

Controllable fate: a refutation of mary's attitude in long day's journey into nig...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

During the long day that occurs throughout *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neill, the members of the Tyrone family struggle with happenings of the present because of their incapableness to move forward from occurrences of the past. For example, Mary Tyrone, the wife of James Tyrone, struggles to live in tranquility during the present due to her morphine addiction that began in the past. As early as the first act of O'Neill's play, Tyrone introduces audiences to Mary's struggle in the present by declaring her "bit of high-strung" (O'Neill 5) behavior that is influenced by her drug use, which was initiated from a previous medically administered morphine dosage during her child labor. Mary faces an ongoing struggle to accept both her past and present, and says, "None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever" (O'Neill). Mary's biggest challenge, dealing with her morphine addiction, is something that has indeed changed her true self from what she would like to be, however her statement does not fully apply to her or her family's life. Mary and the rest of the Tyrone family have the ability to direct their lives; the decisions that the Tyrone family has made in the past influenced the things that affect them in the present. Thus, the Tyrone family could help the things that life does to them by making choices in the present that would create good fortunes in the future.

The choices that James Tyrone made earlier in his life influence his present life that occurs during the plot of the O'Neill's play. Though Mary's statement in act two of the play infers that people cannot help the things that life has

done to them, Tyrone could help the things that life has done to him by making choices that would benefit his future. For example, Tyrone made a choice during his early career to become an actor for a single character of a traveling show rather than the more difficult task of auditioning for diverse roles. Tyrone later admits, “ That God-damned play I bought for a song and made such a great success in- a great money success-it ruined me with its promise of an easy fortune. I didn't want to do anything else, and by the time I woke up to the fact I'd become a slave to the dammed thing and did not try other plays, it was too late. They had identified me with that one part, and didn't want me in anything else” (O'Neill 82). Tyrone's decision to become an actor for a sole role came with an immediate profit of earning a good salary, ye it disabled him from growing his skill and ability as an actor to that he could potentially work as an actor in other plays in the future. Therefore, Tyrone had the ability to change his present life if he would have considered the future when he was making choices in the past. An additional circumstance that James Tyrone had the power to control was Mary's morphine addiction. Tyrone's financial stinginess inclined his decision to hire a cheap doctor, Doctor Hardy, was known as an “ ignorant fool” who should be banned from practicing (O'Neill 38). Nonetheless, Tyrone hired the cheap doctor who administered morphine to Mary, causing her to become addicted shortly thereafter. Tyrone made the decision to hire an inexpensive, hotel doctor instead of a reliable doctor; if he had paid extra money for a more expensive doctor to deliver the couple's second child in the past, Tyrone potentially would not have to deal with his drug-addicted wife in the present. Thus, Tyrone had the ability to help things in the present if he would have made wiser choices in the past.

<https://assignbuster.com/controllable-fate-a-refutation-of-marys-attitude-in-long-days-journey-into-night/>

Tyrone merely admits to being responsible for what life has done to him and Mary by admitting that it wasn't Mary's fault for her drug addiction, and that "Once that cursed poison gets a hold on anyone.." (O'Neill 76), then they have no control. Thus, it was the doctor's fault for Mary's addiction, and Tyrone ultimately created the outcome by hiring the cheap doctor. In addition to these circumstances, Tyrone has the ability to shape his wife's future by providing her with better care, but he instead refuses to pay for better care because he claims to have "spent thousands upon thousands in cures! A waste. What good have they done?" (O'Neill 77). Tyrone could have also hired a good doctor for his son Edmund and potentially change the anticipated fate of Edmund's life, but Tyrone instead chooses "another cheap quack like Hardy! [Because he] wouldn't pay for a first-rate" (O'Neill 18). Consequently, Tyrone proves Mary's judgment about fate to be untrue because he has the ability to change the course of fate for his family. Tyrone also had the ability to change the fate of his sons, Jamie and Edmund, by teaching them good values through parenting. As a father whose experienced much more than his sons have, James Tyrone could have influenced his sons to value a hard work ethic similar to the hard work ethic that he was introduced to when he was a child. Throughout the play, Tyrone complains about how his sons neither appreciate the value of money nor the life that he has provided for them because they are handed everything instead of earning everything, which lead his sons to "know [nothing] of the value of a dollar?" (O'Neill 81). Rather than complain about the work ethic and financial value that his sons obtain, Tyrone had the power to raise them in a way that prioritizes values of high work ethic. Tyrone could have helped shaped his sons' habits by raising them in a responsible way instead of

<https://assignbuster.com/controllable-fate-a-refutation-of-marys-attitude-in-long-days-journey-into-night/>

drinking as a father, and leading his sons to become heavy drinkers later on. Mary even apologizes to her sons for her and Tyrone's lack of providing the boys with a different life style. Mary confesses that her sons that they " never had a chance to meet decent people here. I know you both would have been so different" (O'Neill 21). If Tyrone would have raised his sons with different values, then his son Jamie would have not been dismissed from several colleges, have no job, and come home for the summer looking for support from his parents. Thus, Tyrone had the ability to manipulate his present circumstance of dealing with his son, who he considers a failure, if he would have made cautious parenting decisions in the past

As demonstrated by Edmund, who has " worked so hard before [he] took ill" (O'Neil 46), it is possible for the sons to adopt a hard work ethic. Mary's additional insinuation that things from the past " make you do other things until...you've lost your true self forever" is a subjective statement based on her own life obstacles. Things that have occurred for Mary in the past, such as falling in love with James Tyrone made her do things that she would have not otherwise done. For instance, if Mary had not met Tyrone at the theatre, Mary would have continued her pursuit of becoming a nun, rather than getting married and having children. By getting married, Mary indirectly gave up her friendships and aspirations of becoming a nun or pianist. Now, Mary's life is spent living in a place where she " never wanted to live in the first place" (O'Neill 21) with " old friends [who] wither pited [her] or cut [her] dead (O'Neill 44). Falling in love with Tyrone was something that made her do other things until she lost her true-self forever; nevertheless, marrying Tyrone was a choice she made. Although Mary never wanted to give up her

aspirations, she chose to marry Tyrone, which changed her life forever, but it should not have been a change unforeseen. Although Mary “ never wanted to live here in the first place...but had to come here every summer” (O’Neill 21), Mary knew that she would not have an ideal home upon meeting Tyrone because she knew that he was a traveling actor. Likewise, Mary knew that she could not continue her pursuit to become a nun if she chose a life with Tyrone, but she chose to settle her heart’s desire for Tyrone instead.

Additionally, Mary did not straightforwardly choose to lose her friends, she chose to marry Tyrone who was can actor, and Mary knew “ how actors were considered in those days”, which would result in her friends giving her “ the cold shoulder” (O’Neill 44). If Mary truly valued her fate she could have not married an actor with a bad reputation to maintain her friendships, or refused Tyrone’s advances upon meeting him to stay focused on her dream to become a nun later in her life. Therefore, Mary’s statement that she cannot help the things that life has done to her is false because she could have helped the things that were done to her to an extent. The Tyrone family revisits the past during the present frequently throughout Long Day’s Journey into Night. For illustration, Mary frequently revisits her past aspirations, and Tyrone often revisits his childhood and past career. Mary revisits her past often and claims that “ None of us can help the things life has done to us”. Nevertheless, the Tyrone family’s present circumstances are shaped by decisions of the past, so they have the indirect opportunity to influence what their lives will do to them. While Mary may not have intended for certain things in her life to happen to her, she had ultimate control over the things that have occurred in her life.

In similar correlation to Mary's life, Tyrone had the power to control the overall direction of his life, as well as the power to choose how his sons would be raised. The second part of Mary's statement in Act Two, that unforeseen challenges made one "lose your true self forever", is further refutable because Tyrone's past choices did not change his true self forever. Tyrone "first learned the value of a dollar and the fear of the poorhouse" (O'Neill 80) during his early years and continues to value money and hard work ethic in the present as well. Therefore, life experiences do not always change a person's true self, because Tyrone's true self never changed. Tyrone's character is a mere example of how the Tyrone family can actually foresee life's unpredictable happenings. While Mary views her life as a series of unfortunate events that she has no control of, she actually has control over the choices that she makes in the present, which will lead the direction of her future.

## **Works Cited**

O'Neill, Eugene. *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 1956, c1955. Web.