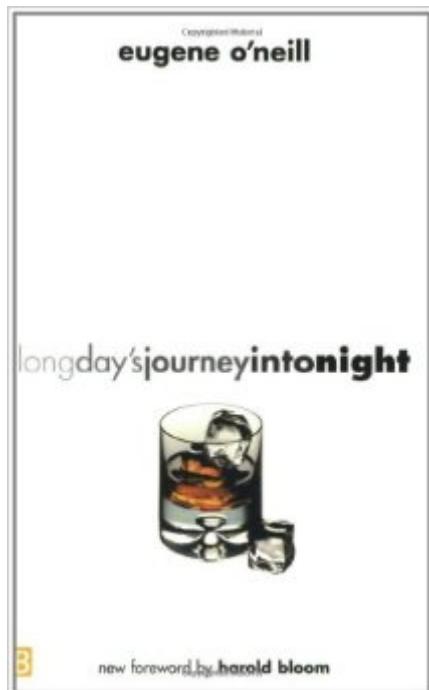


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Long Day's Journey Into Night



Synopsis

Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical play *Long Day's Journey into Night* is regarded as his finest work. First published by Yale University Press in 1956, it won the Pulitzer Prize in 1957 and has since sold more than one million copies. This edition, which includes a new foreword by Harold Bloom, coincides with a new production of the play starring Brian Dennehy, which opens in Chicago in January 2002 and in New York in April.

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Customer Reviews

The great bulk of Eugene O'Neill's work was done between about 1914 and 1933, a period which saw him win Pulitzer Prizes for *Beyond The Horizon*, *Anna Christie*, and *Strange Interlude* as well as create *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *The Great God Brown*, and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. But around 1933 O'Neill--who struggled against physical ailments, alcoholism, and a host of personal demons--fell silent. Although O'Neill was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936, he would remain silent for some ten years, leaving most to believe he had written himself out, was burned out, that his career was over. But in spite of tremendous personal issues, O'Neill continued to write in private, and during this period he would generate a string of powerful plays, many of which would not be released for performance until after his death in 1953. The legendary *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, closely based on his own family life, was written in the early 1940s. It was first performed in 1956--some three years after his death--at which time it too won the Pulitzer Prize. The play presents the story of the Tyrone family. James Tyrone is a famous

stage actor, now aging; his wife Mary is a delicately beautiful but sadly worn woman named Mary. Their two sons are studies in contrast: Jamie, in his late 30s, is wild--fond of wine, women, and song--and seen as a bad influence on younger Edmund, who is physically frail but intellectually sharp. The action takes place at their summer home, and begins in the morning; the family seems happy enough--but clearly there is something we do not know, something working under the surface that gives an unnatural quality to their interaction.

Long Day's Journey into Night is the play in which Eugene O'Neill, as he says in the dedication, had to "face [his] dead at last" by writing about the tragic dysfunctions of James, Mary, Jamie, and Edmund Tyrone, characters based respectively on O'Neill's father, mother, and brother, and O'Neill himself. It is set entirely at the O'Neill residence and takes place over the course of the day on which the family doctor confirms that 23 year-old Edmund has tuberculosis and must go to a sanatorium. There is relatively little action in the play aside from that; most of the dialogue relates to the other members of the Tyrone family facing the various problems that haunt them every day of their lives: Mary is addicted to morphine; Jamie is an alcoholic and at 33 seems unlikely to amount to anything; and James also has an alcohol problem but more importantly is still bitter about his childhood, which was cut short when he was obliged to go to work at a machine shop at the age of 10 because of the departure of his father. The whole Tyrone family is in a state of despair, and it's hard to think of an author better at capturing despair than O'Neill (in no small part, one suspects, because he came of age in the sort of environment depicted in this play). O'Neill was certainly bitter about his past, but, importantly, he doesn't lose perspective. Although the way the Tyrone's treat each other ranges from neutral to downright cruel, O'Neill does a splendid job of balancing this against the fact that they all love each other deeply and feel very unnerved whenever they realize that they're treating each other unfairly.

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