



## MEN HAUNTED AND DEFINED BY THE PAST IN *THE SHINING* AND *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT*

HOMENS ASSOMBRADOS E DEFINIDOS PELO PASSADO EM *O ILUMINADO* E *LONGA VIAGEM NOITE ADENTRO*

Diego Moraes Malachias Silva Santos\*

\* diegomalachias@gmail.com  
Bachelor of Letters in Literatures in English (UFMG), MA in Literary Studies (UFMG), PhD in Literary Studies in progress (UFMG).  
Research supported by MA and PhD scholarships from the CAPES.  
This article, written in 2016, had some of its ideas adapted in my MA dissertation.

**RESUMO:** Apesar de diferenças aparentes, há vários paralelos no tratamento da tradição e da masculinidade em *Longa viagem noite adentro*, de Eugene O'Neill, e *O iluminado*, de Stephen King. Neste artigo, sugere-se abordagens comparativas entre esses dois trabalhos, que, em sua essência, narram a tentativa falha de um homem em instaurar uma forma tradicional de masculinidade revisitando e sendo revisitado pelo passado. As representações das masculinidades nessas obras sugerem uma semelhança entre a crítica da masculinidade tradicional norte-americana feita por O'Neill e aquela feita por King, que, especialmente em seus romances iniciais, combina abordagens naturalistas e góticas, reformando o horror moderno e trazendo-o para o coração da cultura americana.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** masculinidade; naturalismo; Stephen King

**ABSTRACT:** Despite apparent differences, there are several parallels in the treatment of tradition and masculinity in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and Stephen King's *The Shining*. In this article I suggest comparative approaches between those two works, which, in their core, narrate a man's flawed attempt at reinstating a traditional form of masculinity by revisiting and being revisited by the past. Their depiction of masculinities indicates a similar criticism of American traditional manhood and suggests that Stephen King, especially in his earlier novels, combined Naturalistic and Gothic approaches to help redesign modern horror, bringing it to the heart of American culture.

**KEYWORDS:** masculinity; naturalism; Stephen King

It is not a coincidence that, in Stephen King's *The Shining*, Wendy Torrance refers to her husband Jack as the "the Eugene O'Neill of his generation, the American Shakespeare".<sup>1</sup> In her facetious statement she touches issues of creative work, the past, and a man's place in tradition. King and O'Neill may be writers with different approaches, backgrounds, and statuses when it comes to literature, but, using Wendy Torrance's statement as a starting point, we can locate several parallels in their treatment of tradition, especially in relation to men and masculinity. Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), portray a defective effort to restore a traditional type of traditional masculinity<sup>2</sup> by clinging to the past. Despite apparent distinctions, these literary works by King and O'Neill point to similar comments on the failures of traditional American manhood, which draw attention to similarities between American Naturalism and the Gothic.

In *The Shining*, the alcoholic and aggressive teacher/writer Jack Torrance descends into murderous frenzy at the haunted hotel where he is spending the winter with his family as an off-season caretaker. With that plot in mind, one would hardly recall O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which differs not only in genre, but also in its basic structural units and in the presentation of its thematic

concerns. In O'Neill's play, the four Tyrone, in several discussions in the course of one day, expose the untouchable events that scar the core of their family. From mother Mary's morphine addiction to father James's heavy drinking and their son Edmund's tuberculosis, all is laid bare as a sea fog comes and goes, occluding and revealing the family home. When comparing *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *The Shining*, the immediate impulse may be considering differences. O'Neill's text is a critically-acclaimed, Pulitzer-winning play with Naturalistic themes, while King's commercial novel was published two decades later and centers on horror elements set within a Gothic literary history.

If we move deeper into the thematic level, it may become easier to identify some similarities, although even those we ought to consider with a degree of caution. Both works portray the carefully painted transformation of a male-centered family whose secrets are revealed as the winter settles in or the day turns into night. The correlations become more significant when we examine them not merely as resemblances restricted to plot elements, setting, or characterization, but as the thematic foundation of King and O'Neill's texts. The significant likeness connecting their novel and play is not tangential, but lies within the core of the texts: *Long Day's Journey* and *The Shining* point at how traditional masculinity is rooted on unstable soil and

1. KING. *The Shining*, p. 168.

2. "Traditional masculinity," in this article, refers to interpersonal and intrapersonal acts or beliefs related to a social conception of the male gender (masculinity) and that are rooted on long-established practices and habits (tradition). Examples are the notions that only men should be breadwinners, that emotional stoicism and aggressive behavior are manly, and that a man's character can be evaluated by his work. This is a generalized and provisional concept that functions for this analysis. I already assume that James Tyrone and Jack Torrance's masculinities are traditional; what I intend to explore the relation of those characters to their masculinity and their past, which leads to comparisons between contemporary Gothic and Naturalism.

tended by unstable men. They suggest that Naturalism and King's horror share more features than we would initially expect. The key to understanding these issues lies in recognizing how Jack Torrance and James Tyrone are haunted and defined by the past while simultaneously moving towards it to reaffirm their traditional manhood.

The unstable traditional masculinities in *The Shining* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* involve personal stories of men and a social history of defective masculinities. Torrance and Tyrone's most glaring shortcomings, such as their financial anxiety and their failure to assume responsibility or to communicate, can be attributed to traditional manhood in general, while each of them steer his problems toward a personal direction. James Tyrone's stinginess in *Long Day's Journey* reflects the masculine values he acquired in his upbringing and Jack Torrance, in *The Shining*, has problems that are, first, hereditary and, second, related not precisely to money, but to work (teaching, caretaking, and writing). By depicting issues of money, heredity, and work, the two stories reveal how traditional masculinity is an outdated, inaccurate standard based on a faulty tradition. To some degree, those are external problems that involve power, but the attempts at solving them come, as we will see, from the characters' private histories and personalities.

In *Long Day's Journey*, one of the main complications within the Tyrones is James's relationship with money. It is not a problem of financial inequality, but a problem of financial responsibility. Thaddeus Wakefield, in an exploration of the negative impacts of capitalism in the family relations of O'Neill's play, concedes that

[o]ne is at first tempted to believe [James] Tyrone and take his side . . . [H]e in fact could be the ideal twentieth century American husband from capitalist society's perspective. He has never cheated on his wife, he has held a steady job, he has supported his sons well into adulthood, and he has never left his wife on long business trips but has taken her with him. However, a closer look reveals the shallowness of James Tyrone's love, and, inversely, the depth of his love for money.<sup>3</sup>

Wakefield characterizes James Tyrone as someone who puts money above all else, even the people whom his money is supposed to support. He is resistant, for instance, to pay for expensive treatment for his son Edmund's tuberculosis. Once his focus on money eclipses his love for his family, the reason behind having any money at all is lost. Financial power has no worth apart from the patriarchal safety of a sole male breadwinner.

3. WAKEFIELD. *The Family in Twentieth Century American Drama*, p. 11.

As Wakefield suggests, Tyrone's apparent success is not only his, but also the dreamed success of an entire society; his failure, by extension, is reminiscent of the failure of a million men. He fails first when he adheres to a traditional and dysfunctional system of manhood and then fails once more at meeting the expectations of his system of choice. One cannot but wonder if, despite appearances, he has achieved anything good at all when it comes to being a man in a traditional, capitalist context. Had he not failed at meeting the standards of his form of masculinity, he would have succeeded only in being a man with a perfectly dysfunctional masculinity. James Tyrone seems predicated to dysfunction.

Such predicaments are not foreign to Naturalism, but are one of its hallmarks, and they are not foreign to Stephen King's fiction either. Heidi Strengell notes that "a number of distinctly naturalistic works can be distinguished in King's oeuvre, such as the early Bachman books<sup>4</sup>: *Rage* (1977), *The Long Walk* (1979), *Roadwork* (1981), and *The Running Man* (1982)".<sup>5</sup> In my MA thesis, I add King's novel *Blaze* to the list, and here it is worthy to add *The Shining*. Despite having content opposed to Realist and Naturalist tendencies (e.g., supernatural forces), *The Shining* structures its narrative in Realistic/Naturalist<sup>6</sup> terms. In fact, Naturalist determinism may come not *despite* supernatural forces, but *through* them. In my dissertation, discussing masculinities and free will

in King's fiction, I argue that "[t]he existence of free will in King's fiction is undermined by the characters' relationships with deterministic forces, which often come in the form of supernatural entities".<sup>7</sup> Consequently, "the oppressiveness of some settings and supernatural phenomena erases possibilities of characters escaping certain predicaments; or, in other words, erase choice".<sup>8</sup> Supernatural phenomena and entities in King's fiction are often powerful enough to overcome even notions of free will.

More noteworthy than what Jack Torrance and James Tyrone's values reveal about their characters, however, is what their characters reveal about traditional masculine values. James's construction depends upon a reader or spectator who recognizes the values behind traditional masculinity (e.g., fidelity and fatherly prudence on the one hand, control and emotional apathy on the other) and who also recognizes their failure. With a touch of dramatic irony, we accompany James's lamentable choices: his resistance to pay expensive treatment for his son, his denial, his alcoholism. They are warped versions of positive traditional values. James's financial freedom to acquire real estate, for instance, comes at the expense of other more humane usages of his money, such as paying for his son's tuberculosis treatment. The same applies to Jack Torrance, but brought to an extreme. On the one hand, Jack is thoughtful about the education of his

4. Novels written under the Richard Bachman pseudonym.

5. STRENGELL. *Dissecting Stephen King: From the Gothic to Literary Naturalism*, p. 181-182.

6. I use Realism and Naturalism so close together because of Martin Gray's conceptualization of Naturalism as a form a Realism, which Strengell herself uses to understand King's novels (qtd. in Strengell 179).

7. SANTOS. *Masculinity as an Open Wound in Stephen King's Fiction*, p. 72.

8. SANTOS. *Masculinity as an Open Wound in Stephen King's Fiction*, p. 72.



son, for instance, and he at least tries to resist the negative influences of the Overlook hotel; on the other hand, contrasting with Jack's considerate fatherhood, is his extremely aggressive behavior. He breaks his son's arm for having spilt beer over the manuscript of his play even before they come to know about the haunted hotel. In response to James Tyrone's stinginess, one may weep. In response to the actions of Jack Torrance, one would better hide.

Jack Torrance's failures and evil acts are rooted on two stereotypically masculine flaws: anger and the inability to communicate. Anger is epitomized in two scenes: Jack breaking his son's arm and Jack beating a student in a blind moment of rage, ultimately leading to the loss of his job. The inability to communicate is best exemplified by how Jack hides from his family his initial encounters with the ghosts from the hotel. Victor Seidler observes how anger and the inability to communicate are closely related. He writes,

Men may feel they should be 'in control' of their experience, so admitting that uncertainty can threaten their male identities. Rather, men learn to keep their anxieties and fears to themselves as they project a certain public image. Inner distress can build as men are haunted by a fear that if they show what they are feeling to others, they will surely be rejected. Anger can be turned in against the self, and this is

reflected in the high rates of young male suicide as a global phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>

This excerpt could not describe Jack Torrance more accurately. In my thesis I note that

When lack of communication and anger mix, then, the result is an anxiety building up to deadly levels. . . . In *The Shining*, the deadly levels of repressed anxiety are represented by the malfunctioning boiler located in the basement of the hotel, whose pressure, almost in a ritualistic fashion, Jack must relieve, thus relieving, by metaphoric extension, the pressure of his own temper.<sup>10</sup>

If he forgets to give maintenance to the boiler, it will explode and he and his "family'll wake up on the fucking moon,"<sup>11</sup> as Watson, the in-season caretaker for the hotel, puts it. When Jack fails to do so, the result is indeed an explosion that destroys the hotel and kills him.

The inability to communicate is not restricted to Jack Torrance, though: it is a family matter in *The Shining* as it is in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. In King and O'Neill's stories, miscommunication is not a male issue *per se*, but a disease in the core of the family, affecting women and rendering mutual understanding painful, if not impossible.

9. SEIDLER. *Transforming Masculinities*, p. xvi.

10. SANTOS. *Masculinity as an Open Wound in Stephen King's Fiction*, p. 43.

11. KING. *The Shining*, p. 28.

This is clear in how Mary Tyrone treats her morphine addiction as an open secret—everybody knows about it, but none should mention it. When other characters refer to her addiction, she repeatedly asserts she does not “know what you mean”<sup>12</sup> and that they “mustn’t remember”.<sup>13</sup> In *The Shining*, Wendy Torrance does not suffer from substance abuse, but she shares with Mary her difficulties in addressing fundamental subjects. Even personal accomplishments, like Jack’s sudden soberness before the trip to the hotel, are unmentionable, as if naming feelings, uttering words, or addressing conditions would break a spell and attract evil. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator explains how

[Wendy] imagined she smelled [liquor in Jack’s breath] but knew it wasn’t so. Another week [of sobriety]. And another. . . . What had happened? She still wondered and still had not the slightest idea. The subject was taboo between them.<sup>14</sup>

When Jack and Wendy take their son Danny to be examined for the seizures that accompany his psychic visions, they discuss their family background with a doctor and Jack comments, “This is the first time the word divorce has been mentioned between us. And alcoholism. And child-beating. Three firsts in five minutes.” To that the doctor replies, “That may be at the root of the problem”.<sup>15</sup> This scene brings into focus the anguishes the Torrances feel when trying to

communicate with each other and suggests deeper concerns: divorce, alcoholism, and child beating are substantial issues, but behind them lies a repression that enlarges their unhealthy nature. The Torrances and the Tyrones (mostly in the first half of the play) construct relationships of accepted taboos and muteness, in which communication plays no role and only highlights secrecy.

Avoiding communication, for both families, is an attempt at escaping reality, but silence is only one part of a larger masculine relocation from truth to fiction. Even professions hint at this movement: in *The Shining*, the main adult male is a playwright; in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, the equivalent character is an actor. Both are responsible for constructing fictionalized worlds. Jack’s play (*The Little School*) and his short story (“The Monkey is Here, Paul DeLong”) are a mirror for his own life, as if he had externalized his uneasiness into his fiction and drama. To the main character in the short story, “a child molester about to commit suicide in his own room,”<sup>16</sup> Jack attributes problems of his own, such as the physical abuse he suffered as a child. In *The Little School*, Denker manages a broken teaching institution, which highlights Jack’s unhealthy confusion about taking care of his family and controlling it, two tasks at which he ultimately fails. As Stephen Davenport observes, Jack “uses the play as a means of restaging the moment of his

12. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 42.

13. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 89.

14. KING. *The Shining*, p. 75.

15. KING. *The Shining*, p. 214.

16. KING. *The Shining*, p. 378.

wounding, although he does not always seem to understand his use of the headmaster and student, or father and son, as doubles for real people in his life”.<sup>17</sup> Even if not consciously, Jack constructs a mirrored structure through writing. At first, he respects the character of Gary Benson, a rich student trying to achieve some independency, but later he identifies himself more as Gary’s antagonist “Denker, who had to work all his life just to become head of a single little school”.<sup>18</sup> The change in Jack’s identification makes his story (and its interpretation according to its author) shift to accommodate the new truths Jack comes to believe. The perception he had of reality is not adjusted as the world or himself change, but at his whim, at the need of a masculine discourse that strives to remain immutable.

In *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, James Tyrone is not so delusional, but rather “heartsick”.<sup>19</sup> When faced with his severe drinking, his son’s tuberculosis, and his wife’s addiction, he turns to his memories for aid, perpetuating his own masculine discourse. He acts (as man and actor) as if his memories were of pure happiness, but, behind this façade, he understands the current consequences of his past behavior. Yet, it takes him the course of the whole play to admit that. It is only halfway through the last act that he concedes that “[t]he God-damned play I bought for a song and made such success in—a great money success—it ruined me with its promise of

an easy fortune”.<sup>20</sup> Even such recognition, however, does not get in the way of James’s general nostalgia and serves him, instead, as a deflector of guilt. He did not ruin himself with his choices, but, in his view, the *play* did this job.

In order to escape their present, both males turn to the prime (albeit imperfect) moments in their careers: James recalls his acting success and Jack fictionalizes about his teaching experiences. In a gendered context, this reveals that their failures—Jack being penniless and James refusing to use his money to take care of his family—grow on soil fertilized by traditional masculinity and watered by a lack of responsibility for the present. This temporal movement toward the past also sustains a loss of origin. Even if in the end of the play James recognizes the damage caused by his fixation on money and his long-gone acting career, throughout acts one to three he displays heavy nostalgia, tracing a movement from present to past. Anne Fleche recognizes that, “[i]n the circular strategy of the play, the characters revise their pasts to fit their own truths. And in this revision lies an impossible search for origins. (Who did what? When?)”.<sup>21</sup> This movement, then, is also a form of avoidance, of shaping reality to grant self-assurance.

In *The Shining*, this movement in time happens as Jack accesses the history of the Overlook hotel. In the basement,

17. DAVENPORT. “From Big Sticks to Talking Sticks: Family, Work, and Masculinity in Stephen King’s *The Shining*,” p. 318.

18. KING. *The Shining*, p. 380.

19. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 152.

20. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 152.

21. FLECHE. “*Long Day’s Journey into Night: The Seen and the Unseen*,” p. 25.

he finds a scrapbook describing the hotel since its early days. In a section on a masked ball hosted in 1945, Jack can “almost see them in the dining room, the richest men in American and their women”.<sup>22</sup> As I argue in my MA thesis,

This excerpt introduces three ideas: that the Overlook is a man’s place, not for rich people, but for rich men and their women; that the Overlook is a place for pleasure and celebrations; and that, from Jack’s perspective, the past seems present. At first the hotel appears respectfully luxurious, but, as its past loosens its mask, as does the Red Death in Poe’s story, from which King uses a section as epigraph, it is revealed that behind that luxury lies what Manchel calls “the sins of a patriarchal society”<sup>[23]</sup> and Fredric Jameson refers to as “the American past as it has left its sedimented traces in the corridors and dismembered suites”<sup>[24]</sup>. The hotel was not only a place for parties, but for orgies, suicides, and murders. In their hiding, the women and the rich men transgress moral codes, leaving footprints that shape the hotel into what it is—a hive of sinful ghosts armed with an individual consciousness—violating boundaries of moral and time, unearthing the Torrances’ anxieties, and driving Jack into madness.<sup>25</sup>

The space he inhabits progressively restrains his warped imagination, and, unable to reason properly, Jack loses track of both time and place.

When Jack descends to the cellar, he is accessing a forbidden Gothic place, a place where he talks to the hotel and to himself, but that only allows for private conversations. In her chapter *Representações da família na narrativa gótica contemporânea* dedicated to the house as a place connected to the family sphere and to contemporary Gothic, Camila de Mello Santos cites Gaston Bachelard’s *La Poétique de l’espace*, commenting on the house as vertically organized space. “The roof protects; the basement supports”.<sup>26</sup> According to Santos, Bachelard sees the basement as place for buried secrets and for what lies underneath. A character facing the past in such a place is the perfect recipe for horror and danger; however, since the house is a connection to old times, one may follow a necessary journey to the past by visiting the basement. In Jack’s return to the past, however, he does not find enlightenment through knowledge of what has happened, but is confronted by barbaric events that incite his resentment and hate. David Punter connects such barbarism and the Gothic, noting that the barbaric can be realized “as the fear of the past, . . . as the fear of the aristocracy, . . . [and] as a fear . . . not only from the past but also in the present and even the future”.<sup>27</sup> The Gothic, including its contemporary forms, excavates the past and unearths that which people refuse to see. Considering Jack’s fear of repeating his father and considering the fusion of present and past in the hotel, we see that Jack faces different

22. KING. *The Shining*, p. 227.

23. MANCHEL. “What about Jack? Another Perspective on Family Relationships in Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*,” p. 68.

24. JAMESON. “Historicism in *The Shining*,” p. 90.

25. SANTOS. *Masculinity as an Open Wound in Stephen King’s Fiction*, p. 60.

26. SANTOS. *Representações da família na narrativa gótica contemporânea*, p. 106. My translation.

27. PUNTER. *The Literature of Terror*, p. 183.



shapes of the barbaric: he accesses registers of murders in the Overlook, and he encounters several ghosts, both within the Overlook and within himself. Not unlike O'Neill's play in Anne Fleche's reading, *The Shining*, then, also take readers through an "impossible search for origins".<sup>28</sup> There is no source for Jack's destructive masculinity, as it is no personal flaw, but a sociohistorical failure.

In a comparison between a novel which draws upon the Gothic and a play that has features of North-American dramatic Naturalism, analyzing genres seems to be a step away from the central similarities. Those two works, however, in their depiction of miscommunication, masculinities, and movements of time and realities, highlight similar points of their genres, such as characters deterministically bound to a tradition or the past. In *The Shining*, the central male character seems to be *haunted* by the past, while in *Long Day's Journey into Night* the equivalent figure seems to be *defined* by it.

In the first case, the barbaric element in Punter's definition of the Gothic neatly ties together notions of fear and the past. In King's novel, the past is a haunting force that assures repetition: the previous caretaker murders his family like Jack tries to; the Overlook harbors ghosts and their repeating history of depravities; and Jack inherits vices from his father

and pays for mistakes of the previous generation. Throughout this novel, Jack tries to avoid the past, but his very attempt at avoiding it reasserts the pastness of the present. As is typical of the Gothic, *The Shining* presents haunting as inescapable—at least if one uses the failed method of the Torrances, such as withholding secrets. Haunting, which involves the past (the dead or the past returning) and persistence (their refusal to leave), is not only present in the Overlook hotel, but also, metaphorically, in Jack's inability to become a different man from his abusive father. Is not Jack, then, not only haunted, but also *defined* by the past? Before we answer this question, let us consider O'Neill's play.

In *Long Day's Journey*, James Tyrone identity is also tied to events from his past. Wakefield suggests that James is, "sociologically speaking, financially and economically schizophrenic" because he "constantly and overtly complains about 'going to the poorhouse' while he continuously buys land from his buddy McGuire".<sup>29</sup> One wonders where this schizophrenia originates from. Wakefield's suggests capitalism itself as the problem, but, while capitalist drives explain Mary's love for expensive things and may even give a good context for James's purchases, the system itself does not explain his obsession for accumulating real estate. This explanation is in James's past. He was not born wealthy, but rather, as Mary puts it, "made his way up from ignorance

28. FLECHE. "Long Day's Journey into Night: The Seen and the Unseen," p. 25.

29. O'NEILL. *Long Day's Journey into Night*, p. 11.

30. O'NEILL. *Long Day's Journey into Night*, p. 63.

31. O'NEILL. *Long Day's Journey into Night*, p. 150.

32. O'NEILL. *Long Day's Journey into Night*, p. 143.

33. O'NEILL. *Long Day's Journey into Night*, p. 144.

34. O'NEILL. *Long Day's Journey into Night*, p. 144.

and poverty to the top of his profession”.<sup>30</sup> After his father returned to Ireland and apparently killed himself, James Tyrone became “the man of the family”<sup>31</sup> at age ten. He is attached both to his past as a financially poor child and to his bygone days as a successful actor: the result is a wealthy man who, in the present, worships his past professional skills but refuses to acknowledge he can and should spend the money they earned him. Letting go of the money is letting go of his past journey, and, by extension, letting go of his traditionally masculine role of financial source.

In a conversation with Edmund by the end of the play, James admits his mistakes as a provider, but they are always accompanied by defensive justifications. About his wife's addiction, he says, “It was years before I discovered what was wrong”.<sup>32</sup> About her being on the road with him, he clarifies, “I never dragged her on the road against her will”.<sup>33</sup> And when arguments fail, he appeals to emotions and insults, questioning Edmund, “How dare you talk to your father like that, you insolent young cub!”.<sup>34</sup> James's discourse reveals a need to defend himself when it comes to subjects from his past: his working life, the initial stages of his marriage, and his wife's first encounters with morphine. That alone does not indicate his personal unease about these subjects, for he may be simply trying to defend himself from his family's accusations. Nevertheless, when

we consider his heavy drinking—a trait he shares with Jack Torrance—it becomes clear that he does not need external accusations to feel threatened by a past that revisits him in the present, since drinking, like morphine and the fog that comes from the sea, stand for suppression of guilt in O'Neill's play. He drinks to forget the ever-present past. With that in mind, we cannot help but to ask another version of the question asked above: is not James, then, like Jack, *haunted* by the past?

A comparison between King's *The Shining* and O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* suggests that Gothic haunting and Naturalistic essentialism have similar functions and work under analogous assumptions. What connects them in the corpus of this article are two males in a failed personal journey towards traditional masculinity. In Jack Torrance's relationship with the Overlook hotel and in James Tyrone's views on work and money, traditional masculine values—power, work, and money—come as a possibility of asserting one's own worth and erasing one's mistakes.

In the documents revealing the years of an Overlook populated by powerful men, Jack Torrance finds validation of his manhood. After discovering how the Overlook was once tied to organized crime, Jack understands that the hotel used to be occupied by “[m]en reputed to be involved with

drugs, vice, robbery, murder” and that “they had all been here, right above him . . . [s]crewing expensive whores”.<sup>35</sup> While he is still reading the newspaper clippings, he “promised himself he would take care of the place, very good care” because he finally “understood the breadth of his responsibility to the Overlook”.<sup>36</sup> Beyond that, this responsibility is to a form of masculinity so inflexible and controlling that it becomes synonym to theft, political schemes, bigotry, corruption, and even murder. In “Historicism in *The Shining*,” Fredric Jameson argues that what possesses Jack is not simple evil, but “the American past as it has left its sedimented traces in the corridors and dismembered suites” (8). If we consider, as Frank Manchel does, that this past is a patriarchal one, which the newspaper clippings hint is true, then Jack’s ties to outdated and dangerous masculinities are fully formed.

In James’s case, this reassertion of manhood is reinforced by his view of his coming of age experiences as simultaneously undesirable and superior. He claims “[t]here was no damned romance in our poverty,”<sup>37</sup> but proceeds to describe his condition as a source of wisdom and toughness. “Scornfully,” he asks Edmund, “What do you know of the value of a dollar?”<sup>38</sup> And later adds, “You talk of work!”<sup>39</sup> As an explanation of his stinginess and his failure to provide for his family, James turns towards his past work experiences,

which are closely related to the probable suicide of his father. So, fatherless and propelled into early maturity, James seems to find some sort of relief in how the past explains his present. “It was in those days I learned to be a miser,” he tells Edmund. “And once you’ve learned a lesson, it’s hard to unlearn it”.<sup>40</sup> It is curious that, from his bad experiences, James, even in recollection, draws only defensive justifications for his failures. This is not, however, unexpected, if we consider the tones of North-American dramatic Naturalism in O’Neill’s play. Fleche understands avoidance to be “a hallmark of O’Neill’s dramatic writing”,<sup>41</sup> and it is a common motif in drama that draws upon Naturalism. The most common example is probably Blanche DuBois from Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*, who, not unlike the Tyrones, suppresses unforgiving reality using alcohol and retreats to an imaginary land built upon blind nostalgia. Hope, however, never leaves the realm of the imaginary, as it is unfeasible. In his recollection of his past as a child and especially as an actor, James finds a weak form of reassurance that is more akin to oblivion.

The unfortunate catch in this movement towards the past and traditional masculinity is that it is twice catastrophic. To avoid the evils of a form of manhood shaped by silence and unmediated wish for power, Jack Torrance and James Tyrone try to revive the same tradition that initially tormented them. They seem cornered and unable to escape

35. KING. *The Shining*, p. 239-240.

36. KING. *The Shining*, p. 233.

37. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 150.

38. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 150.

39. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 151.

40. O’NEILL. *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, p. 151.

41. FLECHE. “*Long Day’s Journey into Night: The Seen and the Unseen*,” p. 38.

tradition. This calls to mind Seidler's quoted assessment of male anxiety and the unhealthy need of utopic self-control,

[M]en learn to keep their anxieties and fears to themselves as they project a certain public image. Inner distress can build as men are haunted by a fear that if they show what they are feeling to others, they will surely be rejected.<sup>42</sup>

Every step Jack Torrance and James Tyrone take towards an apparent freedom is but a reassurance that the past traps, defines, and haunts. It is not surprising that *The Shining* ends with Jack's death and *Long Day's Journey into Night* ends with the same ominous tone of its beginning.

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*Submetido: 25/12/2018*

*Aceito: 20/05/2019*

42. SEIDLER. *Transforming Masculinities*, p. xvi.