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“Pray you now, Forget and Forgive”: Forgiveness,
Redemption and Restoration in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and
O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*

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Introduction

Filial relationships, love and duties are central aspects for the construction of families in dramatic works proper of Modern American Drama, inasmuch as the tragedies created under this context of artistic production focus on the internal relationships not only of the individual character, but also in accordance with their own interaction with the other members of the group. Examples that might support the aforementioned claim would be plays such as O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *Desire under the Elms*, and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. These plays expose faithfully the interaction of common men and women in the context of their own everyday life with the members of their own familiar group, in which the tension between the group's needs and each member's own ideals is not only evident but complex.

However, it is impossible to refer to the interaction of filial duties in Modern American Drama without regarding a far more distant expression of the same phenomenon under the same time framework –modernity. Elizabethan drama, following the conventions of the time, also produced tragedies in which the relationship between parents and offspring are critical. Shakespearean tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Lear* provide us with the correspondent problematization of this issue. Hamlet struggles because he is unable to resolve himself, and thence act on behalf of his dead father. This situation is something that leads him to delay the task that has been imposed on him as the only man responsible of restoring the lost order and eradicating corruption. Romeo and Juliet are doomed due to the enmity of their families, a hostility to what they rebel, but finally they meet death as a consequence of their forbidden love and filial disobedience.

Nevertheless, the most representative play in terms of filial love is without doubt *King Lear*, in which we can see the consequences of pride in a father, who fails in acknowledging love is not part of the sphere of the public and political life, and that flattering discourse hides behind its words the deepest feelings of ambition and chaos, as seen at the opening scene. Lear as a father has failed in recognizing the importance of true filial love in the figure of Cordelia who is a clear example of truthfulness and loyalty.

Concerning this, analyzing the way in which parents and children interact in tragedies whose main thematic relation is based on filial responsibility would be highly

relevant. However, since this phenomenon is such a broad topic to be covered in this work, the analysis of the plays will be based on an experience that seems simple to understand, but that in fact involves a complex set of implications in the examination of the plays to be studied.

At first, this theme seems to be providing insights on the complementary relationship between language and action in the accomplishment of forgiveness between parents and children, in intricate plays such as *King Lear* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. In addition, it is interesting to notice how the mere task of forgiving or asking for forgiveness may have consequences not only in the relationship between the characters of the play, but in the interaction with its texture, thus providing a structural device for their construction.

One of the objectives of the seminar was to promote intertextual readings between plays framed at two significant stages of modernity. One purpose embedded in this objective was to determine how our understanding of Shakespearean plays would shed light on and affect the reading of representative plays of Modern American Drama. But on the same token, it is even more interesting to observe how the reading of a play such as O'Neill's would change our understanding of the tragedies written by Shakespeare. Under this light, and since the main theme of this thesis came up from my own reading of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, I wondered whether forgiveness finds expression in the same way in *King Lear*, inasmuch as in both tragedies filial relationships are crucial.

The fact is that forgiveness in this tragedy not only takes place so as to attain resolution and as a way of healing the broken bounds between wronged children (Edgar and Cordelia) and negligent parents (Lear and Gloucester). The problem regarding this experience is mainly based on what would supply a new perspective to an observation made by Stanley Cavell in his essay *The Avoidance of Love*.

Cavell points out that many critics are still arguing about the possibility of a Christian interpretation of *King Lear*, and he proposes arguments to sustain this view, which are mainly based on the perception of Cordelia as a scapegoat that will redeem the king, thus creating a parallel with Jesus-Christ at the moment of his crucifixion (246). I arrived, then, at one of the main problems I am concerned with in this study: redemption. The examination of this concept will provide evidence for or against a Christian-based

interpretation of *King Lear*, as well as of O'Neill's tragedy. I say for or against meaning that, even though the presence of the religious aspect in both plays is worth noticing, the concept of redemption and the possibility of a non-secular reading clashes with the actual definition and conventions of modern tragedy, inasmuch as there is a matter of distance regarding the interaction of divine entities in human experience portrayed in these plays.

Forgiveness has been, theoretically, analyzed from two different perspectives: a religious vision asserted by theology and a secularized perspective that prompts from the revision of this phenomenon by specialist in the areas of ethics and philosophy. Authors such as Burton claim that forgiveness is an act intrinsically related to repentance in whatever form it may be expressed (276), as well as it is associated to the shedding of the blood. In the opposite view, Novitz wonders if forgiveness is actually a virtue that can be performed at will, and proposes that it is "the most obscure Judeo-Christian virtue of all the virtues to which people commonly appeal" (299)

Thereby, the purpose of this study is primarily focused on the examination of forgiveness as a thematic link between *King Lear* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, from which instances for redeeming characters' "sins" are generated so as to provide a space for the instantiation of renewal experiences: redemption and restoration. Besides, forgiveness will shed light on the discussion about the possibility of a Christian reading of the tragedies, based on the assumption that our belonging to a Judeo-Christian tradition will affect our reading of the text since our conception of what is atonement is basically influenced by our beliefs.

The influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition finds expression in the selection of certain references that allude to the Scriptures and religious figures such as Virgin Mary. All of these references compound the repertoire chosen by both authors for the conveyance of aesthetic value when presenting their view on filial duties. In order to explore those repertoires and its function as guidelines for the recipients (readers and spectators), the theory advanced by Iser and Jaus is going to be reviewed.

Theoretical Framework

With the purpose of analyzing the manifestation of forgiveness in both plays, it is relevant to come up with a definition of all the concepts implied by this experience at the level of the interpretation of the plays. What follows is a bibliographical discussion around concepts such as forgiveness, redemption or atonement –a concept that prompts from the analysis of forgiveness, which will provide some evidence for suggesting the basis for a Christian interpretation and restoration in terms of the definition of tragedies.

First of all, when studying the problem of forgiveness, it will be possible for us to observe it from many perspectives that are equally respectable and feasible. In order to provide a thorough exposition of this topic, two main perspectives are going to be taken into account. On the one hand, resorting to secular (philosophical and ethical) approaches to forgiveness is necessary for an approximation to this experience in the context of the chosen plays. On the other hand, the religious perspective on the matter is going to be explored not only with the purpose of providing an account on the Christian value of this virtue, but also it will shed light on the problem of Christian interpretations of the plays. Thus, the understanding of this concept will remain two-folded, though as bounded as possible, so as to enrich the nature of forgiveness.

From the point of view of ethics, forgiveness is an experience shared by two figures: the forgiver and the forgiven. According to Scott, one of these entities, i.e. the forgiver, may be divine, but there are always two figures. In addition, “forgiveness is the restoration of... some sort of spiritual communion” interrupted by sins or any offense intended to hurt someone else (194). The author puts emphasis on the fact that whenever the sin is the “genuine expression of the offender’s character”, then the forgiver has nothing to forgive, despite all the efforts of the offender to show repentance. In other words, sin can be forgiven, after being taken out of its original context and after examining the real character of the offender, only if the fault does not emerge from the true nature of the wrongdoer. Although, following Scott’s train of thoughts, all human acts are bound to the one who acts in a certain manner, and they depend not only on their character, but also on the circumstances. Thus, it is necessary to change “some of the infinitely delicate threads which weave the texture of the self at any moment” (196). In other words, when engaging

in forgiving an offence, it is compelling to undertake the task of reflecting on the other's behavior in terms of circumstance (or context) and of the self.

From a secular outlook, David Novitz proposes that the act of forgiveness implies the abandonment of negative feelings against the wrongdoer, as opposed to pardoning somebody, which implies just the renouncement of claims towards the one at fault (301). Furthermore, the author proposes four conditions for forgiveness to be attained which are: 1) In order to forgive somebody, the offended party must feel wrongfully harmed by the other, 2) the fault has to be deliberate or at least the consequence of a deliberate action, 3) the fault must induce negative feelings in the offended character such as bitterness, anger and a certain degree of resentment, and 4) one can only forgive the wrongdoer if they are able to eradicate those bad feelings against the offender (302-303). From this, it can be suggested that the several instances in which the Tyrone apologize for offending the others does not meet the required conditions for forgiveness to take place. Rather, those instances, which are spaces of enunciation used to cover the negative feelings towards others, resemble pardon as defined by Novitz. What is being suggested here is that, regarding this opposition in meaning between pardon and forgiveness, the latter is not necessarily conveyed only through discourse (as this experience directly affects our inner self, and as it is not submitted to free will), but also by the actions undertaken by the wronged characters in *King Lear* as well as in *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

Novitz's objective is to examine the virtue of forgiveness, since it is, according to him, the most obscure Judeo-Christian virtue among all the virtues to which we commonly refer to (299). He claims that "if there's a virtue of forgiveness, it would seem to consist in being disposed to forgive in the appropriate circumstances" (299). However, he doubts about the virtuous condition of forgiveness, inasmuch as it is not an action that can be accomplished at will. (299). Later on in his essay, he claims that "if forgiveness is to be a virtue, it will have to acknowledge and attend to the wrong that was done, and deliberately seek to banish the bitter feelings associated with it." (306)

Besides, Novitz observes that there is a degree of interaction between forgiveness and concepts such as forgetfulness, pity, and punishment, the latter being the one that is more in conflict with forgiveness. This relationship leaps from the basis that punishment has a double value: on the one hand, when somebody punishes the wrongdoer aiming to

inflict harm on them, then punishment takes on the value of revenge. While on the other hand, there is a value for punishment that is closer to the implication of a likely instance for forgiveness, thus the nature of punishment is based on correcting the wrongdoer (304). The latter instance of punishment can be found in those situations in which wronged parents choose to punish their children in order to teach them not to commit that same fault again.

Nevertheless, Novitz's thoughts about the problem of forgiveness are focused on the individual who is going to forgive others, thus omitting the implications or the true nature of forgiveness when it comes to filial duties. Other authors, such as Hasting Rashdall, are highly aware of the inherent relationship of forgiveness and punishment in terms of love expressions.

Rashdall points out that forgiveness is closely related to punishment, regarding them as expressions of love. Punishment, he explains, has to be applied whenever it conveys a certain degree of well-being for the community and for the one at fault. But punishment, although it is a form of expressing love and caring, would not be complete without forgiveness, since punishment only teaches what is to be regarded as wrong, while forgiveness is effective because of its emotional character. Rashdall expands this idea when he distinguishes vengeance from forgiveness, saying that:

“... vengeance often loses its moral effect just because the avenger of the wrong is the victim, while forgiveness often strikes the heart just because the forgiver is the man who suffered by the wrong, - and therefore the man in whom it is hardest to forgive.” (204)

From a theological perspective, forgiveness has been understood as “conditioned on repentance, in whatever way repentance is manifested” (Burton, 276). Furthermore, forgiveness implies an offence against somebody else. The offence should be punished, although punishment is not the proper way for reestablishing the harmed bond, thus being forgiveness the means for healing the breach. It presupposes that “the two parties may stand in the same attitude toward each other as if no punishment had been inflicted” (Burton, 277) or if no offence had been committed. Thus, “forgiveness does not repair the injury done, but reconciles the two parties” (Burton, 277).

Nevertheless, Burton points out the three main institutions in the organization of societies, which bear to some extent a divine nature: the family, the state and the Christian

Church, the first one being the most central in his argumentation, since it “was instituted by God, not merely for the perpetuation of the race, but to secure in harmony with individual freedom and responsibility the highest well-being of all its members” (Burton, 278). Under this view then, the importance of filial duties, and thence of forgiveness, is to guarantee not only the general well-being between parents and children but also that of society, since forgiveness is an experience that comes to relieve the broken bonds between members of the same group.

Moreover, Burton deals with filial duties, stating that the responsibility of the parent is unavoidable once it has been voluntarily assumed. A parent is not only the main authority at the head of a family, but also the one who suffers “if evil befalls the family or any member of it” (Burton, 280). In that sense, the figure of the parent (whether a father or a mother) is the one responsible of administrating punishment in the way it would imply moral and communal benefits for the whole group. Whenever one of the members is at fault, even when it is not the parent’s own mistake, the parent is the one who suffers the most because it threatens the stability and the sense of freedom of the family, as well as the bonds between them may get injured.

Accordingly, the experience of forgiveness as a filial duty encloses not only the possibility for reconciliation or the healing of broken bonds between the offended and the offender parties. Forgiveness also entails the manifestation of feelings, such as love, in the way its purpose is to maintain the sense of harmony and peace among the members of a community. Besides, its relationship with punishment is enlightening as the offenders are not always punished by the offended, but by their surroundings, either human (as in the case of the Tyrones and Gloucester) or supernatural (as in Lear’s case)

Since forgiveness implies the healing of previously broken bonds between two parties (a link that is broken by an offence or sin), and also the eradication of resentment and anger, it could be directly related to the experience of redemption or atonement, as this results in purification of the soul and the forgiveness of sins. The question that immediately comes up when making reference to atonement is whether human beings are able to redeem another from their own sins and if, in forgiving them, we are purifying their negligent existence. Or else, is atonement an experience exclusively religious, proper of God and Christ, rather than an action to be conveyed as well by humans? What is the nature of

redemption? So as to provide an answer to the questions just posed, John J. Martin's work on this subject will be reviewed as it will provide a characterization of atonement from a Judeo-Christian viewpoint.

Martin proposes seven general statements that synthesize the nature of redemption. Those statements include: 1) atonement is a spiritual fact and principle, 2) atonement must be preached, 3) it requires the eradication of worldly-based prejudices, 4) this experience encloses the problem of personality, 5) redemption has an effect in society and communities as it prompts solidarity as a characteristic of the social aspect of Man, 6) atonement is completely related to and requires the existence of sin, and 7) redemption is an experience that proceeds from God (382).

From all these characteristics of atonement, close attention will be paid to the fifth principle, as Martin provides insight on the social role of man and redemption. "Man is radically a social being. His personal redemption therefore, is the key to social redemption. If right and adequate motives possess one man, the benefit will spread to all men" (385). The social aspect of atonement strongly suggests, then, that the redemption of King Lear would propitiate an instance for the restoration of the social and political order, thus attaining the purification of a corrupted state. Solidarity, hence, is incarnated in the figures of Kent, Cordelia and Edgar which are the ones in charge of the eradication of evil forces and the purification of England, as well as in the figure of Edmund Tyrone which is in charge of alleviating his family grief.

Once atonement has been characterized, Martin posits the reasons why he believes humanity needs to attain redemption. He argues that there are three main reasons: need of unity (which can be seen as reconciliation with oneself), reconciliation with the community or social order, and finally reconciliation with God.

The first one, Martin explains, is embedded in our own nature, since "the natural man has within himself no sufficient unifying force, that human nature is subject to oppressing and depressing moods, violent splits, terrific conflicts, warring elements," etc. (390) Thence atonement is necessary not only for the forgiveness of the sins that dissolve us, but it is also the godly force that "emancipates, organizes, augments the lives of men" in order to become highly efficient. (Martin, 391)

Secondly, we need atonement in the way that it reconciles us with the world-order that involves us. This need presupposes the fact that, to some extent, there are puzzling events in life that arise from the lack of rational meaning in a world surrendered to reason. From ancient cultures this problem has been of such magnitude, that through history, mankind has tried to find the answer to this void of rational meaning. We need redemption so as to find what is missing, which is, from a theological basis, our faith. (391-394)

Thirdly, redemption allows reconciliation with God. According to Martin, Man needs to realize the fact that there is nothing in the world around him that is not under the control of God, and that everything operates moved by divine principles. Atonement embodied in the life, the death and the resurrection of Christ, clarifies the conception of God held by man in that period, creating a less distant and indifferent God based in his Fatherhood. (395)

From this, it can be suggested that the characters longing for forgiveness, and hence redemption, in *King Lear* (i.e. Lear and Gloucester) are indeed in need of atonement since they have lost their inner sense of unity (which is affected by their own sins), they have reached a point in which they cannot understand the world they are living in, and, finally, they need to reconcile with the divine forces that operate in their world.

On the other hand, the Tyrone's are unconsciously craving for redemption because they are lacking meaning as a consequence of what modernity has brought us to. In their corrupted existence by the tedium of a life full of uncertainties and questioning, their innocence is snatched away, thus leaving them with a feeling of fragmentation and meaninglessness.

What is interesting to notice about Martin argumentation is the social feature of redemption. This aspect, along with its organizing power, leads us to other dimension of the problem of forgiveness in these plays. Forgiveness not only provides an instance, from the religious standpoint, for the healing of broken links within and without ourselves, but also, from a secular point of view, the redeeming consequence of forgiveness gives way to the restoration of the social order inside the play. Redemption implies the purification of our souls and the reestablishment of a bond with a divine entity, while restoration implies the purification of a corrupted social order that needs to be uprooted, so as to allow its reconstruction by the following generations, as occurs in *King Lear* with Edgar's ascent.

If redemption is observed in the interaction of the characters of the plays, then restoration has more to do with something that goes beyond the plot, in which the forces in opposition of the tragedy instantiate the place for restoration after its resolution. This concept has to be seen under the light of the definition of tragedy, because restoration is a consequence of the effect of forgiveness in the structure of the plays, as opposed to redemption.

In his book *A Definition of Tragedy*, Oscar Mandel proposes the following characterization of this genre suggesting that a work might be considered a tragedy, if it presents a situation as the one that follows:

A protagonist who commands our earnest good will is impelled in a given world by a purpose, or undertakes action, of a certain seriousness and magnitude; and by that very purpose or action, subject to that given world, necessarily and inevitably meets with grave spiritual or physical suffering (20)

Emphasis should be put on the final idea, which suggests that characters involved in a tragic play must inevitably suffer whether physically or emotionally. It is an undeniable fact that characters such as King Lear, Hamlet or O'Neill's Edgar face distressful circumstances to an extreme in which we get to sympathize with them, as we feel not only marveled, but identified with their own process. But what also deserves to be highlighted, as Mandel does, is the fact that this suffering is inevitable.

Inevitability is placed at the center of the definition, because it is not a feature of the consequence of a specific action, but the incapability of characters for avoiding its tragic outgrowth lies in the generative action itself (Mandel 24). In this light, the sense of inevitability transcends any cultural, religious, social or historical values that interact in our world-view. What springs from what Mandel baptized as the kernel of his definition, is that, ironically, it is inevitable for us to conceive a world in which our actions convey a side-effect regardless of its nature (whether it is beneficial or detrimental for us).

The problem is that, due to the double value of action, we fall into a condition of constant struggling forces, in which we end up condemning ourselves by our own deeds. This leads us to a catastrophic state in life, where it does not matter how little the action or task we resolve ourselves to undertake, we might face the inevitability of the opposite

outcome. Thus, an apparently innocent or harmless action such as abdicating or getting married with the love of your life, will provoke a chain reaction of catastrophic consequences not only in the life of the agent, but in the lives of the ones around them.

Even though it seems appalling to put it that way, there is always the possibility for purification to take place, not in the sense of redeeming us from our sins, but in the sense that there might be an instance in which whatever that has been chaotic turns out to be quiet. The concept of restoration becomes central, as it arises from Butcher's definition of tragedy, quoted by Mandel, which suggests the following:

“Tragedy, in its pure idea, shows us a mortal will engaged in an unequal struggle with destiny, whether that destiny be represented by the forces within or without the mind. The conflict reaches its tragic issue when the individual perishes, but through his ruin the disturbed order of the world is restored and the moral forces reassert their sway” (22)

In the end, what has been discussed so far is that the state of chaos in life, or more generally the chaotic/corrupted order (to be faithful to Butcher's idea) is brought to a state of cleansing that emerges thanks to the death of the hero, or the eradication of the element that triggered the developing chaotic state in the plays. What follows, then, after the vanishing of the disturbing figure or event, leads the surviving members of the play to an instance in which they collaborate in the creation of a new order.

Restoration may be embodied in the advent of an outer character, thus involving the promise of a new beginning as Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, or as an outcome of the revelation of the identity of a banished man, his later vengeance and his reward as he ascends to the crown of England, that is to say, the final appearance of Edgar in *King Lear*. Even though Edgar remains as the symbol embodying the promise of a near restoration and the purification of England after the tragedy of Lear's family, re-establishment is not generated by his mere existence. Restoration is attained in *King Lear* as a result of a progression induced by the presence of forgiveness, which leads to the redemption of the characters involved in this massacre, but at the same time it becomes a feature of Edgar, who is rewarded with what Edmund pursued throughout the play without achieving it: power.

To sum up, forgiveness is an experience that demands the eradication of negative feelings. As such, redemption and restoration appear as the effect of such abandonment, inasmuch as both imply a renewal process. Redemption implies the eradication of sin and the healing of links, while restoration implies the emancipation from chaos and the purification of the political order or the familial circumstances. Nevertheless, the social impact of these experiences is just one of their consequences. Also, the presence of these principles illuminates a reading oriented towards a Christian interpretation. So as to examine this, looking for what theory has said about the participation of the reader in the creation process is compelling. The theory that will be supporting this study is the one focused on reception. The main arguments made by authors such as Iser and Jaus, are going to be explored so as to arrive at the conceptualization needed for the characterization of Christian readings in *King Lear* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

Methodologically speaking, reception as a concept appeared after 1950 in areas such as jurisprudence, theology and philosophy (Jaus 53). Its appearance reoriented disciplines such as historical research, inasmuch as this new perspective was freed from the current positivist and traditionalist paradigms of the time, thus providing a new space for the development of a new theory of history that takes into account hermeneutic principles (Jaus 53). Other disciplines, such as philology, also underwent a process of adjustment; by shifting their scope of analysis to one centered in how the three components of aesthetic communication (author, work and recipient) take part in the same measure (Jaus 53). As a consequence, the figure of the recipient had to be reshaped “as the bearer of all aesthetic culture”, who has a right as both recipient and mediator (Jaus 53). In that sense, reception theory “posed once more the problems of defining the work by its effect”, thus focusing on the dialectic aspects between effect and reception, the construction of canon, and a dialogic comprehension concerned with the distance of time (Jaus 53).

The idea of reception has undergone a long process of transformations until it finally reached the definition and implications it has nowadays in aesthetics. One of the main changes involves the shift from the conception of reception itself as the “passive act of receiving”, to the understanding of this concept as an active and productive act (Jaus 55). Thus, the role of the work itself also changes, in the sense that it is no longer seen as an authority providing objective content through literal meaning. In modern hermeneutics,

instead, the sense of the text must be regarded as “an open structure demanding productive understanding”, since the recipient (the reader) faces “the possibility of seeing the text in a later context in unendingly different ways, or more precisely, in ways that answers questions that could not be asked in the primary context” (Jaus 55).

Since reception has an effect on traditional historiography and in legal history, it has also been proposed that reception becomes a basic notion in historical continuity. As such, it “takes place during cultural exchange in the interactive process of encounter and appropriation, response and impetus to bring forth one’s own creation, either as a continuation or as a revision of authoritative tradition” (Jaus 57-58). Also, this author proposes three stages in the adoption of reception (when it concerns literature), which describe the relationship between the work of art and the recipient. Those phases are dependency (translation), independency (classicism) and emancipation (modernity), the latter being central for our study.

On the other hand Wolfgang Iser, in his book *The Act of Reading*, provides more insight on reception theory. In the third chapter of his book, he gives an account on the understanding of the notion of repertoire and its referential relationship with the prevailing systems of thought during the context of production of a work, and how those systems might be interpreted by the reader when being exposed to them.

Repertoire is seen by Iser as “all the familiar territory within the text” that may be introduced in a work of fiction by means of “references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged” (3). An author’s repertoire involves references to the reality outside the text, thus, the reality referred to in a book is not bounded to the frame of the plot, as well as the elements embedded in the repertoire are not supposed to remain as mere forms of imitation (Iser, 3) This is due to a transformational process that those references undergo because “they have been removed from their original context and function” (Iser 3). By reducing or modifying the elements included in the repertoire, those references gain a double value as they provide the source and the changes of their elements at the same time.

Inasmuch as the selection of a repertoire alludes reality, it is important to highlight the fact that a repertoire does not portrait an aesthetic reality as a whole as it actually is. Indeed, what are supposed to be referred to by those allusions are models or

conceptualizations of the world, which Iser asserts to call world-pictures or systems (4). At every stage in human history, there is a hierarchical organization of systems and subsystems (whether social or thought system), thus describing the interaction an inherent relationship between dominance and submission and thus shaping the concept of reality of the epoch in which a certain dominant system emerges (4).

Each dominant system has its own regulators with different functions which include, for instance, providing an agenda for social activity, protection against any uncertainty arising within this system, and the establishment of norms that help to regulate the basis of expectations (Iser 4). However, in order to accomplish those functions, the regulations involve a process in which certain elements are reduced or negated because, to some extent, they challenge the precepts of the prevailing order. In that sense, the literary text takes advantage of the neutralization of these elements as it activates what has been rendered inactive by the dominant system, instead of merely representing or imitating the system of reality in which the text is produced (4).

From this, the reader or recipient of a work of art does not face a faithful and exhaustive account on the system of thought that shaped the reality in a certain production context, but what they come to see are those elements that may threaten the ruling order (which have been neutralized), as well as those elements that become deficiencies for the system (5). Under this view, what the repertoire offers the reader is the recoding of the thought system by stripping it of its existing authority (5).

The reader, hence, is provided with the possibility of critically observing his surroundings and the forces that rule his life that he has unquestionably accepted (5). Consequently, he is given the crucial role of not only reassembling the historical context from which the dominant system emerged, but “also to experience for himself the specific deficiencies brought about by those historical norms, and to recognize the answers implicit in the text” (5).

Furthermore, the selection of the repertoire and its elements is conditioned by the requirements of aesthetic value, thus constituting the framework for the text (8). Accordingly, aesthetic value plays a crucial function in the process of communication as it “instantiates the process whereby the reader assembles the meaning of a text” (8). In that sense, literary communication is rendered different from any other kind of dialogue in the

way that the elements embedded in the author's repertoire lose their validity when put into a literary text, thus leading to the expression of something novel (8).

Thus the interaction between repertoire and reader is relevant as, on the one hand, the repertoire provides the organizational structure of signification, while the reader, on the other hand, is supposed to optimize that structure through reading (8). That optimization is regulated by the degree of alertness and eagerness to face an unusual experience, as the strategies in the text guide its own actualization expected from the reader by means of determined lines that prompt from determined repertoires.

To summarize, the present theory concerning the reception of a literary work by the reader provides enough insight for the analysis and revision of the possibilities for readings of the play mobilized by a Christian basis. The notion of repertoire brings support to these ideas, inasmuch as any biblical reference or allusion made by both playwrights help them to construct the repertoire used to instantiate and guide the reader to a specific horizon. However, as the repertoire is based on the deficiencies of the thought systems that framed the production of the plays, this theory is pertinent as it suggest the importance of the reader in the writing process and in their own emancipation.

Forgiving, Redeeming, Restoring

Stanley Cavell, in his reading of *King Lear*, provides us with his own interpretation of the cruxes that many authors have been trying to explain through their own readings. For him, *King Lear* is a play based on the experience of recognition and the avoidance of it, which emerges from a sense of shame. This feeling has to be compared to that of guilt, because shame “is the specific discomfort produced by the sense of being looked at; the avoidance of the sight of others is the reflex it produces”, while guilt implies that the “reflex is to avoid discovery” (232). Under this perspective, Lear and Gloucester are not only paralleling the other as a means for universalizing the main theme of the play, that of familiar or filial duty, but also, and following Cavell’s idea, Gloucester evolves as a double of the king. In this mirror-like relationship between both characters, however, we can see some differences respecting each own shame, and also the way each of them are forgiven.

Firstly, it is important to take into account Gloucester’s sin. Clearly, Gloucester’s nature is driven by lust, Edmund being the result of an illegitimate intercourse with an unknown lady. By the way his father introduces him in the first scene, it is evident enough that Edmund’s existence is only a remembrance of the joy of sex and of Gloucester’s youth. Gloucester has been “so often blushed to acknowledge him” (*King Lear*, Act 1, Sc 1 7) that he has grown immune to the visible influences of shame. He has become used to acknowledge a mistake that he made long ago, though this mistake barely follows him every single day since Edmund’s birth (according to the fact that Edmund has been away for about nine years and he is supposed to go away again), that he cannot even suspect what Edmund’s real intentions are in the scene of Edgar’s letter. This is due to the fact that instead of getting to know him or loving him, Gloucester has just being ashamed of his offspring. Needless to mention the fact that Edgar, though he is Gloucester’s son “by order of law” (Shakespeare Act 1, Sc 1, 7), is not more loved by his father than Edmund is. This sheds light on the fact that Gloucester is not only a lustful character, but furthermore, he is a remarkably little-caring father. Thus, it can be suggested that it does not matter whether his sons are legitimate or bastard, his love is not in a direct relation to those etiquettes, thus it is easier for Edmund to deceive his father and finally betray him. It seems then, that

Gloucester's shame arises from his own fault at not being capable of getting to know his offspring, thus his fault is being unable to foresee the tragedy that is next to befall on him.

Once he is deceived by Edmund, he is already blinded by his own superstition and by his own ignorance, and paradoxically enough, his punisher is not going to be the legitimate member of Gloucester's family whose image has been corrupted (in other words the offended one), but Edmund, the son which has not been properly acknowledged. Under this view Gloucester is doubly grieved: on the one hand because he is who punishment befalls on. On the other hand, as the father of a family in distress, and following Burton, he is the one to suffer the most, because his duty is to reestablish the order of things inside his family, whilst facing the fact of having a mischievous child, whose wickedness is publicly (and mistakenly) known. Thus his fault leads him to be deceived twice: firstly by believing Edgar a betrayer, and secondly by trusting Edmund with no measure. Then, his fault is not being able to see who deserves being trusted and who does not. His fault, as well as Lear's, is being blind enough to fail in seeing the true hearts of their children.

King Lear's fault or sin, as compared to Gloucester's, emerges from his own blindness and his failure at recognizing true love from lack of affection. And his flaw is such that it leads him to create a political instance for listening to public demonstrations of love, when love belongs to the private sphere of life. Regan and Goneril are successful in conveying their love for their father in the space created for the public according to conventions. Their speeches are of a bigger magnitude than their own filial love, and their words are motivated by ambition and power. Goneril manipulates her father through the appropriate use of language in the political spaces, thus satisfying Lear's pride.

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

(Shakespeare Act 1, Sc 1, 11)

It seems a fine rhetorical strategy to appeal to the limitations of language to express feelings, though Goneril's speech is also ironically created, as the contrast between her words and the acknowledgement of the inadequacy of language to express feelings is made overt. If words cannot convey her love for her father, then she should remain silent as

Cordelia does. Cordelia, on the other hand, is the one who loves Lear the most, but she is unable to express the feelings that cannot find enough space in the public sphere. Her awareness of this fact lies so deep in her nature that it is impossible for her to even attempt professing her true love for his father. She knows and is conscious about the fact that her “love’s/ More ponderous than [her] tongue.”(Shakespeare Act 1, Sc 1, 11-13)

Lear’s blindness and pride unable him to see and to consider this fact, because he needs words (and no actions) to prove himself loved by his daughters. Lear’s conditions for dividing his domains are based on a rational/political basis in which love does not find its place, since love belongs to the sphere of the irrational/domestic. The action of loving somebody is not political though, so it escapes monarchical contexts, being thus restricted to the familiar dimension of reality and of the quotidian. In other words, the administration of the kingdom remains as an asymmetrical and irrational administration of rewards and punishment, provoked by another asymmetrical relation between the expression of affection and the proper use of language in this context. This incapability to distribute punishment and reward properly is due to the lack of recognition on Lear’s side and it is this fault that leads him to, step by step, realize that he has made a mistake in believing his eldest daughters’ words and not Cordelia’s nature. His pride is such that he is unable to see what he has done until his madness has reached an advanced condition, and this delay of self-recognition leads him to face a tragic fate.

So far, the main cause of the conflict in this play is parental blindness and the impossibility of recognizing their faults. While this is true of Lear and Gloucester, what is seen in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* is a sense of denial rather than recognizing own and others’ faults. It can be argued that none of the characters in the play is able to recognize their vices and sins, but it is pertinent to notice that, in fact, they are aware of what they are and of the factors that poison their nature. Mary knows why she is under suspicion, Tyrone is constantly being called stingy and Jamie is well aware of his problems with alcohol and prostitutes. The matter is not if they act or don’t as they do because they fail in acknowledging their flaw, but it is a matter of denying what all on stage (and the audience) already know.

The problem of denial is relevant for the examination of forgiveness in this context, since, and according to Scott, the healing of bonds implicated by forgiveness demands the

compelling acknowledgement of the offender's nature (196). If none of the Tyrones wants to assume that their nature has been corrupted victim of the circumstances, then they will not achieve the attaining of forgiveness. Actually, that is what happens along the play with the constant use and abuse of apologizing instances. Those manifestations are not true, and following Novitz's nomenclature, all those attempts of apologizing are mere instances of asking pardon. Whenever the characters try to amend what they have previously said, they fail in doing so, because in order to forgive somebody or to ask for forgiveness they should eradicate any negative feelings they hold. They are not exposed to the same pain that Lear and Gloucester have to suffer before asking for redemption and forgiveness. There is no storm or torture between the spoken offence and the attempt to remedy it.

These circumstances lead the Tyrones to grow weary of what is going on in their lives, whilst Lear and Gloucester do not have time to become weary of reality. In fact they are supposed to painstakingly discover that they made a mistake when reading and hearing to fake language. They become gradually aware of the deceitfulness of their offspring. The Tyrones, instead, are aware of each other's flaw, and they have always been. The only member of the family that is finding out secrets is Edmund, but that is due to the fact that, to some extent, he (unconsciously) displays a redeeming faculty among his relatives.

Forgiveness, thence, is attained not only by means of language (as it could be expected), but also through deliberate action, even if the forgiven does not notice the fact that the forgiver has already forgotten any resentment and desire for inflicting vengeance or for punishing the offender. Forgiveness is an expression of love, and love is not necessarily and solely conveyed by means of words, a fact that renders Cordelia as the clearest example. However, both action and language are complementary forces that play an important role on the attainment of forgiveness. Language motivates an action, while action is evinced through language.

On the other hand, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, apologizing presents itself as an important part of the structure of the whole play. Its role is central for creating a sense of rhythm proper of the sea waves. Stephen Black has pointed out that O'Neill had a tendency for adding some kind of musicality in the composition of his plays, which in *Long Day's Journey* can be seen through the changing interaction between the characters (59-60). In rhythmical terms, characters interaction and, hence, instances of asking pardon

(but not forgiveness) contribute to the structure of the play. The characters are constantly having arguments about Mary Tyrone's addiction to morphine, James Tyrone's stinginess, Jamie's alcoholism and Edmund's consumption; and as the arguments grow bitter, pardoning takes place as an anticlimactic element, interrupting the normal flow of the tension between parents and sons, or husband and wife. Apologizing is conveyed through a pose in the use of language, because its enunciation does not reflect the real disposition of the characters for forgetting the other's faults, thus being mere instances for asking pardon. However, they try to heal the familiar bonds between them.

Worth noticing, since the characters have not eradicated those poignant negative feelings, they are unable to ask for forgiveness or to forgive the other members of the group. Instead, pardoning is as much as they can attain at this moment and, indeed, it is a swallow experience that lacks all the implications of forgiveness. Pardoning does not lead to redemption, but it serves as a mere convention, necessary to keep the pace of a familiar conversation in a context in which characters cannot hide their own nature and cannot help asking for pardon.

JAMIE: Don't start jumping on my throat! God, Papa, this ought to be one thing we can talk over frankly without battle.

TYRONE: I'm sorry, Jamie. (*Tensely*) But go on and tell me-

(O'Neill Act 1, 37)

The action of apologizing is closely related to the tone of the conversation between the characters. So far, Jamie and Tyrone have been talking about Mary's suspicious behavior, until Tyrone gets upset as a response to Jamie's suggestion that Mary "seems perfectly all right" in the morning (O'Neill Act 1, 37). This comment remarks the fact that Mary is not well enough to avoid consuming morphine, and that the illusion of rehabilitation is only that, an illusion. This upsets Tyrone, not only because it is a topic he wishes to avoid, but because it reveals Mary's neurotic nature, which is something Tyrone would have liked to ignore. However her behavior and his son's suspicions make it difficult for him not to think or talk about the subject. He reacts immediately after Jamie's suggestion. Jamie, on the other hand, tries to calm his father down. Tyrone notices his reaction and apologizes, although he remains tense even when he makes an effort to show another disposition. It is impossible for us to talk about forgiveness having a considerable

role up to this point in the play. In spite of this, the reaction and words of the characters show us a little bit of their own natures and what the rest of the characters in the play are going to be forgiving as the plot advances. Instead, what is being presented at this point, are apologetic instances that create the illusion of forgiving, as they are only part of a convention.

Despite the contribution of apologetic instances to the artistic design of the play's structure, these instances do not help the characters to get rid of their remorse and rancor. Indeed, pardoning only reflects the sense of denial that permeates this dramatic work. Apologizing is pointless if it does not lead the Tyrones to the attainment of restoration, an experience that is compulsory as it plays a crucial role on the recovering of filial bonds. What they really need to do is to speak their minds out, to reveal their inner turmoil provoked by the things that have helped them to grow as they have done, to become what they are and to get where they are now. In synthesis, they should have paid attention to Edgar's final remark.

The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.
(Shakespeare Act 5, Sc 3, 261)

Edgar's statement at the end of *King Lear* is the moral that renders overt the complex relationship between language and feelings in the play. This declaration makes the readers and spectators recall Cordelia's statement about the weight of her love in contrast to the power of her words, thus creating a complete unity enclosing the meaning of the text. "Speak what you feel not what we ought to say" (Shakespeare, Act V, Sc. Iii, 261) is a strong verse that conveys the neat relationship between words and what remains in our heart. Goneril, Regan and Edmund can distort language and intentions in order to accomplish their goals, since they know that Gloucester and Lear are so blind to observe their true intentions. However, Edgar's statement is in tension with the limitations of language as a means of expressing feelings. In the end, both readers and spectators are witnessing a series of tragic deaths that prompt from the characters' incapability of understanding that aspect of love. The play is pregnant with death not only because Lear failed in acknowledging that love is an experience that cannot be conveyed successfully

and entirely through language, but also because Cordelia failed in manipulating words to show affection. In other words, her flaw is failing at speaking out what she feels.

Even though James Tyrone thinks himself capable of playing any Shakespearean character, he also fails in observing this fact. He should know it by heart as he knows “how sharper than a serpent’s tooth is to have a thankless child” (Shakespeare Act 1, Sc 4, 61). His family also ignores that love depends on actions as well as on enunciation. If they had known this, they would have not been apologizing every time they offended another member, because there would not be any offence at all. Forgiveness as an expression of love is not manifested solely through discourse, but it also requires action, something that Cordelia and Edgar know very well.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to state that the Tyrone’s were completely unfamiliar with what love and forgiveness are. As Lear, they are aware of the forgetting and redeeming shades of forgiveness.

KING LEAR:

You must bear with me:

Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and
foolish

(Shakespeare Act 4, Sc 7, 223)

MARY:

Her bitterness receding into a resigned helplessness.

I’m not blaming you, dear. How can you help it? How
can any one of us forget?

Strangely.

That’s what makes it so hard – for all of us. We can’t
forget.

(O’Neill Act 1, 48)

MARY: James! You mustn’t remember! You mustn’t
humiliate me so!

(O’Neill Act 2, Sc 2, 86)

The quotes above refer to the forgetfulness of forgiveness. In the case of Lear, his rationale to ask Cordelia to forget the damage he has inflicted on her is his age. The king has reached a senile state that prevents him from thinking logically. Mary, although she

does not find refuge under the age argumentation, is also in a critical state of mind in which she cannot control her own thoughts. Her pleading for forgetfulness relies on a deeper cause. The suspicions around her and her own addiction help her growing paranoid, and to some extent, this leads her to develop a fragmentation of her own subjectivity. Mary dwells between the domain of the loving mother and the resentful victim of guilt. She unconsciously asks Tyrone to forget because remembering her flaw is poignant, and by forgetting her husband will be some steps closer to forgiving her fault. As Tyrone has not forgiven her at all, every word and every suspicion about her addiction harms her through humiliation. Degradation is a shared experience between Lear and Mary as a process both of them have undergone throughout their lives. On the one hand, Lear has lost his dignity as a king, as a man and as a father. On the other hand, Mary is unable to find her longed innocence, which has been subverted by her own flaw and by her fallibility when becoming a mother and a wife. Thence, their objects of affection embody humiliation because they are able to recognize the deplorable state that Lear and Mary have reached, even when their intentions for getting closer are related to the healing of bonds.

Lear and Mary's shames demand the eradication of negative feelings. Suspicion is a negative attitude towards Mary, and as such, it lingers as a painful punishment. The male members of the family distrust her and she is aware of that, and the more they suspect, the more she feels compelled to suffer a relapse. In other words, rather than asking them to forget her addiction as if it has never occurred, she is pleading for the abandonment of such negative feelings so as to recover lost confidence. In this sense both plays involve the interplay between complex principles and feelings. Furthermore, negative feelings and the unwillingness to forget and forgive each other's fault also hinders the attainment of another relieving experience: redemption.

Characters such as Mary, Tyrone, Gloucester and Lear are not only longing for having the proper instance to be forgiven, but also they are looking forward redemption. What all of these characters have in common is that they are unconsciously compelled to heal the bond of love with their offspring. They need atonement to repair their relationship with themselves, with the world order, and with the divine forces that affects them. Cordelia, Edgar and Edmund Tyrone are redeeming forces that, besides acting as forgivers, must hear and observe the suffering of their parents in order to relieve them of their pain.

Empathy must be regarded as a main constituent of their character, because it reflects the social aspect of Man, which is strongly expressed in the experience of solidarity and empathy. Therefore, they become the materialization of the divine principles entailed in the experience of redemption.

Gloucester's way to forgiveness starts after he gets his eyes plucked off. Put on his way to Dover, apparently with no other motivation than committing suicide, he laments himself and Edgar's banishment, thus showing repentance, the main condition in order to attain forgiveness.

O! dear son Edgar,
The food of thy father's wrath;
Might I but live to see thee I my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again.

(Shakespeare Act 4, Sc 1, 173)

Since Gloucester is getting closer to what he believes his proper end, he is more aware of his fault, and without having the chance of listening to Edgar or without letting him prove his innocence, he is willing to ask his legitimate (and true) son for forgiveness. At this stage of development, Edgar's forgiveness represents the light that Gloucester is unable to find. Being by the side of his legitimate son will supply him with the eyes that have been violently plucked off. Gloucester's statement reveals the restoring nature of his son, as Edgar will revert the painful extirpation of the eyes, even when the main consequence of healing is Gloucester sudden death

The formal action of forgiving takes place before the duel, when both forgiver and forgiven recognize each other. However, Edgar expiates his father's fault when he sees him cruelly blinded, because he sympathizes with him motivated by the social nature of atonement, i.e. solidarity. His father's aspect provokes Edgar the feeling of pity, thus he feels the impulse for being by his side, the impulse for assuming his duties as a good son. While Edgar pities his father's sorrow, he is forgetting any kind of rancor and is willing to assist him, and of course to save him from committing suicide at the cliff in Dover. His own suffering passes to the background, while his father's is in the spotlight and it becomes his own suffering too.

O gods, who is 't can say "I am at the worst"?
I am worse than e'er I was.

(Shakespeare Act 4, Sc 1, 173)

Nevertheless, it is inconsistent enough to notice that the consummation of forgiveness between father and son occurs out of the stage, whose account is given by Edgar after defeating Edmund. The contradiction relies on the fact that what readers and spectators alike expect to read and see in the play is the very moment in which Gloucester finally repairs the bonds with his son. Instead, what Shakespeare offers us is a hidden reconciliation as an artistic device that, in the end, quenches the audience/reader's desires for harmony through Edgar's account. This ellipsis becomes controversial as the formal use of language for the reconciliation between father and son does not actually take place in front of the witnesses of the whole tragedy, thus Kent turns out to be the only trustworthy witness of the healing. This narration contradicts the events taking place at the beginning of the play. While both reader and spectator witness Lear's rage provoked by Cordelia's truthfulness, they cannot gaze at Gloucester and Edgar reconciliation.

When Edgar provides an account of this moment, both readers and spectators must trust his words, and they do so because they have also gone through his father's suffering and his own. What is also worth noticing is that, up to this point in the play, Gloucester's death is the only one that does not involve physical violence. He dies due to a relieving force that provokes a tension between joy and pain. The impact of Edgar's kindness in Gloucester is such that, after noticing that his legitimate son has been as true and loyal to him as he has never thought of, relieves him from his pain and allows his "flawed heart" to "burst smilingly" (Shakespeare, Act 5, Sc 3, 251). Edgar's account on Gloucester's death finds echo in Mary Tyrone, and both characters experience redemption as a feeling that places them at both "extremes of passion", that is, "between joy and grief" (Shakespeare, Act 5, Sc 3, 251).

The second instance of forgiveness starts with Cordelia's arrival in England. The first action she resolves herself to take is to send a search group to find the king. They are all equipped for the rescue of Lear, and once they exit, Cordelia adds:

What can man's wisdom
In the restoring his bereavèd sense?
He that helps him take all my outward worth
(Shakespeare, Act 4, Sc 5, 191)

Her statement contributes to her making up as a force of good and as a redeeming agent. The wisdom of man, i.e. the institution of logocentrism, cannot relieve Lear's madness and cannot redeem England. Instead, Cordelia's statement, later on in this scene, evinces the importance of nature in the healing of the king's state of mind.

All blest secrets,
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
Spring with my tears. Be aidant and mediate
In the good man's distress. Seek, seek for him,
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.

(Shakespeare, Act 4, Sc 5, 191)

The inherent relationship between Cordelia and the forces of nature is fundamental for the aesthetic value of this character. The readers and the audiences alike feel sympathy for this character not only because she is a good daughter, but also because she represents the goodness of nature and its impact on human relationships. She cannot adopt the manners of politic conventions, use the language correctly and destroy filial bond for her own sake. Indeed, what she does is relieving her father from the rage brought about by the incompatibility between love and politics.

Cordelia is the promise of forgiveness, hence, of the restoration of a broken bond and of a lost dignity for Lear. He does not care if he is taken as a prisoner, as long as he can make up for the time lost with his dearest daughter:

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage.
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask for forgiveness.

(Shakespeare, Act 5, Sc 3, 235)

It seems that Lear has lost his faculty for providing blessing, but it is in some degree related to Cordelia's capability to forgive. Furthermore, it can be suggested that he assumes that he is not the one to bless Cordelia, and that it should be the other way around, because Cordelia is already blessed. In other words, Lear is yielding to Cordelia's apparent disposition to "forget, and forgive" (Shakespeare, Act 4, Sc 7, 223) and to her authority. In fact, he thinks Cordelia has enough reasons to kill him since her sisters did not have any reason to torture him, while actually she was the offended party. The image of birds singing in the cage conveys all the happiness that Cordelia's return means for Lear, who despite his being prevented from any form of freedom is happy enough just with his daughter's

presence. It is as if Cordelia transmits relief and happiness just by the mere action of breathing or only through her own existence (“Restoration hang/ thy medicine on my lips (Act 4, Sc 7, 219). Furthermore, there are few, but not less relevant, accounts on her character that emphasize her role as a redeeming force of nature. One of these instances takes place when Kent is talking to a gentleman before Cordelia’s reunion with her father, and this gentleman states:

A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king. Thou hast one daughter,
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.

(Shakespeare Act 4, Sc 6, 209)

These lines find echo in Cordelia when she wants to relieve his father by kissing him in a previously quoted passage. She might be, to some extent, aware of her expiating condition and that would be the main reason why she decides to return. That is why readers and spectators alike might feel moved at the moment of her death, because it would mean the loss of hope in a world that has reached a chaotic state¹. Edmund Tyrone, in contrast, ignores his own responsibility as the character that redeems his parents. His whole constitution is constantly described as the one of a sick, neurotic, weak man. While Cordelia is well spoken of, Edmund has to endure the constant attacks to his “morbidity” and his readiness to follow his brother’s steps into corruption. Yet, it is necessary to pay close attention to his background and the way his family has coped with their own reality.

Mary: (*With a strange derisive smile*) You’re welcome
to come up and watch me if you’re so suspicious
Tyrone: As if that could do any good! You’d only
postpone it. And I’m not your jailor. This isn’t a prison.
Mary: No. I know you can’t help thinking it’s a home
(*She adds quickly with a detached contrition*) I’m sorry,
dear. I don’t mean to be bitter. It’s not your fault.

(*Long Day’s, Act 2, Sc 2, 75*)

In this excerpt, we can notice Mary’s attitude towards her husband. Along the play, there are many instances in which characters imply that Mary’s behavior is absolutely due to the drugs she has been consuming, that she is poisoned and that it is not the real Mary who is talking. In fact, even though she does not recognize her fault, she seems to know

¹ The problem of redemption will be explored in depth in the second chapter of the analysis section, due to its relevance for the examination of Christian readings of the plays. Special attention will be paid to the roles of Cordelia as a redeemer and to Mary’s longing for Virgin Mary’s redemption.

what is wrong about her countenance. She is constantly reproaching Tyrone for failing in giving her a proper house, in which they could create a home to raise their children in a normal context. She also criticizes her husband because, due to his career, she was compelled to stay in hotels and traveling, and everything that had consequences in the current behavior of their children. She also criticizes Tyrone's stinginess, a feature of his own nature, something he is not willing to change, as well as Mary cannot avoid taking morphine. Under this view, whatever a character complains about, it is part of the true nature of the other characters. In that sense, their faults cannot be considered as sin, but as vices or weaknesses that they have been dragging all along their lives. Then, if forgiveness is only provided whenever somebody shows repentance, or only if the fault contradicts the true nature of the offender (which implies that the offender will never commit the fault again), its conceptualization needs to be reformulated according to what late modernity has provoked in the self.

The Tyrone have been constantly pardoning each other's weaknesses and vices, nevertheless they are tired of the whole situation. What is seen in the play could perfectly be one day in their lives which has been repeated again and again during the whole summer. Maybe they wake up every morning forgetting what has happened last night, but as the day progresses, and as Mary goes back in her memories, the Tyrone become unable to contain their weariness. They are weary of what makes them fallible, of being constantly accused because of their defects. They are tired of forgiving, but they still doing that as there is no other way to express they love each other. They never forget that forgiveness is an act of love.

O'Neill's portrayal of the Tyrones, regardless of the autobiographical, is the attempt to provide a picture of the common man. Modern American Drama is concerned with the daily struggle of the ordinary man (of the modern hero) which does not face the forces of fate and destiny, as the classic hero, who emerges from the elite, does. In fact, what the modern hero faces is the struggle of living in a world in which the bounds between the mass and individuality are blurred. As de Certeau posits, the modern man:

Está acorralado en la suerte de la mayoría. Llamado *Todos* (un nombre que traiciona la ausencia de nombre), este antihéroe es pues también *Nadie*, *Nemo*, igual que el *Everyman* inglés se vuelve *Nobody*, o el *Jedermann* alemán en *Niemand*.

(De Certeau 7)

This tension between the massive and the individual aspects of the ordinary man offers discourse the possibility for representing him as the principle for totalization and accreditation of truths (De Certeau 8). Thus, O'Neill provides the audiences and readers not only the particularities of a flawed family, but also the depiction of the struggle of every single man with their own vices and the seeking of their innocence.

In fact, innocence is what Mary misses, but along this she is also looking for a renewal experience. She feels that she has lost something she does not know what it is. Mary is longing for redemption. She is constantly excusing herself; she is trying to forget Eugene's death, Edmund's weakness, Jamie's jealousy, Tyrone's neglect, and her own faults. She longs to go back to her school days, in which she was absolutely happy, free from any sort of responsibility as a wife and as a mother. She is longing for Virgin Mary's forgiveness.

But some day, dear, I will find it again – some day when you're all well, and I see you healthy and happy and successful, and I don't have to feel guilty any more – some day when the Blessed Virgin Mary forgives me and gives me back the faith in Her love and pity I used to have in my convent days, and I can pray to Her again... I will hear myself scream in agony, and at the same time I will laugh because I will be so sure of myself.

(*Long Day's*, Act 2, Sc 2, 93-4)

Her screaming in agony and laughing at the same time places her at both extremes of pleasure, as Gloucester is according to Edgar account on his death. From this, redemption remains an experience that is immeasurable. It cannot be contained in the middle of a continuum traced between joy and pain. Redemption supersedes both experiences, and thus the heart cannot contain its effect. That is why what follows the forgiveness of sins is the cleansing brought about by the hands of Death. Furthermore, it might be suggested that Mary wants to die in order to redeem her faults. It seems that she is not looking forward the day she dies, but she is longing for something that is impossible to achieve. She is longing for her innocence; the one she thinks has been lost when she got married.

Forgiveness emerges now not only as an experience of forgetting and forgiving somebody's faults, but also, the complementary relationship between actions and the use of language has been exposed in terms of forgiveness. Also, this can lead to redemption in the death of the figure of the forgiven, not as a form of vengeance or punishment for the one who committed the fault, but as a form of eradicating evil and expiating sins.

Nevertheless, another aspect of forgiveness is concerned with the regenerating force that some characters embody in each play. On the one hand, Edgar's ascent is sustained not only because he is the godson of the former and diseased king. Edgar ascends to the throne because he represents the cleansing of the current chaotic state in England. This cleansing has to be taken into account from the religious nature of this character as well as from his own suffering along the tragedy. On the other hand, O'Neill's Edmund embodies in himself the promise of an upcoming restoration of the family order. Although the cleansing of the Tyrones is not attained within the frame of the dramatic play, the return to a primitive state is implied in the healing of Edmund's consumption.

Shakespeare was highly aware of the importance of names when creating characters, and in *King Lear* this consciousness is clearly manifested. Etymologically speaking, Edgar means prosperity spear (Ethymonline.com) thus his name conditions his actions and his mission along the play. As a defender of prosperity, he is supposed to survive and to overcome the catastrophe that has taken place in England, and to restore the order so as to eradicate chaos. He fights his brother, not because of vengeance, but because his brother embodies the corruption that was spreading among English nobles and members of the royal family. Edgar is compelled to defeat his brother as a way of restoring prosperity.

Notwithstanding, forgiveness in terms of restoration implies structural relevance to the play, rather than being another aspect of the relationship between the characters in *King Lear*. Restoration involves the return to a state of prosperity previous to the dramatic space and time of the play, and to some extent, Edgar's ascent follows the resolution of the play. The eradication of chaos implies a sense of hopefulness after seeing the breaking of filial bonds, torture, punishment, massacre, wars and dead. Some emphasis must be put on the characterization of hope, not as a modern psychological drive inherent to the characters, but as an emotional need set up in the mind of both readers and audiences. Furthermore,

seen from the perspective of hopefulness, restoration plays a dramatic as well as a structural role, in the way that it motivates characters to accomplish the establishment of justice by the implementation of certain resources such as punishment and forgiveness. This can be seen in Edgar, since he bears a double value: he is Edmund's punisher as well as Gloucester's redeemer.

Rather than paralleling and mirroring Lear's plot as a form of universalizing the embedded moral of this play, Gloucester's plot seems to be a fine device to prepare readers and spectators for the final restoration in the figure of the duke's flawed son. This is to some extent similar to what occurs in *Hamlet* with Fortimbras, which is the embodiment of restoration in Elsinore's tragedy. However, instead of just mentioning his name along the play and appearing at the end of the play as a sort of *deus ex machina*, Edgar's suffering is experienced by everyone who reads or watches the play. Thus, Edgar's ascent is not seen *ex nihilo*, but as a reward for being faithful and true to his own values and principles. Furthermore, his ascent to the throne cannot be seen as farfetched, because Edgar is a parallel of Cordelia in terms of suffering and nature, thus on his becoming king, he is also assuming the power and responsibility that previously belonged to Cordelia. In other words, Edgar is not usurping the crown or merely starting a new line of succession, but he is, in spirit, keeping on with what Cordelia would have done had she lived enough to rule.

When all the surviving characters witness Lear's death, Albany rushes to state:

Bear them from hence. Our present business
Is general woe. (*To Edgar and Kent*) Friends of
my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.
(Shakespeare, Act 5, Sc 3, 261)

The gored state of England is craving for restoration, but Albany seems to acknowledge his inability to rule and to sustain such a kingdom. Kent also avoids this responsibility claiming that he shall depart behind his master. Thus the only surviving character that has the power to restore England is Edgar, even if it implies bearing sadness and pain. Indeed, the current state of the country and the series of events that took place along the play are remarkably gloomy for a heart to bear them, as the several references to hearts breaking in the play seem to evoke (Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I/ Did hate thee or thy father, (Shakespeare, Act 5, Sc 3, 249). Edgar assumes the responsibility of ruling England stating that youth will not be wiser than those who have lived longer, but his

suffering and all that he has witnessed as a wronged son makes him deserve the crown, mainly because he has proved his loyalty and honor as a son.

Nonetheless, restoration has to be regarded as a concept that goes beyond the sphere of the plot and the interaction of characters inside the play. Restoration has to be explored in terms of the structure of the play, and as such, it can require any element of the text to be attained. Thus, Edgar might be seen as such a useful structural element for the author, as his presence in the play comes to tie up loose ends. In that sense, Edgar is a character useful for the accomplishment of the needs of the play, because the tragedy of *King Lear* cannot allow evil to destroy England without providing an instance for redemption and restoration. Again, what the presence of Edgar implies is the fulfillment of the audience/reader's need for justice and harmony when experience this play.

Calderwood distinguishes two features of a character: on the one hand, the character is the source of action; while on the other hand, the character is an instrument for the action of the play (31). Thus, the character "is made by the playwright to choose and act as he does in order to fulfill the needs of the play" (31). In the former case, Edgar is a source of action that is motivated for the necessity of healing the broken bond with his father. That implicit need impulses him to escape and become unrecognizable by means of disguise, keeping his true identity as a secret, helping his blinded father and avoiding his suicide.

As an instrument, though, Edgar advances through this sequence of actions ignoring the end of the path. His actions lead him to forgive his father because these events placed him closer to Gloucester. But if he had not been supposed to be the instrument chosen by the playwright to embody restoration, then Edgar would not have been the one who defeats Edmund, and would not have had the instance to forgive Gloucester. Indeed, Gloucester would have met his death at Dover cliff without redemption.

If Edgar remains as a character and as an instrument at the same time, his functionality as a characters implies that restoration is at the end of a process initiated by a fault. A continuum can be traced between the very fault of the parental figures towards the attainment of both redemption and restoration. This progression contemplates six main stages: 1) the breaking of filial bonds on the side of both fathers, 2) the wronged party starts its way to forgive the offence, either consciously or not, 3) the offended party meets

the offender, which takes place by means of recognition, 4) forgiveness is conveyed by means of language, thus enunciating both forgetfulness and reconciliation of broken bonds, 5) the death of the offender party as a symbol of the liberation of their grieved soul, and finally 6) restoration takes place as the surviving character ascends to the throne, as well as redemption is attained by means of expurgating death. With the purpose of providing a clear picture for the understanding of the continuum proposed above, a more detailed account on some of these aspects remains compulsory.

At the first and second stages of the continuum, what becomes remarkable is the essential role of and interplay between both action and language. Lear and Gloucester break the bonds with their respective offspring by either an unfortunate use of language or the manipulation of it, thus triggering a succession of actions. Those actions, which at the same time are conveyed through language, can take the form of banishment or chasing, obliging Edgar and Cordelia to hide in order to survive or to go away.

Once they become outcasts, Cordelia and Edgar start taking action towards an instance for forgiveness: the former mobilizes the French army and the few allies of her father in England; the latter, in an attempt for surviving in the woods as Poor Tom, unconsciously gets closer to his father, as if he was constantly being drawn to the fatherly figure of Gloucester. This incapability to avoid his father's presence is another evidence of the function of Edgar as an instrument that satisfies the needs of the playwright and, of course of the audiences/readers, as that is the only way the character finds instances for assuring his future condition of restoring king. The audiences and readers get to know Edgar benevolence and unique empathy, thus being able to trust in his power to bring peace and justice to England.

The third and fourth stages are strongly connected to the experiences of recognition and forgetfulness. The former implies the assumption of errors on the side of the offenders, as well as the recognition between Lear and Gloucester as blinded men that have failed in observing what was happening around them. The latter implies the eradication of any form of resentment on the side of the offended ones, though such obliteration of rancor actually does not take place, because neither Cordelia nor Edgar shows such feelings towards each of their respective father. On the contrary, the only feeling they express is that of empathy and caring.

The fifth stage of the continuum exposes not only the relationship between language and action as the previous stages clearly show, but also it renders overt the implication of death in the connected process of redemption. The excitement induced in the experience of forgiveness leads to death, at least in Gloucester's case, since forgiveness intensifies the tension between joy and grief. In the case of Lear, Cordelia's return and forgiveness leads him to resignation and the craving for recovering time. However, under the circumstances of this tragedy, Lear's forgiveness is not attained until Cordelia dies in his arms, also tearing his heart between joy and grief

Finally, death leads to both experiences: redemption and restoration. These two experiences are faces of the same token, and their interaction goes beyond the limitations of filial love, reaching the whole social system in which both families are embedded. It involves the reconciliation of the characters with their own self, with the world around them, and with the divine forces that rule their lives. Lear and Gloucester need their children to bear their own punishment, and when Edgar and Cordelia forgive them, they also put an end to their inner turmoil as negligent fathers. Furthermore, they can feel reconciled with the world order, regardless the chaos ruling over England, inasmuch as they grow conscious about the sources of the prevailing evil that has befallen over each of the parental figures. Finally, death leads both Lear and Gloucester to succumb to the will of the divine forces with the promise of peace and freedom from any kind of worldly form of punishment.

On the other hand, restoration is an outcome of the process of forgiveness since it means the eradication of evil and negative feelings not only in the heart of the flawed parties, but the eradication of whatever has led the kingdom to its current condition. Ambition, blindness, pride, envy and lust have been violently eliminated from the royal family and its circumference. Moreover, restoration implies the healing of social and political bonds that have been broken due to the distribution of lands in the first scene of the play. All that was once divided is now reunited through Edgar's ascent. The division of the kingdom triggered disaster, suffering and death, while the spear of prosperity implies the hope for the healing through reintegration, and hence, the hope for a new beginning.

Up to this point in this analysis, restoration has been reviewed in the context of Shakespeare's play. Due to this analysis the conception of forgiveness prompted as a

process or continuum which seems pertinent according to the succession of events in the plot of *King Lear*. However, this conceptualization seems to be problematic when analyzing O'Neill's play, mainly because of the presence of multiple offenses, the flawed nature of the characters and the constant allusions to the past. It seems that there is no space for a linear interpretation of forgiveness, since each character's flaw is in tension with each of the remainder characters. Accordingly, forgiveness has to be tackled as a prism, in which each character is placed at its corners, but one of them, i.e. Edmund, is placed at its apex.

The reason behind the characterization of forgiveness as a prism relies on the fact that Mary, James and Jamie are placed at each corner at the bottom of this shape, because they are the characters that interchange alliances through the play and the ones that dwell more in their pasts. On the other hand, Edmund remains at the top of the prism, because the rest of the characters either resort to or justify themselves to him. In that perspective, Edmund is their redeemer and is the one who, at the end of the play, can better understand the past of each member of the family without taking sides, expiating them to some extent. Finally, the sides of this shape are the bonds that need to be restored between them.

Redemption is attained in this play not through the experience of death as in "King Lear", but for the eradication of negative feelings articulated through the judgment each of the Tyrones do about their own natures. However, this remark is also problematic because, while this is true for James and Jamie, Mary seems to look for redemption in the figure of the Virgin and in her past, besides the fact that she does not seem to show herself responsible of her addiction. However, her concern about Edmund's health places her at the bottom of the prism because of her inner personality struggle. When poisoned, as the rest of the Tyrones use to refer to her, she wants to undo everything, therefore, the redeeming force she is looking for remains in the past. When conscious, she is devoted to her young son, thus the source for her expiation must come from Edmund.

Jamie also provides insight on this account. At the final act, when he reveals Edmund that he loves him as well as he hates him, he does not only warn his brother, but states:

That's all. Feel better now. Gone to confession. Know you absolve me, don't you, Kid? You understand. You're a damned fine kid. Ought to be. I made you. So

go and get well. Don't die on me. You're all I've got left. God bless you, Kid.

(O'Neill Act 4, 167)

Jamie is aware of the importance of telling Edmund what he has been hiding in his heart all his life. He is aware of the relief he will obtain only by confessing Edmund his real intentions, and he is aware of that because he knows his younger brother is closer than himself to death, even though he refers to himself as having a dead part. Edmund's consumption places him in a position from which he can alleviate his family from its burden by just listening to what the others have to say.

On the other hand, restoration also relies on the figure of Edmund, given that he not only heals the bonds among the members of the family, but also because there is hope in his being sent to a sanatorium. The problem of the feasibility of restoration emerges if the fact that Mary has recently come back from a sanatorium is also taken into account. Her rehabilitation has not been successful and that helps the characters to grow reluctant about the sanatorium. In other words, the Tyrones tried to refurbish their circumstances fruitlessly in the past, but it seems to be a new opportunity for Edmund.

Moreover, the understanding of redemption at the stage of development of the dramatic expression produced at this period of modernity is not necessarily subjected to the guidelines proposed by conventional dramatic demand. Rather, it is reformulated in terms of manifestation as it finds new ways for accomplishing significance. These new perspectives on the problem of redemption arises from the characteristic deviation that distinguishes Modern American Drama from previous conventions, especially when taking into account the impact of the development of expressionistic techniques that emphasizes the role of subjectivity in the perception of characters. In this play, though, redemption is definitely an issue that regards subjectivities within the "foggy" feature of the atmosphere that surrounds the Tyrones. Emphasis should be put on the fact that this family is immersed within a limited circumference, bounded by the fog that alienates them from the rest of the world².

Once again, Jamie seems to be aware of the restoring power of Edmund too. He is aware of the fact that if Edmund manages to come back in good health from the

² This point will be expanded as it is strongly related to the ambiguous nature of Mary's personality and sheds light on her relationship with the image of the Virgin.

sanatorium, Mary will no longer be worried about his health, thus relieving her. But one side of him longs for the opposite:

[...] The dead part of me hopes you won't get well.
Maybe he's even glad the game has got Mama again!
He wants company, he doesn't want to be the only
corpse around the house!

(O'Neill Act 4, 166)

Jamie's disposition to wish Edmund's death finds support on the idea of being dead in life. It not only involves evil and hatred. It also implies a miserable lifestyle that he decided to adopt because of jealousy. Moreover, he is acknowledging the fact that, if Edmund dies, Mary will be condemned to live as a corpse. Death will tear her heart apart and she will be compelled to find refuge in morphine until the end of her life. Not only that, but Jamie will be contempt because he thinks that is the only way of regaining his mother affection and caring.

As well as Edgar's name, Edmund's is related to prosperity. His name etymologically speaking means hand of prosperity (Etymonline.com), and as such he is the force which will bring that longed well-being to his family. That is the reason why all the characters resort to him and that is also the reason why he is positioned at the top of the prism. He cannot be in any other position, because the Tyrones depend on him to prosper and to survive. If he dies, then, there will not be any use in fighting and accusing each other because of their faults. They will become mere dwelling corpses trapped in the fog.

Thus Edgar and Edmund become important pieces of a puzzle where the pieces struggle to attain a certain form of salvation, not from a religious perspective, but in terms of order and filial relationships. While Edgar assumes his mission as a restoring force at the end of his play, Edmund Tyrone is the main concern of the whole family throughout the play because restoration heavily depends on his ability to overcome consumption. In that sense, *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a play about overcoming the illness, the burden and the weariness of modernity, while *King Lear* is about being loyal and true to one's own feelings.

In this chapter, the experience of forgiveness have been explored in terms of the interaction between the characters along the plot and in structural terms, thus providing an

account on two aspects pertinent for the conceptualization of this experience: redemption and restoration. The latter is strongly associated to the use of the characters as instruments for the attainment of the cleansing of a chaotic state of affairs, in order to return to a previous stage in which such chaos had not taken place. Redemption, though, is more related to the experience of forgiveness not only by means of definition, but also because it implies a principle that directly refers to the Christian value of forgiveness. Hence, redemption will provide insight on the examination of Christian interpretations, an issue which will be explored in depth in the following chapter.

Modern Crosses

Stanley Cavell in his essay *The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of King Lear* posits the following:

Is this a Christian play? The question is very equivocal. When it is answered affirmatively, Cordelia is viewed as Christ figure whose love redeems nature and transfigures Lear. So far as this is intelligible to me, I find it false both to the experience of the play and to the fact that it is a play.

(Cavell 246)

The question about the nature of the play may be equivocal if it attempts to classify it as a Christian play. In fact, it seems that the question is badly formulated, because nobody can assure the religious nature of a play that emerged in a time in which secularization was at its peak. Even if the purpose of the question is to prove the religion that the playwright may have adopted in his life, this question is ambiguous. Asking this kind of questions implies that *King Lear* is a play defined in terms of white and black, while there are, indeed, shades of grey that should be taken into account so as to enrich the experience of reading and watching this play. This section, therefore, does not intend to determine whether this tragedy grows from a Christian ethos, but rather to explore whether forgiveness and redemption may prompt a possible Christian interpretation on the side of the readers and spectators. In addition, since both experiences are present in O'Neill's play, they will also be explored in order to enrich the interpretation of *Long Day's Journey into Night* under a Christian perspective, without attempting to classify it as a Christian play.

As Cavell well explains if the answer we give to his question is affirmative, then Cordelia must be seen as the redeeming agency in the play, and as such, her presence may be a parallel of Jesus. Following that train of thought, Cavell states that "If Cordelia exemplifies Christ, it is at the moment of crucifixion, not resurrection" (246).

On this subject, Betty Kantor Stuart suggests that "the Christian hints that are not developed emphasize that *King Lear* is a play about this world, not the next and that whatever a character learns comes from a need to understand this life, not to be saved from the punishment in the next" (178). The problem with this statement is that it does not take into account the role of Cordelia as she exonerates her father, thus setting him free from all

forms of punishment that may take place in the afterlife. It also fails in acknowledging the eradication of evil and the subsequent promise of restoration embodied by Edgar.

Perhaps, the problem of the Christian readings finds support beyond the significance of Cordelia in terms of the Cross. Perhaps, authors such as Cavell and Stuart have disregarded the importance of forgiveness and its redeeming effect as this concept provide the recipients with the needed guidelines to support a Christian reading of the play. The viewpoint held by such authors is limited to the aspects of the revelation of the afterlife, while in fact the values that give shape to the interaction between the characters are the ones that offer a Christian perspective. That is why it is important to pay close attention to the experience of forgiveness and redemption, since both values are defined in terms of Christian teachings so as to determine our behavior towards our equals.

As it has been previously exposed, atonement is a spiritual fact and principle that proceeds from God (Martin 382). Even so, Cordelia “redeems nature” (Shakespeare Act 4, sc 6, 209), and in this sense, Cavell is right when he states that “she shows nature not to be the cause of evil” (246-7). This view on redemption does not take into account the role of forgiveness in the achievement of that experience, and thus it remains misleading, because indeed, Cordelia does redeem her father by creating an instance for his death, as Edgar does for his father. Redemption, in Western tradition, is a Christian value, and if it prompts from forgiveness (or at least it is facilitated by it), then the reader or spectator may come up with an interpretation based on those values.

Redemption and the problem of forgiveness must be explored in terms of what Iser proposed to be the repertoire that installs the guidelines that allow the reader to get a grasp of the deficiencies that have been neutralized during the prevailing system of thought during Elizabethan England. Perhaps the term “deficiency” is too categorical when it comes to Christian values as redemption and forgiveness, so that is why looking another conceptualization is compulsory. Rather than a deficiency of the secularized system of thought that started to rule in England at the beginning of modernity, the Christian repertoire present in *King Lear* reveals the presence of an underlying discourse that can be only decoded by the readers/spectators within the framework of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

As well as in this Shakespearean tragedy, the presence of a Christian repertoire in O'Neill's plays is highly illuminating when referring to the convergence of discourses present along this tragedy. On the one hand, the recipient (either the audience or the reader) will face Western tradition represented by the collection of canonical works arranged in the big bookcase. Also, Tyrone's discourse is another means by which tradition finds an outlet, thus echoing in the mind of those able to recognize the references. On the other hand, the increasing presence of the discourse of modernity is present in the small bookshelf (the one that belongs to Edmund), and finds a space for its enunciation especially at the final act of the tragedy. This presence of both traditional (canonical) and modern (skeptical) repertoires is contrasted and their clash represents, not only a generational gap that seems to upset James Tyrone, but the clash between two different systems of thought that compete for dominance. Both discursive forms are to be understood by those readers "bearer[s] of aesthetic culture" (Jaus 53) in order to optimize the meaning of this play, as reception theory suggests, and also, they should be able to observe the subjacent elements that seem to put into the question the prevalence of a determined world-picture.

The same occurs in *King Lear*, which seems to be a melting pot in which the discourses of Stoicism and Epicureanism meet as opposing and paralleling each other in the figures of Gloucester and Lear. These systems of thought not only reveal the presence of secularized forms of discourse, but also they reflect the presence of a repertoire that takes elements that have been discussed since ancient times and find a space in the play to be compared.

Nevertheless, those colliding forms of discourse are not the only ones that are represented along both plays. If in both dramatic works, the recipient is amused by the presence of forgiveness as a redeeming experience, then, a Christian repertoire can be suggested without seeming odd. Indeed, forgiveness is not the only means that Christianity finds as an outlet to take place in both plays, but also it is interesting to notice the presence of biblical allusions that permeate both tragedies.

In the first place, one of the biblical references that appears in *King Lear* is the one that gathers some of the elements present in the parable of the three servants given talents (Mathew 25:24-30), which can be seen in the abdication scene. This parable tells the story

of an old king, who one day calls three of his servants. He proceeds to distribute talents to each of them: five talents to the first one, two for the second and one for the last of them. The two first servants negotiate and invest their talents, thus doubling them, while the third one, afraid of the power of his master, decides to bury it in the ground. Another day, the king calls his servants again, as they are supposed to report back what they have done with their talents, and give their incomes to him. One after one, each of the servants tells the king the profit they made with the talents, except the third one, which had buried his talent due to his fear. When the king realizes that this servant did not work in order to make a profit out of his gift, he fumes into a rage.

Perhaps the relationship between this biblical passage and the play is rendered farfetched by the moral of this parable. The purpose of this story, though, is to teach Christians about the importance of work in order to double God's blessings and thence enter into the Kingdom of Heavens. However, a suggestion on this account can be done when regarding some structural similarities between both stories. In both of them there is a king distributing something (a talent or the whole kingdom), while there are three recipients that should return their king's kindness (either by profit or by public manifestations of love). Furthermore, the consequence of the negligence by one of the parties takes on the form of anger.

Regardless of the moral behind this parable, the commonalities between both passages suggest that Shakespeare took this fable so as to structure the beginning of the chaos about to befall on England. Lear, as well as the king in the parable, has been distributing "talents" in the form of love and protection to his daughters throughout his life, despite the fact that Cordelia is the one that he loves the best, thus subverting the original idea of the fable in which the last servant is the one that receives just one talent. When he decides to renounce the crown, he calls his daughters and his men so as to render public account on what his offspring has done with his gift. The reward is a piece of the land, as it would refer to the Christian idea of the Kingdom of Heavens in which Catholics are supposed to enter once they die if they have worked hard for it. The notion of working hard in order to obtain a piece of the kingdom in *King Lear* is strongly connected to yielding to courtly conventions in which love is expressed through public demonstrations witnessed by the members of the court, both noble and royal.

The trace of Biblical references as this one may enhance our understanding of, on the one hand, the rise of the conflict, and on the other, the development of a tragic perspective that involves the shaping of a cosmivision associated to it. Firstly, both Cordelia's fear and inability induce Lear to become enraged, as those elements paralyze Cordelia preventing her from taking action (in terms of discourse) when solicited. Secondly, this reference to the Bible presupposes a conception of reality in which our actions and decisions do carry consequences. Therefore, human condition and the inevitability of tragic consequences are mobilized by decision and action; both seen as part of the "embodied human condition" since the instances for making a decision and taking action are bounded by and proceed from a determined gamut of costs.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Goneril and Regan are the ones that master the skills for adulating their father and thus they finally obtain their reward, since they are able to behave as the king demands. In that sense, both characters have invested their talent and have given it back to his father as they are supposed to do. However, Cordelia, true to her feelings fails in proving her faithfulness and love thus disappointing and infuriating Lear. Finally she is punished and condemned to banishment and to remain just with her truth as "[her] dower" (Shakespeare Act 1, Sc 1, 15). In other words, she is deprived of her right to be rewarded and not allowed to obtain a piece of the Kingdom of Heavens in a figurative sense, thus being thrown "into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Like this intertextual reference, there are others along the tragedy that might be illuminating when discussing the presence and role of a Christian repertoire in this play. The parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32), for instance, may shed light on the relationship between Gloucester and his sons, while Moses' Ten plagues (Exodus 10) provide the material for the composition of Lear's curses to Goneril (Shakespeare Act 1, Sc 4, 60-61), as well as God sentence when eradicating Adam and Eve from Eden (Genesis 3:16). All of these passages suggest Shakespeare's degree of knowledge about the scriptures and his artistic skills to reshape them in order to convey the fallibility of Man and the deified nature of kingship. Probably, his purpose was not to teach the audiences of his time about the morals of the Bible. Rather, he transforms such experiences in order to expose the deficiencies of the system of thought that coexisted with its secularized

counterpart, meaning that even when the power of the king proceeds from God, the head of the kingdom cannot even try to play His role.

This repertoire moves James Tyrone, as a reader of Shakespeare and as an inveterate Catholic, to advocate for the theory that suggests Shakespeare's so as to reassure his preference for this playwright.

EDMUND: [*sits down opposite his father—
contemptuously*]

Yes, facts don't mean a thing, do they? What you want
to believe, that's the only truth! [*derisively*]

Shakespeare was an Irish Catholic, for example.

TYRONE: [*stubbornly*] So he was. The proof is in his
plays.

(O'Neill Act 4, 127)

An interesting element in this quotation is that here O'Neill creates a contrast in Edmund's speech between the meaningless of facts and the truthfulness of a set of beliefs. To some extent, this opposition between these two aspects of life emphasizes Edmund's skepticism and Tyrone's stubbornness. For Edmund, reality is shaped by facts, such as those he himself proved about the light bulbs and electricity waste. On the other hand, Tyrone stubbornly ignores those proven facts, thus revealing a dogmatic character, unable to "change the leopard's spots" (O'Neill Act 1, 31). Their argument is crucial for the clash between a dogmatic stance and a skeptic discursive form framed within Modernity.

EDMUND [*Bitingly*] Did you pray for Mama?

TYRONE: I did. I've prayed to God these many years
for her.

EDMUND: Then Nietzsche must be right.

(O'Neill Act 2, Sc 2, 77)

This opposition between faith and skepticism evince the clash of two different perspectives about reality. Tyrone's faith does not fit in Edmund's conception of an in-existent divine force that organizes the world, while for Tyrone, Edmund's skepticism is just another aspect of his morbidity. Mary's addiction lingers as an argument that supports both perspectives. On the one hand it induces Tyrone to keep praying for her rehabilitation, thus leading to hopefulness. On the other hand, this same fact confirms Nietzsche's ideas read by Edmund, thus leading to hopelessness and resignation.

However, James Tyrone not only rejects modern skeptic ideas. He also rejects Jamie's philosophy, because this perception of life, along with Edmund's ideas, threatens his own beliefs.

TYRONE: Shut up both of you! There's little choice between the philosophy you learned from Broadway loafers, and the one Edmund got from his books. They're both rotten to the core. You've both flouted the faith you were born and brought up in –the one true faith of the Catholic Church –and your denial has brought nothing but self-destruction!

(O'Neill Act 2, Sc 2, 77)

James points out his son's detachment from the order of thought held by the whole family. Edmund and Jamie have become detached from tradition, and have gotten a liking of the worldly conceptions of reality. This does not bother Tyrone because they do not believe in God, but because he thinks that the adoption of those forms of discourse have rotten not only his own sons but have infected the whole family. Thus Tyrone presents himself as the protector of Christianity. In addition, he assumes his role as a father in terms of the mission that God had entrusted to fatherly figures as stated by Burton (278). Moreover, it should be asserted that both parents represent the ideas underlying Christianity, while both sons are symbols of the uncertainties brought about by the deficiencies set aside by the modern system of thought.

Mary, for example, is searching for the Virgin forgiveness so as to be redeemed of her faults as a mother. Her way to redemption, though, can only be walked if Mary surrenders to her addiction, thus evincing the contradictory and ambiguous nature of humanity. What occurs in her mind is that the more she consumes morphine, the closer she gets to her imaginary source of redemption. As she is incapable of acknowledging her own flaw, she still tries to immerse into the deep fog since "It hides [her] from the world and the world from [her]" (O'Neill Act 3, 98). The imagery of the fog that permeates O'Neill's dramatic work obtains also a double value, because it allows Mary to become detached from the rest of the people that judge them, as well as it allows them to hide the poisonous monster that grows inside her as she abuses of morphine. Another aspect of the absolute

abstraction that the fog encompasses is that it also allows her to believe that she can hide from the merciful eyes of Mary, the Virgin, when in fact she cannot.

MARY: ... [*Longingly*]
If I could only find the faith I lost, so I could pray again!
[*She pauses –then begins to recite the Hail Mary in a flat, empty tone*]
“Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with Thee; blessed are Thou among women.”
[*Sneeringly*]
You expect the Blessed Virgin Mary to be fooled by a lying dope fiend reciting words! You can’t hide from her!

(O’Neill Act 3, 107)

Her poisoned part is right when asserting the omniscient presence of the Virgin in Mary’s life, and that she will never escape the Virgin vision. What strikes the audience/reader is not merely the fact that Mary is struggling with two different personalities within her own person. Indeed, this duality in her seems to be reinforced by the pious character of those personalities, while the other, though cruel, is more rational in spite of the scope of possibilities allowed for a believer like herself. Although the fog grows thicker and thicker throughout the day, as opposed to what she thinks, it will not provide her a refuge during the hard night that is just about to start, nor will it hide her monstrosity from the Virgin.

Even so, Mary’s need of Virgin Mary’s forgiveness as seen at the end of Act 2 not only exposes her longing for redemption and innocence. Besides that, there seems to be a spiritual link between both figures attained not only by means of names and of the significance of the latter in the memories and needs of the former. Perhaps the fact that O’Neill chose the name of the Virgin to name Mary is not by sheer chance. Probably his decision about the naming of his characters relied on aesthetic needs, as well as it was indispensable for the utilization of a determined repertoire that takes advantage of Christian ideals.

Mary fails in realizing that her insistence in looking for the Virgin’s atonement goes far beyond the mere consequence of her religious education. She fails in seeing a crucial commonality between her and her idol. Both figures have been witnesses of the death of a son without having any chance to avoid such an end. Seen under this light, Mary

is depicted as the fallible double of a divine image, as a flawed version of her object of worship. The link between both entities becomes blurred and darkened by the weaknesses of humanity and the impossibility of carrying out a flawless life. What humanizes Mary, the Virgin, in the end, is what tortures Mary, the mortal, inasmuch as she is not able to bear the consequences of her own faults as a mother.

So far, what is being suggested is that in *King Lear* as in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the recollection of emblematic religious repertoires allows the playwrights to overtly expose the human condition by means of the marked contrast between fallibility and divinity. In other words, instead of emphasizing the divine powers of the king and the holiness of the mother, the authors distort the recipient's notions embedded in Christian tradition about what is right with the purpose of emphasizing humanity's inherent inclination towards sins³. In each play, such emphasis is accomplished to the different devices that belong to the conventions of each one's creative process, i.e. on the one hand, Shakespeare exploits all the possibilities that Elizabethan tragedy provided him in order to broaden the gap between the divine and the human (elements that include the cruel violence on stage, catharsis and the shocking number of deaths); while on the other hand, O'Neill takes advantage of the spectrum of possibilities for artistic choice that the expressionistic technique offers him, such as the excessive tendency for characters to resort to their vices, their personality and psychological traits, and the poetic texture of their dialogues that provides an account on their own subjectivities. In that sense, the fallibility of man relies on the conventions that help the authors to shape each character's subjectivity as a reflection of the deficiencies of the world-picture that structure each author's reality and that had an effect on their creative process.

What has been argued so far serves as a supporting claim for the suggestion that, indeed, Cordelia's character is not thoroughly and completely built upon the image of Christ. However, what both figures have in common is the redeeming nature that their deaths imply for the cleansing of a collective consciousness. While it is absolutely true about Jesus, in the case of Cordelia it presupposes the healing of the consciousness of the

³ Of course, the conceptualization of sin in the context requires the detachment of moral and religious judgments, and should be understood in the light of fallibility.

whole kingdom dependent on the atonement of Lear's sinful behavior. His own atonement implies not only the redemption of the worldly state of affairs, but also the reconciliation with the divine entities that rule over England in the dramatic context of the play, thus providing the reorganization of the cosmic order as a consequence of the achievement of harmony. The ruling forces of fate demands Cordelia death not as a punishment for Lear's misbehavior, but as the first piece to fall in a domino effect whose end is to bring down and eradicate the remains of the chaos that rocked the kingdom.

Of course, the Christian repertoire enriches the amount of possibilities for the reader/spectator to optimize the significance of the play as it may provide the space for a twofold process. In the first place, as the recipient is able to gauge the impact of the embedded religious references, they can envision the clash between the discourses opposed in the composition of the plays. The second aspect of this process requires the emancipation of the reader/spectator from the Christian elements referred to so as to grasp the complex picture of the neutralized subsystems that help the literary text to question the supremacy of the dominant system of thought from which each play prompts, say, secularized Elizabethan England and the critic culmination of modernity expressed in plays ascribed in Modern American Drama.

As Jaus posits, one of the stages in the adoption of reception in literature is emancipation (58). This element characterizes the relationship between the recipient and the text in terms of modernity. The crucial role of emancipation mobilizes theory and provides the possibility for spectators to become active participants in the construction of the theatre.

Jacques Rancière posits that there is a compelling need of a theatre without immobile audiences, but a theatre whose spectators can join in the process of signification of plays by leading them to actively participate in a learning process (11). Thus, the spectator stops being a mere passive voyeur, ignorant of the whole process that means to prepare a play for the stage. The purpose of emancipation is to activate the underlying meaning of Drama, that is to say, action, and to allow the audiences to become mobilized by the mobile bodies on stage (11). Furthermore, emancipation begins when the opposition between watching and acting are questioned, as the evidences that organize the

relationships of saying, watching and doing are understood as part of the whole structure of dominance and submission (19).

Under this light, the experiences of redemption and forgiveness are not dogmatic elements that the authors use in order to be looked at by the reader/audience without purpose. In fact, what they pursue by adding those elements on the recipients is their mobilization and the emancipation of dogmatic principles that seem to shape the view they hold about these experiences. Redeeming and forgiving are actions, completed through language, that demand interpretation on the side of the spectator as elements that need to be acquired and not observed just to be forgotten right after closing the book or leaving the theatre.

On the other hand, the Christian repertoire demands the optimization of the yolk of dogmatism and the expansion of its significance to the spaces of the secularized order, since the issues portrayed in the parables are not only part of the Christian spectrum of knowledge, but also they should be resignified as universal experiences that describe the characteristic thought and culture of Western civilization. By detaching from the religious aspect of this repertoire, and by adding them to a representation of the universal knowledge, the reader and the spectator actualize, optimize and reshape the experiences of forgiveness and redemption in any of the different contexts that reality offers them so as to bear a new meaning, far less from the ideas of human sacrifice and mercy set up by Christian doctrine.

Conclusion

Filial relationships cannot remain flawless, no matter how hard we try. Filial bonds are so fragile that, even without thinking, we can break them and the cost of these breaches is unbearable enough to drag us down to grief. Humans are fallible, and either as a father or as a son, we are prone to make mistakes that may hurt our dear ones. One of the aspects about life that these plays expose is that human fails in acknowledging the impossibility of satisfying each other's expectations. Neither do we satisfy our own desires.

The importance of forgiveness lies on this tendency for making mistakes and hurting others. This experience provides us the opportunity to heal flawed bonds and to express our love whenever we recognize there is something wrong about our actions or about our lack of words. It helps people to relieve their inner turmoil; regardless how deep in grief they remain. Forgiveness creates the instance needed for the regeneration of past wounds that prevents us from being still. If there were not forgiveness in the world, there would not be other thing than hopelessness and disgraced individuals. There would not be space for redemption or restoration to take place.

Reading *King Lear* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* is a gloomy experience, not only because the tragic and violent events that permeate both plays. They are sad because they show us all of our deficiencies, human fallibility and the inevitability of the consequences prompted by our actions and decisions. But also these plays leave us with a warm feeling of hopefulness, because they make us believe in forgiveness and the possibility of renewal experiences.

The purpose of this study was to explore the important role that the experience of forgiveness played in the interpretation of these plays and to shed light on its outcomes: redemption and restoration. Both concepts are faces of the same token and cannot be dissociated. However, throughout my analysis, we could see that there are different outlets for the flux of both forces, as well as there are many shapes to characterize the interaction between the characters in terms of these concepts.

It has been suggested, for instance, that in O'Neill's play (as opposed to *King Lear*) the structure that emerges from the interaction of the members of the family resembles a prism. This shape emerges as the solution of such a complex scheme of interaction, because it places each of the characters at the corners, thus each of its sides represents the filial bond that connects each member with the others. So far, a square scheme would have sufficed, but then we come up with the problem of redeeming and restoring agencies we run into the need of another shape. Having a square as the most representative shape prevents us from watching the different shades and the complexities embedded in the role of the redeeming and restoring elements in the family, and does not tell us anything about that entity, which, as have been suggested, is embodied in the figure of Edmund. Thus, it is important to provide a new dimension to this shape: one that will provide it with depth and body. The prism perfectly fits for the establishment of the interaction between characters because it allows us placing Edmund at the top, whenever redemption is concerned, as the target that the rest of the characters are aiming at from the bottom.

The stiff sides of the prism also reveal the perception that O'Neill had about the redemption of their characters. The stiffer the road, the tougher the attainment of liberation becomes. Even so, if each of the sides represents the links between each of the Tyrones, then those sides are uneven, due to all the wounds that have cracked them. Under this light, this prism has to be imagined not as a crystal clear one which light passes thorough to become decomposed. Instead, the fog that covers them renders the figure opaque, and the sides remain shattered and hazy. The function of forgiveness, hence of redemption and restoration, is to polish the sides and dissipate the haze that has darkened the prism.

In addition, this prismatic structure allows us the mobilization of the characters through the corners at the bottom and at the top. For instance, Mary can be placed at the top since she is the object of concern for the male characters, whenever the prism represents the level of detachment. James can be placed there if the hierarchy reflects their relationship with economic aspects, as Jamie can be at the top when describing cynicism. No matter who is at the top and at the bottom, or if the prism is upside down, the links between them are strong enough to keep them together, and they will always be as such. In other words,

the prism serves to accurately describe any hierarchy established within the structure of the family.

This configuration of the relationship between the Tyrones cannot be expanded to represent the state of affairs in *King Lear*; however, it leads me to re-think the progressive continuum established in the analysis section. Even though the progression of forgiveness implies a series of stages that describe the steps taken by Edgar and Cordelia, and even though this conception seems adequate, it does not explicitly entails or reveals the relationship between them and their respective parents. I suggest that the relationship between Lear and Cordelia, as well as Gloucester and Edgar, is based on the sense of sight. As Gloucester states right after having his eyes removed, if he were offered with the possibility of having Edgar by his side, he would be able to see again. This idea is in harmony with the problem of the blindness canonically attributed to both Lear and Gloucester. The forgiving characters resemble the plucked-off eyes of consciousness, whose extirpation, along with the infectious poison of the mischievous son and daughters, has obscured the sight of the fathers.

Another point to take into consideration is the one related to the mirroring relationship established between Mary and her idol, the Virgin. Since it has been pointed out that she is a flawed version of the Virgin, longing for the recovering of her innocence and, perhaps, her virginity, in like manner the male members of the family can be seen as flawed versions of the guarantees of Modernity, which concerns freedom and emancipation of the Will. This claim finds support on the idea that these characters are too immerse in each other without having any chance for dwelling somewhere else or to heal their own wounds. This is also expressed by the involving presence of the fog that contribute to the illusion of isolation that surrounds them, in which the foghorn turns out to be the remainder of the outer reality from which they are hidden. Not only their relationship with each other is marred by this hazy presence, but their subjectivities are in tension with this fact because of the claustrophobic effect of the fog, which leads them to be highly aware of the events taking place within their narrow field of vision.

The clashing manifestation of Modernity and Christianity permeates the play as an aesthetic device that demands the recipients for completion of an exhaustive

reinterpretation of the world-pictures in which the plays are crafted, and of their own current thought systems. By retrieving the significance of the repertoires that shape the play, the reader/spectator is able to see with unveiled eyes the complexity of the relations between all the elements subdued to the dominant order. However, the recipient is not only supposed to recover those embedded references, but once they have identified them, then, what is left to the recipients is to emancipate themselves from those allusions, so as to optimize the significance of the whole play. Thus they will be able to appreciate the whole picture by being set free from the restraint imposed by the prevailing system, therefore becoming able for criticizing the elements that mold their reality.

The examination of the impact of forgiveness and the Christian readings allows a novel approach to the plays' main theme: filial love. Nevertheless, there are more aspects concerning these elements to take into account and they might be explored in future research in order to enrich the gamut of possibilities for the interpretation of this plays. The understanding of forgiveness have mobilized concepts such as the forgetfulness underlying this experience as well as it has turned out to be closely related to humiliation as seen in each of the tragedies analyzed. Those experiences may shed light on the aspects of subjectivity that have been left aside, and that would be interesting to take into account as they will provide a new perspective on the transformation of the expression of subjectivities when connected to the impact of harm and shame. Finally, it is necessary to go deeper in the inspection of the confluence of religious and secular discourses in both plays, so as to draw more inclusive and exhaustive conclusions about its role in terms of the reading experience.

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