "around quarter to one" (*Long Day's Journey* 2.1.44). Although it seems that only four and a quarter hour have passed, the swift transition of events provides the audience with a much deeper sense of annual passages from phenomenological perspectives. The point is further stressed in Tyrone's speech:

> TYRONE. {With guilty resentment.}. For God's sake, don't dig up what's long forgotten. If you're that far gone m the past already, when it's only the beginning of the afternoon. . . .
>
> TYRONE. Mary! For God's sake, forget the past!
>
> MARY. {With strange objective calm.} Why? How can I? The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that, but life won't let us . . . (*Long Day's Journey* 2.2.74–75)

Next, in Act Three, five hours have passed as the clock strikes "half past six in the evening" (*Long Day's Journey* 3.83); however, minor transition of uniformed chronological time appears more significant, as its existential and phenomenological variable effects begin to be uncovered differently on each character:

> SCENE. Mary is paler than before, and her eyes shine with unnatural brilliance. The strange detachment in her manner has intensified. She has hidden deeper within herself and found refuge and release in a dream where present reality is but an appearance to be accepted and dismissed unfeelingly—even with hard cynicism—or entirely ignored. (*Long Day's Journey* 3.83)

Thus, Act Three stresses a controversial idea of chronological past, as a healing power in face of the lived experimental time readable throughout O'Neill's narrative. To make it more palpable, Adorno defines the term "'empirical time' (*empirische Zeit*)" as the time mutually posited toward "the phenomenological time of the experience of an artwork," which is "best understood as chronological time" (qtd. in McPherson 128). O'Neill explains it as follows:

> MARY. You go back until at last you are beyond its reach. Only the past when you were happy is real. {She pauses—then as if her words had been an evocation which called back happiness she changes in her whole manner and facial expression.} She looks younger. . . .
>
> Thirty-six years ago, but I can see it as clearly as if it were Tonight! We've loved each other ever since. (*Long Day's Journey* 3.90–91)

The final Act occurs "around midnight" (*Long Day's Journey* 4.108), following the same setting, when the concealed truth is revealed through the characters' aesthetic experience with a transitory and fluid, yet subjective, concept of time. Hence, the time in modern mentality "is not merely one instant replacing

another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present—no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration [history]" (Dettmar 1), as stressed by the following Tyrone's quote:

> TYRONE. {Sits down sheepishly—grumbles pathetically.}. That's right, laugh at the old fool! The poor old ham! But the final curtain will be in the poorhouse just the same, and that's not comedy! (*Long Day's Journey* 4.111)

Long Day's Journey into Night revolves around confession while making it evident that the time itself "will bring no relief or brighter vision, that life will continue in a fluctuation of temporary bright hopes and sensual enjoyment on one hand and remorse and guilt on the other" (Logan 116). Thus, a multilayered reality of time and its subjective attribute cannot be simplified or ignored, as it was the case in previous centuries. Pursuant to these hypotheses, the role of confession in the *Long Day's Journey into Night* goes as follows:

> [i]s not only the chief revelation of the real characters being played before us but is also the core of emotional impact. In the last act one of the most bitter scenes of the play has Jamie confessing to his younger brother who is about to enter a sanitarium that he is partially responsible for his own brother's grief because of a burning jealousy within him, that filial love is present but that it is secondary to his hate. (Logan 112)

By and large, contemporary aesthetics ponders on the dark side of an individual's experience, proposing the "negativity of experience . . . to be nothing more than the mark of that process of repression that obviously goes into the artwork" (Adorno 8). Thus, art provides the desired stage for its innermost social and existential representations, where "[t]he painfulness of experimentation finds response in the animosity toward the . . . programmatic, self-conscious, and often collective art" (Adorno 24).

Conclusion

Modernist art fosters a controversial debate regarding the fundamental concept of time and aesthetics, as the two yield the era with a new definition on the basis of relativism, which is opposed to the previously institutionalized theories. Foremost, the idea suggests that all works of art possess a dialectic essence, according to which the concept of time cannot be limited to a simple linear pro-

gression of events, from the past to present. On the other hand, Adorno introduced the concept of truth content as a counterpart to the previous inclusion of politicized aesthetics in arts. Though subjective interpretations were inevitable, such commentaries did not seek to define an artistic work, for each piece of art possesses its own truth content. In other words, any creative expression reaches its own form of self-consciousness, derived as a result of its intended aesthetic negations. In line with the new form of self-awareness in modern arts, Adorno defines the philosophic concept of truth content as a form of self-reflexive perception in modern art that embodies a transient nature.

Foisting the truth into false, *Long Day's Journey into Night's* aesthetic negation accredits the work as an antithesis and a critique of its maternal society. Separating itself from the representational techniques, the propositionally self-judgmental, subjective, and indefinite nature of modern negation justifies O'Neill's unconscious obsession with regard to an autobiographical dramatization of his traumatic familial story, with the physical and psychological maladies being described in the *Long Day's Journey into Night's*, though the truth content proves skeptical. Provided that the characters' memories of the old ages are vividly present, O'Neill constantly unfolds the story, swerving between the current moment and the past memories, to provide the audience with a fair apprehension of temporal attributes, as they transgress into a fluid empirical notion, subject to dialectic discussions in the artworks. Correspondingly, the *Long Day's Journey into Night* is subject to an aesthetic analysis alongside the studies in a chronological and phenomenological time. Furthermore, it sheds light on the concealed correlated layers of a shocking truth of jealousy, guilt, and villainous crime, residing within the characters' psyches and being enclosed by the dialogues that long to be comprehensively detected.

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MODERNO KAZALIŠTE IZ ESTETSKIH PERSPEKTIVA: NEGACIJA, ESTETSKA ISTINA I TEMPORALNA DIJALEKTIKA U *DUGOME PUTOVANJU U NOĆ* EUGENEA O'NEILLA

Sažetak

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Moderna estetika fascinirana je kakvoćom empirijskih izraza u umjetnosti u kojoj najnedohvatljiviji oblici iskustava traže utočište za opstanak kroz temporalnu dijalektiku. Dok moderna umjetnost nastoji transcendirati svoje inherentno iskustvo patnje kroz negiranje sociopolitičke stvarnosti nametnute supresivne boli, estetska teorija Theodora Adorna povezuje se s proučavanjem nediskurzivnoga oblika iskustva koji se odnosi na prolaznu prirodu višeslojne istine, kompromitirajući samorefleksivnu i subjektivno vremensku bit na kojoj završavaju sva estetska pitanja. U skladu s tim, ovaj članak ima za cilj pristupiti mentalnomu teatru Eugenea O'Neilla iz nove perspektive, priznajući značenje temporalne dijalektike u modernoj estetici. Aktualna istraživanja stoga proučavaju O'Neilleovo *Dugo putovanje u noć* na temelju elemenata temporalne dijalektike i estetske negacije, potvrđujući značenje tih elemenata u detektiranju ultimativne estetske istine u književnim djelima.

Ključne riječi: *Dugo putovanje u noć*, Eugene O'Neill, Theodor Adorno, estetska teorija, negacija, istina, temporalna dijalektika