AN ANALYSIS OF THE ARTISTIC PROCESS
IN CREATING THE CHARACTER OF MARY TYRONE
IN LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

A Thesis

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for the Degree Master of Arts

by

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I wish to thank Dr. Charles Ritter for his imaginative execution of the dual responsibilities of director and teacher, and for his helpfulness as my thesis adviser. I am grateful to Dr. Roy Bowen and to Dr. George Crepeau for their interest in and suggestions for this study. Special thanks is also due the theatre staff members of the Speech Department whose critiques appear in the Appendix.

To Mr. James E. Michael, chairman of the drama department at Kenyon College, I owe a long debt of gratitude for his perception and understanding.
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INTRODUCTION

An axiom of methodology is that the form a question takes is largely predetermined by the kind of answer one is looking for or considers useful. A systematic series of such questions constitutes a "critical method," "angle of approach," or "theory," and acting theories share the advantages and limitations of all such schemes. They have only instrumental value for rearranging information in abstract terms, but do not offer an adequate framework for discussing problems peculiar to a characterization created under the limits of a particular production. This paper, then, is written primarily from the viewpoint of the actor, not the theoretician. It is intended as a description of the artistic process experienced by this writer in creating the character of Mary Tyrone in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, for The University Theatre 1966 production of that play, under the direction of Mr. Charles Ritter, at The Ohio State University. In this production there were formal and specific problems to be solved, and, like any artist, I solved or failed to solve them precisely
to the degree that my choices among possible effects were well motivated, consistent and relevant. Art is a matter of choice—the selection of a series of particular responses out of many possible ones to achieve a unified effect. Rather than force this "existential" experience into the pigeon holes of some abstract theory, I chose, insofar as this was possible, to let my material order itself. This is not to deny that I have imposed an alternative scheme of my own, but only to suggest that because my scheme is specific to this production, it makes possible the kind of distinctions required by the premise that lies at the heart of this study: that while acting can be profitably discussed under many rubrics, the creation of character—this night, this moment—is a unique phenomenon, and is only describable as a unique configuration of choices.

Analysis is by nature critical. Since this study is analytical and attempts to forego the evaluation of effects, it is devoted largely to problems, rather than the successful moments, which because they never became problematical were less amenable to analytic description. This paper generally follows the order in which problems presented themselves: Chapter I deals with the preparatory study of the play; Chapter II, with general
production problems, Chapter III with the establishment of character, and Chapter IV with technical devices. The four acts of the published text were rearranged for our production: Act I included O'Neill's Act I and Act II, Scene 1; Act II included the textual Act II, Scene 2, and Act III; Act III of the production was the play's Act IV. Hereafter, the references to act numbers are those of the production. The director cut the text from what originally ran for four hours, fifteen minutes, to three hours, fifteen minutes including two ten-minute intermissions. I have substituted Arabic numeral combinations (as Unit "22") in place of the longer act-scene notation (as Act II, Scene 2.). The page numbers cited for quotations from the play are from the text as published by Yale University Press, 1956.

One of the tools which I have used in this discussion is a number of critiques written, at my request, by several members of The Ohio State University Speech Department faculty. These critiques expressing reactions to my performance along with critical reviews of the production in two different performances written by WOSU critic, Gene Gerrard, I have accepted as measures by which to judge the success or failure of
my intentions. Since this thesis is an attempt to learn something of the art and craft of acting by analysis of its selective process, these critical responses have been invaluable in supplying me with specific comment, and, insofar as possible, I shall respond to them.

As an aid to objectivity, I have tried to locate the conscious reasons for my choices within the restrictions of what I think of as three separate, but often overlapping, sources of response. The first source is the play script itself; its restrictions are the easily apparent ones of specific lines, directed to certain characters, in a certain setting. The second source of response contains all of the conditions of our particular production: the identities of the director, cast, and crew, the time and location of the production all impose limitations and offer opportunities to the actor. Finally, inner resources, such as technical skills and limitations, physical appearance, and personal quirks, contribute to the dynamics of the artistic process. Tracing an actor-choice to its source in this extremely subjective area is, of course, difficult. But locating the reasons for a given selection in one or more of these areas is virtually the only useful procedure for analyzing.
the art of acting. Acting is not the awesome mystique assumed by the adoring fan, nor is it the happy accident claimed by so-called "naturals." Actors function in much the same way as other artists. The following comment on playwrights is equally apt for the actor:

As for the writing of plays, it is admitted that the opening of horizons, discovering of lucky phrases, rejecting of inept ones and other such matters receive assistance from the author's unconscious. But the major part of the business of creation is a conscious one—in masterpieces an intensely conscious one.

. . . However the unconscious may lend aid, the writer beginning to compose is like the painter (before Jackson Pollock) confronting his blank canvas; he is preoccupied with, "How do I do it?" The question requires, most, a thoroughly conscious answer. ¹

CHAPTER I

PREPARATORY STUDY OF THE PLAY

An actor's initial step in preparing a role is a careful study of the play. For this part, my textual study was enhanced by an opportunity to write a pre-rehearsal term paper on the play. As a result, I approached the role armed with an unusually detailed structural analysis and some knowledge of outside sources. The illuminating O'Neill biographies, for example, were indispensable.¹

The discussion of my preparatory study, therefore, might best proceed under three general headings: 1) script specifications for Mary, 2) an interpretation of the play evolved from my analysis of its dramatic structure, and 3) a summary of the artistic choices suggested by resources outside the play. I shall indicate throughout the body of the paper how these analyses affected by characterization.

For all his plays, Eugene O'Neill wrote unusually long and explicit character descriptions, and there is a 235-word description of Mary Tyrone preceding Act I. Accompanying the dialogue were O'Neill's usual detailed directions for line reading and gesture. A sampling of those which refer to Mary's lines follows:

A trifle acidly
Quickly.
As if she wanted to dismiss the subject but can't.
Forcing a smile.
With sudden tenseness.
She stops abruptly, catching Jamie's eyes regarding her with an uneasy, probing look. Her smile vanishes and her manner becomes self-conscious.
Her hands flutter to her hair.
Jinching—her lips quivering pitifully.
A defensive uncasiness comes into her voice again.

At the end of Unit II, this stage direction appears:

Her first reaction is one of relief. She appears to relax. She sinks down in one of the wicker armchairs at rear of table and leans her head back, closing her eyes. But suddenly she grows terribly tense again. Her eyes open and she strains forward, seized by a fit of nervous panic. She begins a desperate battle with herself. Her long fingers, warped and knotted by rheumatism, drum on the arms of the chair, driven by an insistent life of their own, without her consent.

(p. 19)

O'Neill's detailed specifications are paralleled by what Mary says about herself. In Act I, for example her nervousness is apparent:
MARY: I'm not upset. There's nothing to be upset about. What makes you think I'm upset? (p. 16)

MARY: You really must not watch me all the time, James. I mean, it makes me self-conscious. (p. 17)

MARY: Why are you staring, Jamie? Is my hair coming down? It's hard for me to do it up properly, now. My eyes are getting so bad and I never can find my glasses. (p. 20)

She tries to explain her nervousness several times:

MARY: I do feel out of sorts this morning. I wasn't able to get much sleep with that awful foghorn going all night long. (p. 17)

MARY: I know it's useless to talk, but sometimes I feel so lonely. (p. 45)

MARY: Your father goes out. . . . You go out. But I am alone. I've always been alone. (p. 45)

MARY: I couldn't sleep because I was thinking about you. That's the real reason! I've been so worried ever since you've been sick. (p. 47)

MARY: But I'm quite all right, dear. Except I naturally feel tired and nervous this morning, after such a bad night. I really ought to go upstairs and lie down until lunch time and take a nap. (p. 49)

The men's conversations express concern for Mary and indicate that O'Neill intended her to be a sympathetic character.

TYRONE: Haven't you got any sense? The one thing to avoid is saying anything that will get her more upset over Edmund.

JAMIE: . . . I think it's the wrong idea to let Mama go on kidding herself. It will only make the shock worse when she has to face it. . . . (p. 29)
Father and son return to the subject later;

TYRONE: Yes, this time you can see how strong and sure of herself she is. She's a different woman entirely from the other times. She has control of her nerves—or she had until Edmund got sick. Now you can feel her growing tense and frightened underneath.

JAMIE: Of course, Papa. Outside of nerves, she seems perfectly all right this morning.

TYRONE: Never better. She's full of fun and mischief. Why do you say, seems?...

In Act III, Tyrone gives his version of Mary's past, which belies her memory of it:

TYRONE: . . . you must take her tales of the past with a grain of salt. The piano playing and her dream of becoming a concert pianist. That was put in her head by the nuns flattering her. . . and the idea she might have become a nun. That's the worst . . . She was a bit of a rogue and a coquette, God bless her, behind all her shyness and blushes. . . . She was bursting with health and high spirits and the love of loving.

Edmund gives a horribly accurate picture of Mary as we are to see her when the play ends:

EDMUND: 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. Deliberely, that's the hell of it! You know something in her does it deliberately—to get beyond our reach, to be rid of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!
The play's action also serves to reveal character. In the following outline of what Mary does during the course of the play's "long day," (hereafter, the Mary-plot), notice that the italicized words all connote "separation." They describe the main action in terms of Mary's chief motivation: "I want to get away." I found this brief summary useful in keeping action and motivation in my mind.

MORNING:

(Unit 11)--A tense Mary mediates (but does not join) a family conversation. She runs off to the kitchen to "confer with the cook." Re-entering, she recoils from an argument between Tyrone and Jamie, and urges them to go. She strains at a conversation with Edmund, avoids discussing his illness, complains of her loneliness, and protests the men's suspicions. She retires for a "nap," and, left alone, she suffers fights the temptation to return to drugs, but it seems she will escape in this way.

(Unit 12)--Jamie chides Edmund for leaving Mary alone all morning. When she comes downstairs, her manner is detached: she has taken her first shot away from reality. Her tell-tale speech and appearance alienate the men. She pleads for understanding, but
denies their help.

AFTERNOON:

(Unit 21)--Mary talks to herself, in a rambling way; the men remain silent with foreboding. Mary rejects Dr. Hardy's advice with passionate anger, and quickly excuses herself and departs to "fix her hair."
The men prepare to go uptown. Mary's re-entry is marked with further detachment: she has had her second shot (away from reality), and loses herself in reverie of the past. In two hopeless conversations with Edmund and Tyrone, they urge her to stop the drugs, but she excuses, promises, denies, accuses, defies, and threatens in a series of flights from the problem. Left alone, Mary contradicts herself with an assertion that she is glad to be alone, and a bitter question to an absent friend, "Mother of God, why do I feel so lonely?"

(Unit 22) A disoriented Mary is discovered with Cathleen, rambling away in a drug-induced reverie. The men return to find Mary even farther removed from reality, chattering to herself about her babies, her wedding gown, her early marriage, in a disconnected way. Edmund tries to reach his mother by forcing her to acknowledge his illness,
but she refuses the contact. As fear of present reality increases, Mary wishes for death, but denies Tyrone's charge that she is going "up to take more of that God-damned poison..."

**NIGHT**

(Unit 3)--Mary is not seen until the end of a long act during which the men engage in drunken reveries, confessions, accusations, and defenses, referring throughout to Mary who wanders alone in the rooms above them. When she re-enters, drowned in dope, and completely isolated from reality, she has regressed into the voice and person of her girlhood.

The Mary-plot, together with stage directions and descriptions, shows the novelistic way in which O'Neill specifies his own picture of Mary. The autobiographical nature of the play might account for some of this, but for whatever reason, Mary's portrait is not sketched in lightly, and there is little room for doubt or leeway for an actor in interpreting what she is trying to do: she is trying "to get away." I did not consider the script "sacred", but certainly respected the supply of rich detail.
Analysis of Dramatic Structure

My interpretation of the character of Mary Tyrone was strongly influenced by my analysis of the play's dramatic structure, which ordinarily would not have been part of my preparation for the role. The fact that I did make this study, however, must be recorded and its results taken into account. Mr. Ritter suggested that my preliminary analyses of play and character might well have burdened me with preconceptions which prevented me from achieving developmental insights from our particular production. I acknowledge this possibility and will note an important instance where this factor may have functioned.

I saw the plot of Long Day's Journey Into Night as, essentially, character revelation, and the Mary-plot as the dramatic focus for its total structure. The external Mary-plot, in other words, functions to unify the men's internal "journeys." Mary's character progresses in chronological order along the day's time-line, according to the amount of dope she has taken or her need for it. The following chart may clarify the close relationship between the progress of the dramatic action and the gradual revelation of Mary's "triple-split" personality.
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<tr>
<th>MORNING</th>
<th>AFTERNOON</th>
<th>NIGHT</th>
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<tr>
<td>A weak self in tenuous balance</td>
<td>Weaker self in violent, primitive unbalance</td>
<td>Weakest, non-self, stabilized by cushion of drug</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gentle, loving</td>
<td>Savage, malicious</td>
<td>Detached, indifferent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitive to others:</td>
<td>Rejects responsibility</td>
<td>Dressed for dreaming in night dress, hair awry</td>
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<tr>
<td>-You mustn't drink, Edmund.</td>
<td>-You're not sick at all!</td>
<td>Insensitive to anyone around her</td>
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<tr>
<td>-You need your mother.</td>
<td>-I won't have it! Saying you're going to die!</td>
<td>-You must not try to touch me!!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleasant, some humor</td>
<td>Irritable, humorless</td>
<td>Removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace-loving</td>
<td>Quarrelsome</td>
<td>Detached</td>
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<tr>
<td>-James, don't lose your temper.</td>
<td>-You won't help a bit!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painfully self-conscious</td>
<td>-You're to blame, James!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-What are you looking at? Is my hair coming down?</td>
<td>-I hate doctors!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second person-present</td>
<td>Tries to bluff</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Oh, You!</td>
<td>-I think I'll go upstairs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-You remember, don't you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-We all pick on you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Jamie! Edmund! (1 to 1 relationships)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wife of James</td>
<td>Bride of James</td>
<td>Bride of Christ</td>
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O'Neill provided the following devices for Mary along the day's time-line. (These, also, roughly approximate an adult ego-state, a child ego-state, and, finally, a non-person.)
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<th>MORNING</th>
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<td>Social Devices</td>
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<td>Artificial Device</td>
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<td>1. Mama Role&lt;br&gt;-You shouldn't drink, Edmund.&lt;br&gt;-You really must eat more.&lt;br&gt;-All you need is your Mother to nurse you.&lt;br&gt;-You're such a baby!&lt;br&gt;-Your father wasn't finding fault with you.&lt;br&gt;-Sit down and I'll make you comfortable.</td>
<td>1. Denial&lt;br&gt;-Nothing like that ever happened.&lt;br&gt;-I don't know what you're talking about.&lt;br&gt;-You're not sick at all!</td>
<td>THE NEEDLE</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. Wife Role&lt;br&gt;-James, do be quiet.&lt;br&gt;-There's no reason to scold Jamie!&lt;br&gt;-James! You mustn't be so silly, right in front of Jamie.&lt;br&gt;-You mustn't lose your temper.&lt;br&gt;-Yes, it's terrible the way we all pick on you...</td>
<td>2. Excuses&lt;br&gt;-Rheumatism&lt;br&gt;-Childbirth&lt;br&gt;-Social outcast&lt;br&gt;-Quack doctors&lt;br&gt;-James drinking, miserliness, jealousy, profession, demands&lt;br&gt;-Guilt over Eugene's death, Edmund's health</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Woman Role&lt;br&gt;-I really ought to reduce.&lt;br&gt;-Is my hair coming down? It's hard for me to do it up properly, now.&lt;br&gt;-My eyes are getting so bad.</td>
<td>3. Aggression&lt;br&gt;-I never knew what pain was before you were born!&lt;br&gt;-Why don't you light the light, James?&lt;br&gt;-I must go to the drug store (taunts)&lt;br&gt;-Suicide threat</td>
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<td>4. Homemaker Role&lt;br&gt;-Cathleen must be waiting to clear the table.&lt;br&gt;-I must go see the cook.</td>
<td>4. Promises&lt;br&gt;-I give you my word of honor.&lt;br&gt;-Someday, when I find my faith again, it will be so easy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Reverie&lt;br&gt;-I used to be healthy.&lt;br&gt;-At the convent I had so many friends.</td>
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For its suspense, the play depends on shocking character revelation or confession, and sudden sharp turns in Mary's traffic between planes of absence, passion, and remembrance. The unconscious nature of Mary's end is pitiful, but not sublime: it supports a tragedy, but does not contain one. The dramatic structure is only the occasion for the tragedy of those who accompany Mary on her terrible journey. Mary's journey away from truth is externalized; the men's journeys toward truth are internalized; all the journeys are lonely ones. At the play's end, each man is left alone in the night, facing the others and himself silently and helplessly: Mary is isolated in a more pathetic but less painful night of drugged oblivion. O'Neill leaves each character lost and bewildered in the farthest reaches of human suffering—an end which seems senseless.

Personally, I found something of redemption in the play. As a member of what is often called the last generation to place value on and faith in human resiliency—the "ideal", if you will, that with some kind of faith in the deity or himself, man can fight his fate, the Tyrones' end is alien to me. But
"fate-fighting" is always in danger of slipping into facile American optimism. I saw in the painful honesty of the play a valuable corrective to the more popular, but dangerously optimistic, view of man that gives easy assurance of virtue. One "long day" seems precious little time to prepare for the approaching night, and O'Neill does us service to call attention to the tightness of the schedule.

**Image.**—The image around which I built my characterization was one suggested to me by another cast member: "a bird with a broken wing." Mary's instincts about the proper life for a soaring creature are strong, but her pursuit of these dreams is reduced to the weak fluttering of a broken wing. She substitutes defensive devices for the urge to fly; her "journey into night" is an instinctive migration back to the remembered peace and wholeness of the nesting place. WOSU radio critic Gene Gerrard's recognition of the "bird-like quality" of my characterization (an image with which he disagreed) testified to the success with which it was projected.

**Speculations and Options.**—Early in the rehearsal period, it seemed important to determine the extent to which Mary's insistence on her youthful
potential was reliable. In order to accurately shade line readings, it was necessary to choose between a Mary who had been crushed by circumstance, and one who had been playing the "If-it-wern't-for-you" game. The discrepancy between Mary's and James' evaluation of her youthful potential as a pianist or nun, and their differing explanations of her anti-social behavior during the thirty-six-year marriage, reveal contradictions which must be resolved by the actor. A consistent characterization requires that one "truth" or another be decided upon. I shall reproduce some of my speculations, less for the possibility of offering an original interpretation than for the example they offer of the kind of intellectualizing that helped me make my selections.

My decision concerning Mary's integrity contradicted her words and agreed with her behavior. Had she become a piano teacher in lieu of concert artist, more credence could be given to her story of frustrated ambition. Had she remained a practicing Catholic in lieu of becoming a nun, one might take her religious protestations more seriously. Instead, Mary becomes a drug addict, and it is a fact that the dominant emotional characteristic of the addict is his "enormous compulsion to abdicate all responsibility for his life."
... every word an addict speaks is colored by the symptoms of his disease—self-deception, immaturity, insecurity, guilt."\(^1\) These words from *The Drug Takers*, a report on narcotic addicts, might be a description of Mary Tyrone. There is every indication that Mary is essentially weak-willed, more interested in escaping problems than in facing them. Mary's speech about her parents (p. 114) reveals a loving, indulgent father who encouraged her music and sponsored her marriage, and a "strict and pious" mother, who wanted her daughter to be a nun, and predicted the marriage to Tyrone would fail. This speech, together with what we know of Mary, implies a young girl, crippled with doubt, vacillating between her parents' opposing dreams for her, and never choosing her own life. We might further infer that Mary's husband and children were painful reminders of her broken faith as the Bride of Christ (and a broken promise to Mama), her crippled hands painful reminders of her lost aspirations for a musical career (and letting Daddy down). Such speculations and theories about a character are a part of the process of "filling in

in the dots" and provide a sub-textual understanding of the play's lines that must inform all of the actor's decisions.

Outside Resources

The gathering and sifting of information in search of potential actor-choices was not entirely speculative; I examined many other sources of material about the role itself, the play, the O'Neill family, and the subject of drug addiction. (I visualized my quest as that of a detective tracking down a missing person whom I hoped to capture and bring to court on the University Hall stage.) The two O'Neill biographies, critical reviews of the play and its several productions, and the film version of the play all suggested various possibilities for the characterization and appearance of Mary. Since they influenced my choices, a few impressions from these sources might be of interest.

I was struck by the fact that the Gelb biography reported that both Ella O'Neill and James O'Neill, Jr. were able to give up narcotics and liquor after James O'Neill's death. Ella became both an efficient executor of the complicated estate, and socially more outgoing. She seemed to be a psychological cripple during her husband's lifetime. A friend remarked to Eugene O'Neill: "Your
dear father loved her [Ella] so much that he couldn't bear to see her be anything else than an ornament..."¹

Such biographical reports influenced me to see James Tyrone as a posturing, self-centered "bag of wind" whose insensitivity was largely responsible for Mary's addiction, and these facts and opinions from the O'Neill biographies seemed to support the theory. Because of the autobiographical nature of the play, I felt free to rely on the impressions from the biographies. My Mary began to recoil from the Tyrone I had interpreted. Ultimately, my interpretation of the James-Mary relationship was to undergo three more alterations before the final compromise was reached.

The movie version of the play suggested a new possibility for the James-Mary relationship. Ralph Richardson's Tyrone was a sensitive, loving father and husband whose relationship with Katherine Hepburn's Mary was especially gentle. Hepburn's Mary, on the other hand, had considerably more "grit" than I had imagined possible. She offered the innocent Victorian lady as only one side of Mary's personality; when

cornered, her drugged Mary could sting and bite. The gentle Tyrone and aggressive Mary worked in the movie; the University Theatre production had its own problems, and the movie's solution could not serve. (I shall deal with the James-Mary relationship in more detail in Chapter III). One further word about the movie: its influence on me was subliminal, an impression of tone, rather than of specific detail. Though I saw the movie after I knew I was to play Mary Tyrone, I carried away few visual images. The major influences from the movie were auditory, for I listened to a taped recording of the movie sound track many times. It was from the tape that I selected some readings from Miss Hepburn's characterization of Mary, as well as an imitation of her general tone. The following lines were read with a suggestion of the Hepburn tone:

MARY: I know it's useless to talk. But sometimes I feel so lonely. (p. 45)

MARY: But I suppose you're remembering I've promised before on my word o' honor. (p. 43)

An increasingly aggressive Mary was conveyed by the nagging, spitting edge of the section beginning:

MARY: Oh, I'm so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! (p. 67)
A hysterical, angry build, falling to stammering
uncertainty emphasized this speech:

MARY: Why is that glass there? Did you take a
drink? Oh, how can you be such a fool?
. . .One small drink won't hurt Edmund. 
It might be good for him, if it gives him
an appetite. (pp. 67f)

I used the rising build to a screech on:

MARY: Oh, we all realize why you like him,
James. . . .I hate doctors! (p. 74)

(Ultimately, this entire speech was toned down as a part
of a general softening of Mary's responses in Act I.
I felt I was playing too high, too soon, leaving
nothing to build to in Act II.) I used Miss Hepburn's
pattern of a gentle tone, breaking into a desperate,
pleading sob, and falling off to a chanting monotone
on the two speeches beginning with:

MARY: You mustn't be offended, dear. (p.85)
The vocal effects used in the following speech, were so
perfect, that I lifted the entire reading:

MARY: I have to get tooth powder, and toilet
soap, and cold cream--James! You mustn't
humiliate me so! (p. 86)

A vocal tone which imitated the foghorn was employed on:

MARY: It's the foghorn I hate. It won't let you
alone. It keeps reminding you, and warning
you, and calling you back. (p. 99)

Other vocal and diction tricks used by Miss Hepburn were
employed: breathiness when the men return in 22;

MARY: Oh, I'm so happy you've come! (p. 108)
and the repetition of a word in the drugged speeches:

MARY: . . . and the, uh, the leading part was a nobleman. He was different [different] from all ordinary men. . . . (p. 105)

I discussed the ethics of such imitation with the director and he approved of my selecting readings that I thought appropriate to my interpretation. Mr. Ritter pointed out that imitation constitutes theatrical plagiarism only when it becomes a substitute for individual work in creating a character.¹ Confident that I was working hard on my own characterization, I listened to the sound track from the movie, and was intrigued with Miss Hepburn's readings. I analyzed her speech patterns and vocal tone and decided to use the ones that worked for me. Two critics of my performance were aware of the imitation:² a third mentioned that he "saw no Katherine Hepburn" in my characterization.³ I have come to realize the value of a carefully considered imitation as one device in preparing a role. In the future, however, I shall exercise great caution when contemplating the imitation

¹I found license for this same kind of imitation in Rosemary Harris' declaration that she copies every good actress she sees. She cites as her authority none other than Laurence Olivier, who recommends outright "pirating" of technique. (Life, May 6, 1966.)

²Gene Gerrard and George Crepeau.

³James Lynch.
of so widely-known an actress as Miss Hepburn, because the recognition of her distinctive style can be a distraction from the audience's "willing suspension of disbelief."

Taken together, the exhaustive textual analysis, personal speculations, and consultation of outside resources form one seamless structure of preparation. Adherents of the "natural" theory of acting have often manufactured a distinction between the "studied" preparation which guarantees competence, and the "inspired" or "spontaneous" moment which can, in some mystical and capricious way, be conferred by the muse in mid-performance. Obviously both kinds of performances exist. But the distinction is not between preparation and inspiration, but, rather, between predictable and possible effects of a single process of preparation. "Inspired" touches pre-exist as options in the actor's (or director's) mind, or they do not exist at all.

During the first dress rehearsal of our play I began to experience this kind of freedom (relaxation) which I welcomed after the long concentrated preparation. New values occurred to me, tired gestures and movements came alive, the pace tightened in an exciting, fresh rhythm, and I felt the exhilaration (not "inspiration") of being part of an emerging work of art. For
unpredictable reasons, this "freedom to act" was short-lived, or, at least, short-circuited. A serious situation in my family developed just before the final dress rehearsal, reached its crisis a few hours before the opening performance, and continued throughout the run. My performance (at least on opening night) slipped back a notch from the level of total concentration and relaxation to a level supported largely by technique—from "possible options" to "predictable competence." 1

1Interestingly, Mr. Bowen, who saw both the first dress rehearsal and the opening public performance, noticed and commented on the difference between my two performances. The words used by the critics to describe my acting all connoted "predictable competence": "outstanding achievement," Roy Bowen; "credible and motivated," George Crepeau; "believable and highly effective," James Lynch; "remarkably effective," "impressive," Charles Ritter; "portrayed with a high degree of competence," Everett Schreck.
CHAPTER II

GENERAL PRODUCTION PROBLEMS

Director

Since the ambiguous position of Mr. Charles Ritter as both director of the play and adviser to my thesis study was not entirely clear until this investigation was well under way, the explanation of his role should perhaps be similarly delayed until the end of this paper. But since this is not a mystery story, the reader will be best served by an early explanation that clarifies his part in the total design. Mr. Ritter directed Long Day's Journey Into Night with what I would call "indirection."

Faced with a mature cast of relatively experienced actors, Mr. Ritter chose to give us fairly free rein in creating our characterizations. Because my performance was to be a part of my thesis study, he told me specifically that I was to detail my entire performance, and he turned over to me the blocking of one scene. Mr. Ritter did give me notes during the rehearsals, but the over-all design was mine, and he said little in the way of confirmation or rejection. During the run of the play, consequently, I suffered lingering doubts about
the effectiveness of my choices. After the performance, however, these same doubts accentuated the interest and zeal with which I began to dissect what I had done. Writing the thesis, in other words, gave me the opportunity to re-run, in slow motion, an experience that had run by too fast (and under unusual pressures) to allow me to absorb its lessons. I began to untangle the reasons for the weak spots that had continued to plague me (and to which the critics had reacted), and this proved to be especially illuminating. Discovering for myself, in a slow, careful re-creation of the process, the errors and pitfalls which might have been pointed out to me at the time, was finally far more valuable. More often than not, one learns by pain; until a moment becomes problematical, one has little motivation to analyze its dynamics. Mr. Ritter's "withholding" of direction was painful, but the concentrated learning experience for me was the compensating gain.

After I had written much of this thesis, Mr. Ritter gave me a critique which detailed his part in the design. Its inclusion at this point may clarify for the reader, as it did for me, the dynamics of our mutual experiment in what Mr. Ritter has called an "educational exercise."
Critical Reaction to Marjorie Johnson's Performance of Mary Tyrone

First, let me state that since my position was crucial in structuring the nature of the performance, I feel obligated to describe what the performance was designed to be in accordance with my understanding of that design before reacting to the question of how successfully the design was achieved.

Foremost in my mind was the fact that the performance was an educational exercise, a "muscle-stretching" experience for the student. Therefore, my relationship with Marjorie was less director-oriented and more teacher-oriented. A natural result of this relationship was that I operated contrary to standard directorial conduct of capitalizing on the actor's strengths and disguising her weaknesses. Rather, the strengths were given free play to develop as they naturally would and the weaknesses were deliberately exposed and insistently kept in the open in the hopes that after the experience they would be less than weaknesses. The summary result of this intention was to aim for as completely a controlled and disciplined performance as possible. While Marjorie had earlier displayed a high degree of stage presence (ease on stage) and a suggestion that she possessed a higher degree of vocal and physical range than she employed, she had yet to establish her stage authority (mastery of all stage elements, which is a long step past stage presence) and to develop the habit of exploiting those moments in a script which lend themselves to theatrical "fireworks." As a consequence of the direction given to the performance, we should have reasonably anticipated a highly technical yet highly theatrical performance.

Had this not have been a thesis-performance, my direction would have been quite different. I would have insisted upon a "softer" Mary. I would have hoped for an entirely different Mary-Tyrone relationship as a result; we might have had a somewhat different relationship with these two except for unavoidable rehearsal problems arising
out of a complex of difficulties I won't describe. To say that we would have had a different performance of Mary is not to say that we would have had necessarily a more effective performance, and decidedly it is not to say that the performance we had was not an effective performance.

The performance of Mary Tyrone was remarkably effective. The design of the exercise (Marjorie and my combined intention) was achieved to a degree of which Marjorie may be unqualifiedly proud. The point is not how impressive she was as an actress in this role (she was impressive) but, rather, to what extent did she improve as an actress as a result of this role. Seen from this view, the experience had for her in my judgment a superior result. I could complain of such trifles as the fact that she wasn't sufficiently concerned with the problem of the two special spotlights with which she concluded the performance. This would not detract from the fact she gave a remarkably disciplined performance and evidenced a true sense of stage authority, thus realizing the design.

Charles C. Ritter

University Hall stage

The first problems presented by the production in general were the assets and liabilities of University Hall stage. My initial fears were that the projection of greater volume and bigger gestures would destroy the fragile intimacy of the play. Although there was undoubtedly a loss of the kind of subtlety possible in a smaller theatre, or available to movie actors, my worst fears were proved to be unfounded. The closed box set
improved the acoustics and created a feeling of intimacy within which small gestures were effective. (I am sure that the cramped backstage area gave the crew more trouble than the actors, who were only denied sufficient space for entrances and exits.) I was unaware of any special visual or auditory problems, but I was told that from the back of the house my make-up faded. The generally attentive audiences presented no special problem with voice projection.

The chief drawback in using the University Hall theatre was the unavailability of the stage. Moving rehearsals from a Derby Hall classroom to the large stage imposed a reverse order on the normal procedure for building a performance level. Instead of beginning with exaggerated body gestures which could later be toned down, I first became accustomed to the smaller projection level appropriate to the rehearsal room, and was then required to build a projection level suitable to the larger area. Because there was insufficient time to make delicate adjustments to the scale of the set, and its spatial relationship to the auditorium, I sensed the presence of a few dangling exaggerations of gesture.
Rehearsal schedule

The rehearsal schedule, broken by spring vacations and illnesses, was a handicap faced by director, actors, and crew alike. I shall limit my remarks to my own experience as it was affected by the length and nature of the rehearsal time. There was an eleven-week period between the final try-outs (January 25) and opening night (April 12). No rehearsals were scheduled for four of these intervening weeks (two weeks were left free for study of the play), except for a few rehearsals with Mary, Edmund, and Jamie during the vacation break (March 14-25). Of the remaining seven weeks, I was out of town for one, and suffered an illness which kept me home for the better part of another. The five weeks remaining for me were widely scattered in time: two weeks in February, the second week of March, the last week of March, and the first in April. Because of the illness of three cast members, the last two weeks of rehearsal never saw the entire cast together until the first dress rehearsal. The lack of continuity and "togetherness" gave me the feeling of being abandoned; each cast member seemed to be "traveling his journey" alone or with whomever showed for rehearsal. This unusual rehearsal phenomenon, together with my preliminary study of the play, may have contributed to Gene Gerrard's
observation that I seemed to be detached as an actress as well as a character.¹

Costume, Make-up, Wig

A chief function of costuming is to convey immediately the relevant facts about characters during the audience's first visual contact with the actors. Opening dialogues are largely time-fillers during which the audience has an opportunity to see the set, look at the actors and their costumes, begin to identify characters and their relationships, and get expository information. The costumes and set for our production fulfilled their functions well. I was faced with deciding which of the physical specifications for Mary in O'Neill's 235-word description of her were relevant to our production. Three of these presented special difficulties:

Mary is fifty-four, about medium height.

Her high forehead is framed by thick, pure white hair.

¹I wish to make a special comment about this particular criticism. Because I consider Mr. Gerrard to be an astute critic, and because other critics of my performances in former productions have indicated that I have some strength in ensemble acting, I was particularly impressed with his remark. My initial defensiveness in response to the criticism alerted me to the probability that it was true, and I decided to keep special watch for evidence of its causes in this analysis.
The height problem in our production was complicated by the fact that I am 5 feet 2 inches and the men all over 6 feet. The director alleviated the problem with blocking positions which favored my height; there was little else to be done. The age problem was more difficult. Mary is fifty-four, while I am forty-two and look considerably younger, particularly on stage. In effect, a twenty-year age difference had to be compensated for with costume, make-up, body posture, gesture, and vocal quality. Ordinarily the line references to Mary's white hair (and the stage directions) could have been ignored. I did not choose to do so because a white wig offered a possible solution to the age effect. This decision might well have proven disastrous on two counts: (1) There was too much hair in the wig for me to carry gracefully. The disproportionate bulk imposed a visual irritation on the spectator which was bound to become distracting. (2) The audience associated the bewigged head with a "cranky old woman" stereotype antithetical to the sympathetic figure recalled and, in part, created by O'Neill, the mother he loved and idealized. I felt, however, that although O'Neill's italicized descriptions of Mary generally refer to her beauty, and he makes the Tyrone men tend to idealize her, he did not create a cardboard character. The directions for line readings call for her to "taunt,
jeer, defy, tease, deny, lash," and to speak "sharply, angrily, passionately, bitterly, scornfully, defensively."

Her shy, convent-girl manner and vague dreaminess is charming, but she is far less attractive under pressure.

I tried to show both sides of Mary with the use of stinging readings in the following lines:

MARY: I'm so tired of pretending this is a home. You won't help! You won't put yourself out in the least! . . . (p. 67)

MARY: You're to blame, James! Do you want to kill him? . . . (p. 67)

MARY: . . . Come to think of it, I do have to drive uptown . . . (p. 86)

MARY: I never knew what rheumatism was before you were born! (p. 116)

MARY: . . . I have to go to the drugstore. You'd hardly want to go there with me. You'd be so ashamed. (p. 94)

MARY: Why don't you light the light, James? . . . (p. 117)

However, the stereotyped association of "quarrelsome old woman" evoked by the wig could well have combined with the waspish readings to carry the character too far away from audience sympathy. In trying to avoid "poor little Mary," I may have created what one critic called "somebody's afflicted grandmother."1 Katherine Hepburn's success in dealing with Mary's "sting" was accomplished,

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1 Gene Gerrard.
in part, by capitalizing on her beauty. One doesn't object entirely to watching a bird of paradise peck; a "cross, wet hen" is harder to sympathize with. If the wig transformed the character into a wet hen, an invaluable aid in winning audience sympathy was lost.

I used a traditional "age" make-up: a combination #2-1/2 and #4 base greasepaint, brown and white liner following the natural face lines, white highlights on the cheekbone, and shadow in the lower cheek, and no lipstick. In order to enlarge and accentuate the size of the eyes, I used false eyelashes and widened the eyebrow. After Mary takes her first shot, I added heavy liner to widen the eye line and create the effect of a dilated pupil. Although the eyes were effective, the many comments about a too-youthful look led me to conclude that the make-up was not successful.
CHAPTER III

ESTABLISHING CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

The brief summary of "separating" actions, the two lists of "devices" and changing responses charting a break from reality, and the structural analysis of the play all described a journey to an inevitable end—"the isolation of Mary." Theoretically, "brokeness" can only be shown in contrast to "wholeness", unreality in contrast to reality, night's isolation in contrast to morning's "togetherness." Practically, the character of Mary had to be shown in relation to each of the other characters, before she could be shown out of relation, or, "separated" from each one. An interpretation of Mary's relationship to, and rejection of, each of the men was central to the establishment of character—a process, again, that functioned in response to the script, the production, and my own resources. I shall discuss the structure of these relationships in the order of their increasing complexity, the same order in which Mary terrified at any such entanglement, succeeds in destroying them.¹

¹The physical and vocal effects used to convey these relationships are discussed separately, except in the case of the Cathleen-Mary relationship which is considered along with the examination of the use of gesture.
Jamie-Mary Relationship.--The most tenuous relationship is between Jamie and Mary. Its weakness is indicated by the small number of lines devoted to their dialogues: the two characters have only six one-to-one exchanges. The first one reveals Mary's opinion of Jamie, his answering stare, and an uneasy question which sets a tone of mutual wariness:

MARY: I could hear you down the hall almost as bad as your father. You're like him. As soon as your head hits the pillow, you're off. ... Why are you staring, Jamie? Is my hair coming down? ... (p. 20)

Jamie, the cynical realist, strips away illusion; the eye of Nephilim sees through the would-be "Blessed Virgin Mary." Her subsequent responses are increasingly uneasy; the relationship is under heavy strain.

JAMIE: It's not just a cold. The kid is damned sick.

MARY: Why do you say that, it is just a cold. ... You always imagine things! (p. 26f)

Preoccupation with other thoughts barely disguises itself as polite exchange:

MARY: Did I actually hear you suggesting work on the front hedge, Jamie? Wonders will never cease. You must want pocket money very badly.

JAMIE: When don't I? ... 

MARY: What were you two arguing about?

JAMIE: The same old stuff. (p. 40)
The following tense exchange is the closest Mary and Jamie ever get to expressing concern:

JAMIE: We're all so proud of you, Mama, so darned happy. But you've still got to be careful. . .

MARY: . . . I don't know what you mean, warning me to be careful.

JAMIE: All right, Mama. I'm sorry I spoke. (p. 41f)

After her first shot, a guilty Mary makes feeble attempts to avoid Jamie's probing eyes, and finally confronts him angrily. The battle lines are drawn:

MARY: Good heavens! How down in the mouth you look, Jamie! What's the matter now? . . .

MARY: It's you who should have more respect! You who, thanks to him, had to work hard in your life. (pp. 59f)

Their last exchange exposes "too much truth" for Mary to bear, and enforces an automatic end to their relationship:

MARY: Why do you stare like that?

JAMIE: You know.

MARY: I don't know.

JAMIE: Oh, for God's sake, Mama, do you think you can fool me? I'm not blind.

MARY: I don't know what your're talking about.

JAMIE: No? Take a look at your eyes in the mirror! (P. 63)

At the end of the play, Jamie, who has by now expressed to Edmund the depth of his love and anguish for Mary
calls once more to his drugged mother. There is no answer.

There seemed to be little difficulty in conveying this interpretation in our production, a fact which did not diminish the careful process of selection in establishing this relationship. A thorough understanding of it by both Mr. Parady and myself was clearly stated in performance: Cynic and coward had little to do with one another; the "bird with the broken wing" could have no traffic with the hawk.

James-Mary Relationship

By far the most troublesome relationship to establish and convey was that between James and Mary. Several factors were involved in this problem: the stereotype "crosspatch" image evoked by the wig, and the selection of line readings in Act I which tended to corroborate it, set a precedent early in the play that was almost impossible to correct; personal reactions, illnesses, and fragmented rehearsals all contributed to the decline rather than the development of a satisfactory character relationship. A compromise of sorts was finally reached, but not until the third performance. In the first two performances the unsolved problem produced some surprising audience
reactions which, in turn, suggested a solution. (This serves to prove, one might note in passing, that acting does not become complete until it is presented on a stage before an audience.) The sequence of the problem's genesis and solution may be outlined as follows:

1) My original interpretation of the James-Mary relationship was that the two were "going through the motions" of intimacy, but were actually hopeless solitaries—one a pompous "bag-of-wind," the other a fugitive from reality. This interpretation was rejected on two counts: a statement so extreme would have been as untrue as the other extreme—of two innocents crushed by circumstances beyond their control—and the audience could not care about the fates of two individuals who cared nothing for each other.

2) The Long Day's Journey Into Night movie supplied a possible alternative: Ralph Richardson's gentle Tyrone allowed Katherine Hepburn's peppery Mary to join in a believable, basically loving, relationship which accommodated the weaknesses of both, rather than forcing mutual rejection. The options are found in alternative readings for two lines:

MARY: I knew buying the car was a hard thing for you to do, and it proved how much you loved me, in your way... (p. 85)
Are the underscored lines read gently (as Hepburn read them), or are they read with a sneer? Again, are Tyrone's following lines read with sincerity or as "hot air"?

MARY: . . . I know you love me still, James, in spite of everything.

TYRONE: Yes! As God is my judge! Always and forever, Mary! (P. 112)

3) The gentle readings of the movie expressed a deep relationship which conveyed far more exquisite pain than any other. I chose this alternative as my own, and waited and hoped for a sensitive Tyrone. He did not appear. Mr. Burke's Tyrone, while justifiable and consistent, evoked a superficial matinee idol who "spouted lines" even in matters closest to him, an insensitive character whose maxims and cliches would repel my hyper-sensitive Mary. This characterization was perhaps close to the "truth" reported in the Gelb biography—that Mary was an "ornament" to James, not a person.

4) My reactions to Mr. Burke's characterization during rehearsals were confused and tentative. I was so enthusiastic about the movie's interpretation of the relationship that I kept hoping for it to develop. It did not come. On opening night there were inconsistencies
in the way my Mary responded to his James. I anticipated one thing, got another; responded first one way, then another. (In retrospect, I must judge some of my responses in this first performance to have been personal ones disguised as Mary's.) At the time the specific cause was not apparent to me, but was obviously centered in the tone of the James-Mary relationship. Audience laughs in "wrong" places (on the car speech, and the "I love you, dear, in spite of everything;" exchange,) confirmed the location of the trouble.

5) With the director's consent, I devised a new strategy for Mary prior to the second performance. I abandoned my unsuccessful attempts to create a sensitive, loving relationship between Mary and Tyrone, and used readings which conveyed resentment and repulsion against Tyrone's phoniness. I chose sarcasm as Mary's weapon, and brandished it early in the play. Act I lines such as following were edged with this sarcasm:

TYRONE: . . .I have the digestion of a young man of twenty, if I am sixty-five.

MARY: You surely have, James. No one could deny that. (p. 14)
MARY: You were snoring so hard I couldn't tell which was one foghorn. Ten foghorns couldn't disturb you. You haven't a nerve in you. You've never had. (p. 17)

MARY: Yes, it's terrible the way we all pick on you. You're so abused! (p. 18)

My Mary brushed aside Tyrone's caress with a show of irritation on: you mustn't be so silly, James. . . (p. 28)

The audience response to the new "edges" was immediately evident. They either laughed audibly or gave subdued anticipatory or confirming chuckles before, or as, such exchanges occurred. The response snowballed during the second act. An edge of sarcasm had become a load: and, by a strange kind of psychic anticipation communicated to me through the quality of audience response, I felt compelled to provide it on such lines as:

MARY: We are still on our honeymoon, do you remember? (p. 113)

MARY: I haven't been such a bad wife, have I? . . . At least I've loved you dearly, and done the best I could, under the circumstances. (p. 114)

MARY: But I must confess, James, although I couldn't help loving you, I'd never have married you if I'd known you drank so much. . . . (p. 113)

This last line is badly written for it always got a laugh, although I don't think O'Neill intended it to be funny. I finally gave up on this one, and concentrated on sobering the audience on: "I remember the first time
your bar friends brought you up to the door. . ."

Even allowing for a "theatre-ignorant" student audience, these laughs were wrong and too frequent. The quality of audience anticipation pointed to what I finally saw to be the exact locus of the problem: by playing on the level established by Mr. Burke's characterization of Tyrone as a kind of buffoon, Mary had become "Jolly" to his "Fibber McGee."

Allowing these parallel characterizations set a series of precedents early in the play for a "bickering old couple." As the Tyrone couple become funnier, they became easier to watch; when their relationship dropped down a level, the audience lost respect and the characters lost the dignity necessary to sustain the kind of pain O'Neill was after. I had interpreted O'Neill's intentions for the unfolding of Mary's unconscious "strategy" as proposal followed by resignation, pleading, and defeat. First she proposes resignation as a mutually solution to the things life has done to us. Misunderstanding, Tyrone insists on will-power: "You won't even try?" (p. 85)

Donning a mask of detachment, Mary assumes the resignation for herself: "Try to go for a drive this afternoon, you mean?" (p. 85)
Further harassed by Tyrone's taunts, Mary is reduced to pleading: "James! You mustn't humiliate me so!" (p. 96) She makes a last desperate plea for help: "James! I'm so frightened! I know he's going to die, and it will be my fault!" (p. 122)

Still unable to find realistic solutions, Mary turns to drugs. When next she meets Tyrone in Act III, she refuses to recognize him, responding to his overture as though he were a stranger. The relationship between the two is broken.

But this interpretation of the underlying transactions between James and Mary, however well supported by the O'Neill text, was almost impossible to achieve in mid-production. For all the reasons I have suggested, the moment to moment details of the relationship established between Mr. Burke and myself in rehearsal (and complicated by the ill-fated "Ribber McGee and Molly" solution) were by now set on a pair of iron rails leading in quite another direction. As it presented itself in the second performance, then, the problem could only be alleviated by wrenching a few key moments to support my own interpretation, and counting on these highlights to color the remaining details. There was no time, and little hope, for reworking the entire action with Mr. Burke. The initiative was mine, and I simply forced
him to respond to the new cues. Selecting the "pressure points" for this operation was the most demanding test which the play required of me.

5) It was clear, first, that Mary does not have the option of being funny in the way Jamie can be; the dark laughter of a tragic clown can only come from a person who knows himself completely. The legitimate laughter at Mary's report of Jamie hiding under the hedge is not in appreciation of her humor, but is directed at Jamie. The audience reaction on the second performance convinced me that "to isolate" a comic scold serves her right; whereas "to isolate" a weak victim is pitiable. Certainly some modern equivalent of "pity and terror" for Mary should be experienced by the audience. I decided, therefore, that I must retain for Mary her strongest and most sympathetic posture—the unworldly "lady" fighting as best she can. Having given up on the men, her most effective behavior is to "go along" with Tyrone's bombast and her sons' shocking ways. For the third performance, then, I attempted a shift in tone designed to evoke more audience (and Tyrone) sympathy.

A specific example of one device used to effect this change in tone occurred in Unit 22, when Mary, in the depths of despair about Edmund's health after a
traumatic conversation with him, makes a desperate plea to Tyrone for comfort. The blocking called for Mary to spring from her chair and throw herself into Tyrone's arms with a "soul-wrenching" sob of fear and panic. The line is:

MARY: Oh, James, I'm so frightened! I know he's going to die! And it will be my fault, I never should have borne him. (p. 122)

It had been Mr. Burke's habit to throw away the entire moment by speaking his next line too quickly, with little or no show of concern for Mary's pathetic state. With a quick pat on the shoulder, suggesting a coach's "pep talk" rather than a sensitive response to an anguished, and rare, intimacy, the following line was rapidly dispensed with:

TYRONE: Hush, Mary for the love of God! Hush, now! Here comes Cathleen. (p. 122)

The technical problem here arose from the curt line reading and the hasty break from Mary's grasp. I could do little about the line reading other than delay it by tightening my grasp on Mr. Burke, clawing his chest, digging my nails into his hands, hanging on as long as possible, and murmuring under my breath a "heart-rending": "James! James!" Clinging to him so tenaciously, and pleading with him in this way, startled Mr. Burke,
I'm sure, but he could no longer ignore the moment. His cue pick-up was delayed, and he recognized the moment I had begged for as worth a pause to "see that Mary was all right" before continuing his line. His concerned hesitation remained in his performance.

My final example of mid-production strategy occurred in Act III at the moment when Tyrone takes the wedding gown Mary has dragged down the stairs on his line:

TYRONE: Here, let me take it, dear. You'll only stop on it and tear it and get it dirty dragging it on the floor. Then you'll sorry afterwards.

MARY: Thank you. You are very kind. (p. 172)

Again, the problem was rushing. Mr. Burke was taking the gown from me much like a delivery man picking up the laundry, instead of capitalizing on the excruciatingly poignant moment it was meant to be. I tried a delaying device similar to the first one by holding on to the gown and turning away with it but this only produced a tug-of-war. I finally appealed to the director to intervene, which he did, and from the third performance on we had this moment to add to our late-day defenses against "Fibber McGee and Molly."

This final compromise was all that could be done to
patch up the problem—the wig phenomenon was beyond help. In effect, she may never change him in this way, but at least he does not succeed in changing her into a Fashwife.

Ironically, the decision to revise strategy was made none too soon, for the Friday night audience was the noisiest, most unruly one played to, and had I come up with a garrulous "Molly" instead of a painfully "proud but broken" Mary, the result would have been a burlesque of O'Neill's play. The audience's "lip-licking" readiness to laugh at anything and resist the tragedy at all costs proved a challenge to the entire cast. In spite of the frivolous character of the audience, the surprise laughs in Act I were not destructive, but legitimately nervous. By the middle of Act II the audience was controlled by the actors and soberly informed about what it was seeing.

Edmund-Mary

Although Mary's relationship to her youngest son is the most complicated one of all, it caused little difficulty as an actor-problem. Everything in the script insists on their natural similarity to, and affinity for, each other. Edmund, the dreamer who reports the "high spots" of his life as solitary
moments at sea, seeks a nirvana similar to Mary's--
a condition without the "hell of other people." This
bond creates a fierce but ironic loyalty. It is he
who defends Mary against his suspicions of Tyrone and
Jamie, and it is he who tries the hardest and the
longest to save his mother from her addiction.
Mary, in a frenzied protest against the decision that
he must go to a sanatorium, in turn admits that her
greatest love is for Edmund:

MARY: No! I won't have it! You are my baby!
He wants to take you away from me. He's
been jealous of every one of my babies!
He's been jealous of you most of all.
He knew I loved you most because--
(p. 119)

In the opening family scene, Mary constantly seeks to
defend or soothe Edmund. He is obviously her favorite
son "Mama's baby, Papa's pet." But his return from
sea and Mary's intervening trips to the sanatorium
have changed them both: somehow they can never quite
re-establish the mother-son relationship they both

1The possibility of an incestuous implication in
this line was recognized by the cast, and dealt with,
consciously, by rehearsal clowning. The Freudian
"undertone, however, remained in my mind and colored
my "bird flutter" retreats from Edmund. In ruling out
"inspiration" from the art of acting, I would never
rule out whimsy and where it might lead.
remember and treasure and try to re-enact. Edmund is no longer a baby, and Mary finds the restless young man a stranger. They do not know what to do with their frustrated love for each other except to insist on the responses of former selves. Their love is marred and qualified by the weaknesses Edmund sees in the present Mary, and by the exaggerated fear and guilt projected by a past Mary.

These two characters have three scenes together. In the first (Unit 11), Edmund upsets Mary by voicing his suspicions about her strange behavior. Mary defends herself with denials and promise. In the second scene (Unit 12), Mary has started on drugs again, and Edmund begs her to stop; again, she denies, accuses, promises, and threatens, rejecting for a second time his offer of an adult relationship. In their third scene (Unit 22), Mary is far gone on dope, and violently refuses his attempt to reach her:

MARY: I hate you when you become gloomy and morbid! I forbid you to remind me of my father's death, do you hear me? (P. 120)

This line leaves the relationship teetering on the edge of destruction. O'Neill's directions and following dialogue corroborate the damage:

EDMUND: Yes, I hear you Mama. I wish to God I didn't!
But Mary responds "like an automation":

MARY: Just listen to the foghorn. And the bells. Why is it the fog makes everything sound so sad and lost, I wonder?

EDMUND: (Brokenly) I--I can't stay here... (p. 121)

This leaves the balance so precarious that the addition of one more ugly word can plunge Mary into the abyss of total isolation. When, like Jamie and Tyrone, Edmund tries one more time to reach his mother in Act III, she replies in her girl's voice—except for the flicker of recognition which asserts itself in what is at once the first word in the speech, and her last word as an adult:

MARY: 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. 171)

Thus the girl—Mary rejects, each in turn, the men's final efforts to reach her. Her manner in each case corresponds to the complexity of the relationship: she makes no reply to Jamie's call (this weakest relationship was broken first); she responds to Tyrone's call as though he were a stranger (which, indeed he has been); her final "No!" to Edmund reflects her agony in breaking this, her most complex and valuable relationship.
CHAPTER IV

PHYSICAL AND VOCAL DEVICES

The playwright gives the actor the words he must say and the order in which they must be said; it remains for the actor to create their effect. As I have indicated, the preliminary intellectualizing, psychologizing, and information-gathering constitute the actor's homework. All of this becomes relevant only to the extent that he can direct it toward a unified dramatic effect; show with the instrument of his body, the subtleties discovered during both his research for the role, and his rehearsal experimentation with gesture, movement, and intonation. Added to his own discoveries (or, sometimes, opposed to them) are those of the director and other cast members, which, of course, often necessitate some kind of compromise or adjustment. The point here is that during the rehearsal period the extremely complex process of the selection and rejection of visual and auditory detail is added to the assessment and reassessment of emotional motivation. Charles McGaw points out that the word
"emotion" literally means "outward movement." The actor must now produce in some way—by invention or imitation—an acceptable symbolic gesture which will convey the felt emotion. Terminology varies with the different acting theories, but the appropriate selection of effect is, by any name, an artistic process. It is not possible to account for every moment of the two hours Mary is on the stage, but representative examples of the more important actor-problems, as I saw them, can be described.

The technical preparation of a part leads ideally to the moment of performance when specific techniques are forgotten in what should now appear an effortless "living of the part." The following discussion of physical and vocal devices are all examples of techniques which (hopefully) were internalized in performance. It should be noted that these techniques were analyzed and described in retrospect, and that the degree of consciousness with which I selected each one varied from deliberate design to the unconscious, "forgotten" device which I have recalled only through concentrated effort. Here, then, are the devices used to achieve my interpretation of the changing Mary.

In unit 11, I used a dignified "head-high, shoulders-back" posture to indicate her grace and style, marred by self-conscious, involuntary gestures, and a suggestion of rheumatic stiffness. To convey tension I used several gestures: movement of the right hand back and forth over the left hand, which acted as a stop to the moving hand; a fluttering hand movement to the hair; a twisting of the buttons and lace trim of the dress; tracing an invisible line on a chair back or arm; a stroking movement of the hands over the mouth; and sometimes a biting of the fingers and pulling of the lips. After the first performance, I reduced the hand movements considerably when it was called to my attention (by an outside observer) that these movements were distracting and less effective than facial expression. Thereafter, I tried to use the "drumming" motion only in moments when Mary feels she is unobserved (at the bay window after "I will, dear." (p. 17), or on her entrance which interrupts the Tyrone-Jamie argument.). When Mary is addressed by another character, and attention returns to her ("Take a look out the window, Mary." p. 40), I used a very pointed stilling of the hand movement. The sudden stop in mid-air was meant to emphasize her self-conscious attempt to appear calm when caught in a tell-tale gesture of "nerves." I wanted to achieve a bird-like
quality of quick retreats in face of the men's rough ex-
changes--"gunshots" to a bird. I made fleeting use of a
furrowed brow and quick eye movements, flashing from one
face to another, to indicate her battle to stem the rising
tension among the men in the opening "family group." I
tightened the lower facial and neck muscles in order to
pull the neck cords into a taut strained position. I
usually kept the mouth closed in a tight-lipped, strained
position. When the lips parted to allow sucking gasps of
air, I often bit the lower lip at the peak of the inha-
lation. I punctuated the line readings with a forced,
breathy laugh to indicate a nervous attempt to appear calm.

Effects for a Drugged Mary.--After Mary has had her
first shot (unit 12), the business and gestures employed
through the remainder of the play were uninhibited ex-
tensions of those used in effecting the non-drugged Mary.
Her early "pace" smooths out into the languid stroll used
for the "floating" descent down the stairs and her cross
to stage-center (unit 12, p. 58); her "out of sorts"
tension is eased; she reports she feels "ever so much
better," and "doesn't feel nervous now"; the strained
silence and short, tentative speeches of her morning scene
lengthen, now, into endless rambling. To further the ef-
flect of this new calm, I slowed the speech tempo, evened
the intonation, and decreased the number of head and eye
movements. In order to judge her responses better, I kept track of Mary's dope intake by noting the number of shots on each page of the script. Head and eye movements were similarly noted, and as the drug intake increased, the movements decreased in number and tempo, until by the end of Act III, the head and eyes hardly moved at all. There were three slow head and accompanying eye movements in Mary's last "Mother Elizabeth" speech. (pp. 175f.) Because it was in direct opposition to a quickness of manner basic to my own personality, this slowing of tempo and decrease in movement was the most difficult technique of all I attempted. Ironically enough, the euphoric state which addicts seek from drugs is often followed by a whiplash effect of violence and impulsiveness resulting from the very release of inhibitions which they sought. As Act II's afternoon of the "long day" unfolds, Mary has several more shots of morphine which release the second of her tri-part personality. Such passionate outbursts as the "I hate doctors!" speech from unit 21 (p. 74), are painful to Mary, and shortly after this, she leaves to take another shot to reduce this pain. Her appearance after each shot is more detached; O'Neill supplies a beautiful double-meaning line to accompany an Act II return: "See how hazy it's getting. I can hardly see the other shore." (p. 82)

The Rheumatic Hands.--There are nine references to Mary's rheumatism; seven of them mention her hands. In his
stage directions O'Neill mentions the crippled hands, Mary's self-consciousness about them, and her habit of unconscious drumming. Several critics of my performance mentioned the crippled hands as a problem. Two complained that the hands were not always cramped. I confess to resting them when I thought I could, but tried to compensate for the rest periods by exposing the cramped hands at times when there was no reference to them in the script. One example of such a time was when Mary, DRC of the stage-center table, watches Edmund circle the table to an ULC position on his line: "It's stupid. / You went in the spare room for the rest of the night." (p. 47)

As I leaned across the table, I placed my hands, in a cramped position, on the table, and left them extended toward him during the replying line: "Because your father's snoring was driving me crazy!" (p. 47)

I repeated this deliberate exposure many times on lines with no reference to hands. Apparently this device was not sufficient to satisfy all eyes at all times and the hand position was never organic. This probably led to the criticism that I should have suggested, rather than exploited the hands. My intention was to suggest rheumatic deformity with a position shown to me by Mr. Ritter, but I found it impossible to "drum" the fingers with the hands cramped in this way. The full hand movement described earlier was
substituted. (Some kind of splint-device to hold the hand in position might have been useful, but I rejected this as too clumsy.) I was told by two nurses who saw the play that my hands resembled exactly those of rheumatic patients they had cared for. Despite the authenticity of their appearance, I was always aware of the awkwardness of the hands, and some of my self-consciousness about them apparently came across as Mary's, which should have been effective. The numerous textual references to hands may have added to the impression of their over-emphasis, and it is important to note that it is the character who exploits them. The pain of her rheumatism provides Mary with her principal excuse for taking the "medicine."

Physical Contacts.--In my analysis of the structure and destruction of character relationships, I indicated that the Edmund-Mary one was the most complex and the last one to be broken. (Most of Mary's dialogue with another character is with Edmund.) This scheme is supported by an interesting parallel in the relative intimacy of physical contacts between Mary and each of the other men. The text suggests this scheme, Mr. Ritter exploited it in the blocking, and I incorporated it into my bird image for Mary. I visualized it as an extension of the territorial instincts which all birds display.

There was no physical contact blocked between Jamie and Mary; five brief contacts between James and Mary, and
six strong, intimate, physical contacts between Mary and Edmund. James made three attempts to caress Mary, a hug, a kiss, and a hand pat. She brushed all three aside. The fourth contact occurred when Mary seized James' arm in a desperate appeal. The most meaningful physical contact between the two ("James! I'm so afraid!") I discussed above. The physical contact between Edmund and Mary was of quite a different quality. 1) She fondled Edmund tenderly, but broke away in an embarrassed "flutter" to the window. (p. 43) 2) Seated at the window, Mary angrily "broke cover" to avoid Edmund's caress because of his suspicious accusation. (p. 45) 3) Standing behind Edmund, Mary used fondling to distract his attention from her dilated eyes. (p. 58) 4) She used fondling, again, as a ruse to keep Edmund from going to the doctor. (p. 92) 5) She fondled Edmund in a possessive maternal embrace, but broke away roughly when he insisted that she face the facts of his illness. (p. 119) 6) The climactic parallel between psychological and physical contacts occurred when Edmund grasped his girl-mother, twisting her averted body and mind into a position from which she must face his present illness. In pushing him away, she rejected everything.

**Use of Movement**

Another strategic device which I used frequently was the repeated "echoing" of an effect. An example of
this device occurred in the Act III "slow-motion" repetition of a movement pattern established in unit 11. I shall detail the pattern of the first movement, which was designed to accompany one of Mary's attempts to deal with reality. She talks to her husband of her concern for Edmund, defends Jamie against Tyrone's attack, and finally walks to the dining room entrance to call her sons.

1) Mary is standing LC of the Tyrone who is seated in the second chair LC of the stage-center table

2) She crosses from LC to DL, eight steps, beginning with left foot, and pivoting on steps seven and eight on the line:

MARY: Now don't start in on poor Jamie, dear. He'll turn out all right in the end, you'll see. (p. 18)

3) Pace continued back, beginning left, from DL toward LC on Tyrone's speech:

TYRONE: He'd better start soon, then. He's nearly thirty-four. (p. 18)

4) Arriving LC on six steps taken on Tyrone's speech, the pace continued in a curved line which snaked back to the DC area and continued through the RC area, ending at the edge of the UR area, during the line:

MARY: Good heavens! Are they going to stay in the dining room all day? Jamie! Edmund! . . . (p. 18)

This movement pattern was designed with three things in mind: First, it was plotted on a curving line which is visually more graceful than a straight one. Secondly, its hyper-tense "pacing" quality was itself a repetition of a precedent established on an earlier line cross. (RC chair to URC window after Mary's "I will, dear." p. 17) The
"bird fluttering about its cage" quality was repeated in different patterns on other Act I lines:

MARY: They've started clipping the hedge. (p. 43)

MARY: I don't understand why you should suddenly say such things... (p. 45)

MARY: Yes, you are. I can feel it. Your father and Jamie, too--particularly Jamie. (p. 45)

MARY: It makes it so much harder, living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion... (p. 46)

MARY: If there was only some place I could go to get away for a day... (p. 46)

Finally, the repetition of this movement pattern in Act III recalls (undoubtedly on a subconscious level) to the audience the morning motivations for the movement (fluttering attempts to "cope"), and contrasts them to the night motivations of a totally disoriented Mary. Now her only concern is to look for "something I lost," and her aimless walk is a weird combination of a confused "search" and a re-enactment of her convent-girl's dutiful call on the Mother Superior.

The realistically motivated movement-pattern of Act I, when repeated in Act III, was meant to project a hollow echo and terrible caricature of the way we remember the "morning Mary."

"Movement for Movement's Sake."--The faulty use of "movement for movement's sake" is often a difficult thing to identify, and if it has become "set" in the design, it is even more difficult to erradicate. I have chosen to
examine what I consider to have been an unsuccessful artistic selection in the hope that such a dissection will reveal personal impulses and acting techniques which must be guarded against, or used with greater discretion, in solving similar problems. The movement I wish to analyze accompanied the lines:

MARY: Poor hands! You'd never believe it, but they used to be one of my good points, along with my hair and eyes, and I had a fine figure, too. They were musicians hands! (p. 103)

The dynamics controlling the selection of this particular movement had roots in both production circumstances and actor-resources. Knowing that I was to do a thesis study around the characterization of Mary Tyrone, the director of the play assigned to me the blocking of Mary in the Act II "Mary-Cathleen" scene. In addition to blocking it, I was also to detail the gestures, business, et cetera, as I had agreed to do generally for my acting in the entire play. Although this scene appears to be largely a solo performance of great intensity (the bulk of the lines go to Mary's reminiscences), it requires a careful listener in the servant, Cathleen. The effect I was after in this scene may be stated briefly. Plying herself with drugs, and Cathleen with liquor, Mary recreates a convent-girl's exchange of confidence with her pathetic substitute for a friend. They engage in hilarious laughter, and Mary becomes more and more expansive in front of her captive
audience of one. A problem arose when the actress originally cast for Cathleen was found to be unsuitable for the role, and she was not replaced until the first dress rehearsal. This meant that during most of the rehearsal period I worked against the handicap of playing to the first actress, whose skills of concentration were limited. As I began to work on the blocking and detailing of action, a distressing phenomenon developed. I found that what seemed right as I worked alone would fall apart when I tried to play it to an inattentive partner. Feeling literally abandoned, I experienced the frustration of talking to the wind and the fatigue of "forcing." I began to grab at straw solutions. Having been a dancer for most of my life, the most natural device for me to use was body movement. Subconsciously I had decided to dance my way out of trouble.

On the line, "Poor hands! You'd never believe..." (p. 103), the body position was one-quarter right with a straight forward extension of both arms; the left arm circled left in a position preparatory to the following full body right-swing into a three-quarter left position, arms extended over the head, and hands held high. This last position was assumed on the line, "They were musician's hands!" (p. 103) Staring at the hands held high above the head was intended to indicate Mary's attempt to see them from far off, as they were when she was young. This line
and movement was followed by: "I used to love the piano. I worked so hard at my music at in the Convent . . ." (pp. 103f.) which led into a reverie of girlhood dreams.

The point of the above description is to show how a movement begun as a response to one problem, tends to be simply altered to accommodate a second motivation, marking the final effect. The arms which were extended over the head during a body swing from one-quarter left to three-quarters left, are finally lowered during a slow completion of the turn to a profile-left position. This complete movement originally stretched over the reading of four lines, beginning with: "They were musician's hands!" (p. 103).

The intent of this original timing was to direct Mary's monologue to herself, almost as though she was addressing her outstretched hands. The selection was made during the early rehearsal period when I was consciously avoiding the frustration of playing to the "first" Cathleen, and compensating for the awkwardness by relying almost totally on the trusted device of body movement.

The substitution of the second actress, who played Cathleen in the six performances, filled the void I had sought to bridge with movement, and set off a new chain-reaction of responses. The "school-girl relationship" now seemed plausible, and laughter and expansiveness flowed freely. The psychological block that had forced the selection of the relatively extravagant gesture dissolved
when a "listening actress" called forth a different technique. Whereas I had originally sought to isolate Mary in a complete preoccupation with her own story, I finally was able to direct her external focus toward Cathleen; her internal focus, which contained the greatest intensity, remained on her own reverie.

The original gesture was altered by shortening the length of time that the hands were held high over the head. I brought them down almost immediately after "They were musician's hands!" into a folded position across the breast, with body in profile-left position, head turned to the right, and directed the remaining lines ("I used to love the piano . . .") toward Cathleen. Shortening the time in this way robbed the gesture of its original motivation (to stare at them and address them), and its remnant was exposed as an "exploitation of movement." Similarly, the full arm extension gesture accompanying the "Poor hands!" speech had a weaker impulse under Cathleen's steady eye. Now Mary could only be self-conscious about her hands and would not have held them up to scrutiny, but, rather, have hidden them apologetically.

Most of my "dancer's solutions" remained legitimate within the context of Mary's expansive intimacy with the second Cathleen. But those which were plausible only as solutions to the original problem could remain only as the technical responses of an actress. The character no longer
justified them. My failure to eliminate all of these provoked the criticism that I was detached and over technical. A strong gesture pushed by a weak impulse can only result, again, in "movement for movement's sake"; a half-solved problem is as obvious and unsatisfactory as an unsolved one.

Variety and Contrast.--Because of the heavy focus on Mary (she has 288 lines), there was a particular need for technical variety in unit 22. Mary's reconstruction of her first meeting with young Tyrone, her recollection of early marriage disillusionsments, and that of her wedding gown are all long, uninterrupted monologues, virtually "re-enactments." I hoped to achieve a variety of effects by employing various specific strategies: the "danced" Mary-Cathleen scene projected a kind of animated cartoon of the early romance; its gaiety was ended by a shocking picture of a stupefied, disheveled Mary, slipping to her knees in front of a chair, parodiing the prim school girl at the shrine; a collapse from the praying position into one suggesting convulsive retching, was meant to demonstrate physically Mary's descent into bitter self-loathing; a stumbling run projected her frenzied flight after more drugs; shrinking into a corner conveyed a frightened impulse to hide from the returning men; and the Act I "flutter," now executed "underwater," was meant to expose the pathos of her confident assumption that she is
deceiving the men with her "natural" welcome. I tried to vitalize the long, seated wedding gown speech with the facial and vocal qualities of the "rogue and coquette" (Tyrone's names for the young Mary), which provided a lyric recall of the wedding preparations. The reverie ends with Mary's lashing taunt in reply to Tyrone's accusation that she might be drunk as well as doped. She can afford only one more outburst of fear for Edmund's health, "James! I'm so frightened! .. ." (p. 122), before she breaks away from her family for the long night of drugged re-enactment of remembrance.

I visualized the build to Mary's break as a rising jagged line whose points indicated the most intense explosions of joyful recall or bleak despair and complaint. I intended to show her final outburst of fear hardening into resolution to "go to bed and rest." "Goodnight, dear," are her last words of farewell to James and to reality. Mary attempts to cloak this exit with as much dignity as possible with her last lines:

TYRONE: Up to take more of that God-damned poison, is that it?
MARY: I don't know what you're talking about, James. You say such mean, bitter things when you've drunk too much. You're as bad as Jamie or Edmund. (p. 123)

Mary goes down fighting in the only way she can, and we do not see her again until the end of Act III when she is unrecognizable as wife or mother.
Mary's "traffic between planes of absence, passion, and remembrance" required unusually fast and sudden changes of motivation, often puzzling to an audience. This variety had to be accommodated without violating the system of association "precedents" upon which the climactic lines depend. After wrestling the difficulties inherent in creating this character, I can only agree with the critic who calls the role of Mary Tyrone among the "most arduous and exacting in American dramatic literature."2

Vocal Devices

I used a middle-register vocal pitch for the "normal" Mary of Act I, forcing it just enough to produce a brittle, strained edge to its tone. I had given up trying to imitate the "breathy" laughter which peppers Katherine Hepburn's readings, but found that I was able to accomplish it, in part, during performance of the "nervous" speeches. A low-register vocal quality was used for moments of anger or despair, which are Mary's most lucid, or "adult", moments of self-awareness:

MARY: But I suppose you're remembering I've promised before on my word of honor. (p. 48)

In the next exchange the second line was dropped far below the high screaming pitch of the first line.

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MARY: Stop this at once.
EDMUND: He's a liar! It's a lie, isn't it, Mama?
MARY: What's a lie? Edmund! Don't! (p. 64)
The sudden drop in voice register on the last line was repeated in this exchange:

MARY: Why do you look at me like that? Although as usual I couldn't find my glasses. Please stop staring! One would think you were accusing me-- James! You don't understand! (p. 68)

The low register, by now an identifying tag for "honesty," was meant to increase the poignancy of Mary's plea to James (I used a suggestion of Hepburn's "chant" here):

MARY: James! We've loved each other! We always will! Let's remember only that, and not try to understand what we cannot understand, or help the things that cannot be helped--the things life has done to us we cannot excuse or explain. (p. 85)

Other examples of the use of the low-register were:

MARY: You're a sentimental fool. What was so wonderful about that first meeting between a silly romantic schoolgirl and a matinee idol? You were much happier before you knew he existed. (p. 107)

MARY: 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)

In addition to the low register, I injected a suggestion of a sob, or "gravel" quality, to this line:

MARY: I hope, sometime, without meaning it, I will take an overdose. (p. 121)
Suspected missing page 73.
controlled gesture repetitions, identifying each with a characteristic voice pitch. Even the girlish tone of Act III was established early in Act I:

MARY: I did truly have beautiful hair once, didn't I, James? . . . It was a rare shade of reddish brown and so long it came down below my knees. (p. 28)

This high-register was repeated more frequently as the drugs increase, the middle-range tone receded, and the low-register tones were used most in Act II's violent pendulum swings in and out of passion. It sounded only once in Act III. When Mary is confronted with Edmund's desperate plea for recognition at the end of the play, I departed from the girlish high register for one word only--"No!"--to indicate Mary's final rejection of present reality and its painful entanglements. The deep register, having an established connection with the "honest" or "mature" Mary, conveyed a double effect: the response is that of Edmund's mother, stabbing through the eerie spectre of the convent girl; yet the word itself denies that this can happen. The carefully wrought series of technical precedents and associations allowed me to "load" that one word with what amounted to the whole crushing weight of Mary's experience.
CONCLUSION

If one accepts the dogma that all art is a matter of selections designed to produce a unified effect, this effect can only be located in the critical response of an observer. Without raising the age-old debate over the objectivity of aesthetics, it can be said that of all artists, the actor, who cannot see or hear himself, is least able to function as his own critic. Left with only the memory of unspecified applause, chance remarks, and often suspect criticism, the play's end is more often than not a bewildering and depressing experience for the actor, who wonders what, exactly, he has done. This is not to recommend a retreat into mysticism (or despair) but only to insist that by the very nature of his skills the actor is disqualified from any aesthetic evaluation of his performance. He is on firmer ground in describing his particular configuration of choices; but he can do this only in terms of his intentions, not their effects. This, indeed, has been the rationale of this study, and a reader might recommend that it be titled "An Examination of the Artistic Process Intended to Create the Character of Mary Tyrone." The actor's process of selection is a
necessary, but not a sufficient condition; it offers only a possibility, not an automatic guarantee of the creation of character. An actor may only specify his choices, test and re-test them in rehearsal, and present them in performance in the hope that they will produce a "unified effect." If he later re-examines this process of selection, he does so only to refine his own understanding of technique, and to clarify, for anyone interested in it, the discipline of such choice-making. This thesis, then, is a description of one such process. Its logic is inductive, and it is offered as evidence of itself.
APPENDIX

Critical reactions to my performance of Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night were submitted, at my request, by Roy Bowen, George Crepeau, Walter Dewey, James Lynch, Charles Ritter, and Everett Schreck. I also made use of Gene Gerrard's reviews of the production in two performances. Mr. Ritter's critique is located in the text of the paper. The other critiques follow in this appendix.
Critique of Marjorie Johnson as Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night, by Roy Bowen

I saw the first part of the play in rehearsal on Saturday, saw the entire play on Tuesday, and came for the last act of the final performance. We were fortunate to have you do this role and I feel quite sure no one in the Department could have done it as well. You are rather too small and too attractive for the role, which might be considered an irrelevant comment in view of the above. However I feel quite sure that part of the strong focus on Mary in this production was due to the contrast with the three tall men who played the other roles.

Externals

I was neutral on the great wig controversy except that I felt it did suggest a fright wig in your last appearance. The dinner dress was perfect. Nervous movements of the hands in the first act seemed external to me on the opening night but not at the rehearsal.

Characterization

You obviously understood the character well and had made a careful analysis of the role. I thought your charts on Pages 13 and 14 of your analysis were excellent and the results of their use impressive.

I had no objection to the occasional waspishness which Gene Gerrard complained about. The irritability and maliciousness are important to give her a three-dimensional quality. Some of your best moments were the moments of complaint; some of the most believable emotional states were those when you felt persecuted.

Within the limits of the dramatic action, I thought you had good connections with the other characters. The peculiar problem in this play for the actress playing Mary is that, for most of the time, she is detached from and lacking sensitivity to the people she loves. Possibly you could have suggested more than you did that you wanted to really see or hear them but were unable to.
M. Johnson Critique

You deserve great credit for the believable portrayal of the effects of drugs. I must say that nothing in the entire play seemed more thrilling to me than your entrance after the first "shot" at the rehearsal. I cannot really tell you why it seemed so much better than the performance. You seemed to get a totality at the Saturday rehearsal which amounted to a drugged state of mind; possibly I was more conscious of technique on opening night because I was seeing it for the second time. I was certainly much too conscious of hand movements and critical of the fact that your hands became more deformed when you talked about the ailment. However, you did not deserve the "Zasu Pitts" comment.

Overall, this play and your role in it represented outstanding achievement. I will be looking forward to reading your thesis.
Har-Jorie Johnson

Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night

I must disagree with any reviewer who says that a role should be played this way or that... toned down or more restrained or whatever... because that reviewer is acting as a director and using the press to reveal his personal approach to the role. The reviewer's interpretation and/or likes or dislikes do not matter... it is rather the effect of the actress' interpretation on him that matters.

I believed in and was moved by your performance as Mary Tyrone. The "acted" action was credible and motivated. Motivated within yourself and motivated by others and things. The feelings came across very well as far as I was concerned.

I know no one with an affliction such as hers (Mary Tyrone) and would have no base in actuality with which to compare your delineation of such a person and this is probably as good as anything... because if I had I would not resist comparison. But because I did not have such a base I was able to accept readily whatever you did. Therefore the hand-wringing and the waspishness I have heard about did not bother but rather helped.

The role vocally was wholly acceptable. If there is any sense of repetitiousness I would be inclined to attribute it to the writing rather than to the actress... especially in this case.

The reviewer who said something about Sara Pitts is wrong there but he was not far wrong on the Katherine Hepburn similarities. These came through in the ends of phrases and the ends of sentences. Hepburn is so recognizable in anything that a similarity shows more. And, of course, in this role, people would look for it.

My only negative thought is no fault of anyone... but little Mary Tyrone in the midst of three six-footers was quite noticeable and as an actress I would have tried to find ways of being on stage and having them seated more often etc. Getting into directing here.
The second act is a tour-de-force type plum for an actress which I think was handled well by all concerned. My comment is that you made it less Tennessee Williams than it could have been and for that I was glad.

Variety in this role is difficult. I thought you were able to show transition in a way that was neither subtle nor unsubtle...if that has any meaning for you. If at either extreme it would have been obvious and stagey...as it was I accepted it.

As I understand it the wig was the best we could do. It was a little large but not that large that it was bothersome. It did not seem to bother you. And in this age of a lot of hair and our remembrance of that period as being one with a lot of hair I did not see a problem. I thought it was well costumed and you were able to wear the costumes as your own clothes.

I think O'Neill has written "Scenes for overacting" in a lot of his plays and this among them. If there was any I would again blame the script and not the actor too much.

If you need explanation of what I've said...call me.

George Crepeau
The final scene seemed very good and in keeping with the part. For the early scenes Mary seemed too youthful and too attractive for a woman of her age (granted she was younger than James O'Neill). While I appreciate the desire for contrast between appearances in early and late scenes and the fact that she had just returned from rehabilitation, the nervous movements were the only physical indication I had of the several previous addictions and withdrawals. An adjustment in makeup and a little less sparkle in the manner would have helped a great deal.

In general I was in accord with line readings but the prolongation of some compounded the director's problem of a script which is inherently too long.

W. S. Dewey
Reaction to the Performance of Marjorie Johnson as Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night

Opening Night Observation:

The performance had an uneven quality in the first act. Movement and changes in voice volume and rate appeared to be too sudden, too jerky and one had the impression that the character was in the latter stages of schizophrenia. However, as the play progressed and the tension of opening night subsided, it was my feeling that the character took more definite shape. Changes from frenzy to calm were subtler and more controlled. Miss Johnson began to play with the other actors and we now experienced Mary Tyrone's helplessness and despair. Her performance in the third act was taut and sure. The climactic scene was handled with disciplined intensity.

Articulation throughout was distinct and pleasing without calling attention to itself. I saw no "Katharine Hepburn" or "Geraldine Page" in her portrayal. There was always a definite attempt to understand the highly complicated Mary Tyrone. By and large the performance was believable and highly effective.

James Lynch
Comments on the acting of Marjorie Johnson as Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night.

Mrs. Johnson demonstrates a sound and thorough understanding of the character of Mary Tyrone—the confused and conflicting relationship with her husband and her two sons—drawn to them with deep affection yet alienated from them by their distrust and accusation.

The portrayal of the character's idiosyncrasies seemed uneven. At times the mannerisms (hands specifically) were overplayed, particularly at those times when specific reference was made to the hands in the text. At other times, those mannerisms were almost totally eliminated.

Although the character was developed and portrayed with a high degree of competence, I feel that greater audience empathy and sympathy for Mary Tyrone would have added to the general effectiveness of the character.

Everett H. Schreck
In his painfully autobiographical drama Long Day's Journey Into Night, America's late playwright-laureate, Eugene O'Neill, has turned his soul and guts inside out to exorcise old family ghosts. It was the one play he felt absolutely compelled to write. In doing so, he has written what is perhaps his finest work: a dark, brooding, spell-binding study of a family on the brink of personal disaster and a young writer (O'Neill, himself) on the threshold of personal greatness. Long Day's Journey Into Night is a long evening's excursion into fear, love, hate, and a curious kind of decadent beauty; a gloomy play by the melancholy Irish-American who demonstrates not only an uncanny mastery of his craft, but also theatrically-sound total recall.

Mr. O'Neill's lacerating study deals with a single day in the life of the Tyrones, and what happens to them shouldn't happen to the Beverly Hillbillies. In a sense, you are the witness to a kind of public autopsy with the playwright using a pen for a scalpel and laying bare all the tensions and conflicts of a doomed family. O'Neill probes the inner-most depths of their souls with almost unbearable intensity and in excruciatingly painful detail. He exposes the blustering, tyrannical father who is a rapidly fading matinee idol and a penny-wise, pound-foolish tight wad; the pitifully weak mother who has become a hopeless and helpless drug addict; the older brother, an alcoholic; and the younger brother, a sensitive, tubercular poet who suffers perhaps more than anyone else in this house divided. By the time you have spent three hours and fifteen minutes with the Tyrones, you will know them as intimately as you would had you been one of them. Long Day's Journey Into Night is O'Neill's most shattering play; another monument to the playwright's unique gift of getting at the roots of the truth. He spares no one...least of all himself.

In the current University Theatre revival, director Charles Ritter has directed a generally proficient cast with the tautness of a full sail in a high wind.
If and when Havorgan Johnson makes up her mind whether she's Katherine Hepburn or Zasu Pitts, she may make a creditable Mary Tyrone. In last evening's performance, she over-played the part. Much of the time her technique was showing. Mrs. Johnson is a good actress who should be told that subtlety can be a virtue and that selectivity is a major key to an effective and believable characterization. As it is, she plays the first act in too high a key and there's little or nothing to build to from then on. Also, there is a wariness about her that bothered me. Of the four Tyrones, Mary should be the most moving. Mrs. Johnson does not evoke 'the sympathy the character deserves. The crimping of her hands by years of rheumatism might be suggested rather than exploited. All that's needed to improve her performance is a little self-discipline and a more subtle, inward approach to the character.

John D. Burke, as the disillusioned actor-husband, is barely acceptable as James Tyrone. It's a pity, too, because Mr. Burke really resembles some of the later photographs we've seen of O'Neill. Mr. Burke's voice is strained, and he does not play with the bravura one might expect from so colorful a character.

Edward E. Debeic plays Edmund Tyrone (actually young O'Neill). Since he is really the most passive character in the play...the eye of the camera, so to speak...Edmund isn't given a great deal to do in the first act of the play. Then the occasion calls for a minor display of theatrical fireworks later in the evening, Mr. Debeic rises to it nicely. If any of the four roles is underwritten, it is the part of Edmund. Most playwrights seem to have difficulty with self-portraits. O'Neill is no exception. Mr. Debeic does especially well with the playwright's occasional poetic outbursts, and his long scene with his father offers several memorable moments.

Sharon Frankel wisely resists the temptation to be precious in a music hall-Irish sort of way.
But the real acting laurels must go to Ronald R. Parady who plays James Tyrone, Jr., a lovable lusty syph and a wastrel. It is probably the flashiest part in the play, but it takes fantastic control to really bring it off. Jason Robards created the role in New York. Mr. Parady could play it tomorrow in the same city and do it justice. He is that good.

And David A. Salginiad could move his wonderfully effective setting to any stage in the country and be justly proud of it. As always, Charles W. Rousliman, Jr.'s lighting is of the highest professional calibre. The subtle lighting changes, from daylight and sunshine, to dust, fog and darkness are brought about almost imperceptibly.

Though the current University production is unevenly acted, it is well worth your effort to make the trek to University Hall for a performance that continues the recent high standards set by the theatre department. This has been a season to remember.

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LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT...REVISITED

In all fairness to the excellent cast, the director, and more especially, to Eugene O'Neill's monumentally demanding play Long Day's Journey Into Night, I decided to take a second look at the recent University Theatre production. It's both interesting and encouraging to note the obvious changes that occur between the opening and closing performances of a play...especially when the run is a relatively short one. It's always seemed a bit unfair and, yes, downright presumptuous for a critic to be expected to do proper justice to the performance of any play on opening night. There are always extenuating circumstances, and one seldom sees the best performance of a run on the first night.

There are, for example, the inevitable and bothersome opening night jitters or butterflies on the part of the actors; their necessary adjustment to the acoustical eccentricities of most auditoriums; the last minute, frantic coping with often incomplete technical embellishments (lighting, sound, props etc.) In professional productions, especially on the road, an opening night performance may suffer for not having had the advantage or even one rehearsal on a given stage. In the road company production of Death of a Salesman, Darren McGavin, who played the role of Happy, stated that the cast didn't have a single rehearsal in the actual set before they opened. Initial performances can be, and generally are, traumatic experiences for everyone concerned. Only the audience is unaware (or only vaguely aware) that a production is being all but swamped by on and off-stage problems.

In the production of Long Day's Journey Into Night, just ended last evening, the players had been plagued with an elusive bug which threatened to lay them all low through a long rehearsal period and right up to and including the early performances of the play. Actors, like singers, dancer and musicians, are never at their best when illing. Since one or the other of them had not always been present at rehearsals, it was probably impossible
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to achieve any semblance of ensemble acting...so vital to the successful performance of O'Neill's highly personal family tragedy. But, in its last night, it was immediately evident that the production, as a whole, had been considerably tightened and smoothed out.

On Tuesday evening, Harjorie Johnson was quite obviously strained as Mary Tyrone. She was simply trying too hard, and, as a result, she over-acted. Her performance lacked subtlety and variety. She was often twitchy and, in appearance, resembled no one so much as Grandma Moses. In the play's final performance last night, Mrs. Johnson had toned down Mary considerably. She was quieter, better disciplined and evoked a good deal more sympathy than she did on opening night. But, after having observed her for a second time around, I am more firmly than ever convinced that she was not ideally cast in the part. She had a bird-like quality that worked against her, rather than for her. Though the character she portrayed is essentially a detached one, Mrs. Johnson did not give the impression that she was ever really a part of an acting ensemble. She was detached both as an actress and as a character. The gray wig she wore only added to the impression that she was even actually somebody's afflicted grandmother.

The greatest improvement was observed in the performance of John D. Burke as James Tyrone. On the first night, Mr. Burke seemed a bit shaky and unsure. His voice had been badly affected by a cold. He was not playing with enough energy. Last night, though his diction still tends to be sloppy, at times, he had grown a good deal in the role. There was a sureness and bravura about his playing that was missing in previous performances.

Ronald B. Parade gave the most shattering individual performance last night. He is an amazing actor, and there were touches of greatness in his portrayal of the wastrel son, Jamie. He dominates the third act, which is the most theatrically effective one,
Like a veritable cyclone. There was infinite variety in his playing, and he dramatically demonstrates that the naturalistic style is one in which young American actors excel. His was one of a half-dozen genuinely moving performances I've seen in as many years. Mr. Parady further indicates that the University Theatre may be entering into a sort of acting Renaissance. There are a lot of good ones around these days.

Edward E. Dobiec was much better in the third act than he was in the first two. He seemed at his best in handling O'Neill's lovely poetic passages and in the highly explosive scenes with his father and brother. He is an actor to which an audience pays attention.

Director Charles Ritter realizes that the play is essentially static in nature. Instead of fighting it by imposing unmotivated movement on his actors, Mr. Ritter very wisely bowed to the playwright and to the play...All of the movement was both meaningful and affecting. There is still nothing more effective than two actors in a meaningful exchange of a playwright's ideas...without movement for the sake of movement.

Long Day's Journey Into Night is O'Neill's finest work and one of the ten greatest American plays. The University Theatre has not let him or the play down.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Periodicals


