

Alcohol Portrayal in Selected American Plays

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Abstract

Alcoholism, as a social disease that creeps into society, in general, and into the family, in particular, causes addiction, depression, and ultimately death. Affecting a vast array of people, Alcoholism is indiscriminate regardless of race, gender, identity, education, class, or intelligence. Alcoholism results in societal problems that are depicted heavily on the American stage after wars to reach solutions. A qualitative research method is going to be followed and applied by employing a mixture of Scholarship and Textual Analysis Methods are used to investigate the body of scholarship written about the two playwrights, their literary works, and historical periods. By comparing two American plays: Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, this paper identifies alcoholism as a social disease, traces back its causes, and analyzes the problematic portrayals of its stereotypes. By following the Block Method, this paper makes a comparison to deal with particular and important features of the two plays for the argument presented, supported by textual evidence taken from both texts. This study raises questions such as: Why is alcoholism projected publicly? How do people feel and react toward alcoholic addicts? Are alcoholic addicts, the main characters in the selected plays, reliable, tragic, sympathetic, or empathetic? Does the playwrights' history of alcohol play a role in shaping such characters?.

Keywords: *Alcoholism, Wilder's Our Town, O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night*

A. Introduction

First, one has to take a look at American society after World War II and how the problem of alcohol is spread and accepted publicly. For instance, Norman K. Denzin (1997) describes American society as a hypocritical one since it allows alcoholism to be publicly used and blames the alcoholics to be abused: "American society is a drug-oriented society, an addiction society, and a society preoccupied with drugs, alcohol, consumption, and social control. Two-faced in its attitudes, American society encourages alcohol consumption but does not want alcoholics. Stereotyping statements about alcoholics such as "s/he is weak, sick, and drunk; s/he cannot be trusted; s/he is struggling or suffering" are common and signify stigma and judgment. These statements identify individuals as alcoholics, delivering a message that these marginalized individuals are hopeless cases, outcasts, outsiders, and others (Campbell, 2013).

The general stereotype of alcoholics is that they are untrustworthy and unreliable individuals who lack a moral attitude which makes them unproductive members of society. Dependent upon unique experiences, people deal with a boozier as someone who made unfulfilled promises and disregarded the dangerous outcomes of drinking. These points of view are increasing trouble, dissatisfaction, bewilderment, and shock toward alcohol enslavement as a disease. Simply, boozers are not harmful as other people who experience evil impacts on society. Both of these categories are socially commendable. Alcohol addiction conveys

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numerous meanings and interpretations, reflecting individual inclinations and social encounters not of what liquor abuse is but rather what liquor abuse is described. Liquor abuse is quantifiable as well as interpretable. It might have the option to stamp standards of conduct welcomed on by risky or potentially proceeded with utilization of liquor, yet it is how these practices are seen and deciphered that leads people to classify an individual as a drunkard (Campbell, 2013).

From different perspectives, thoughts regarding the utilization of liquor on and off stage have changed. Alcohol addiction may have been seen as a familial or private issue; however, contemporary dramatists have analyzed liquor abuse as a social issue. That is why liquor turns into an essential issue in work and can be found in numerous classes, styles, and exhibitions. The utilization of liquor and its abuse are investigated on the stage as a result of the inalienable sensational struggle characters go through in battling liquor abuse, directly or not, and the elements of real vulnerability and dread collectedness that plague an individual. In this sense, Joseph A. Califano (2008) compares the number of addicted American people with religious services attendants, stating that “The millions of Americans, who daily take some kind of mood-altering, pain-killing, or mind-bending prescription drug, abuse alcohol, and illegal drugs, and smoke cigarettes likely exceed the number who weekly attend religious services” . Here, a direct reference to alcoholism as a societal epidemic is made to ease the pain through the use of readily available escapes in the form of chemical substances. Alcohol consumption whether appropriate or not as a level is seen as unbearable.

Hence, the current paper is done to show how dangerous the issue of alcoholism is whether for society or the individual himself. Through the comparison between two prominent plays, the paper aims at focusing on alcoholism as a social disease that makes society and individuals fall apart, collapse, and end their lives. However, other people should take of them to prevent such catastrophic events to happen. Comparing two plays dealing with the same problem gives a panoramic view of the issue addressed and show how significant and serious issue like alcoholism affects the core of society and requires a solution.

B. Methods

A qualitative research method is going to be followed and applied by employing a combination of methods such as Scholarship Methods and Textual Analysis Methods used to investigate the body of scholarship written about the two playwrights, their literary works, and historical periods. Close readings of literary texts are not enough without relying on background information to support the reading. In addition, the data collected will be analyzed by making an inference and verifying as well. Relevant journal articles and book chapters will be obtained from valuable libraries to be studied, analyzed, and quoted. Finally, a comparison will be made between the two works to differentiate between two unique ways of dealing with alcoholism as a serious social illness.

C. Findings and Discussion

Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*: Self-Destructive Stimson

As a revolutionary play with a minimalist theatrical style, Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* was the 1938 recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It is not only a microcosm of the life cycle but also determines people’s reality and identity. Throughout this play, Wilder is demonstrating that life is precious and the aspects of daily life are universal to all generations and cultures.

Life's pressure on people, especially the marginalized ones, is one of the subject matters that the playwright makes the audience aware of. In this respect, Thomas Michael Campbell (2013) sees the play as a "call for empathy towards marginalized members of society" and in the words of Donald Margulies (2003), it is "an idealized view of American life" in which "the impieties and hypocrisies depicted by Wilder's vision". Still, the play criticizes alcohol abuse, presenting a stereotypical character, Simon Stimson, as a "Despondent Drunk", strange and in contrast with the other characters. While the characters in the play share systems of social belief and good methods of reasoning, Stimson is a pariah who addresses the undiscovered areas in American culture. Similarly, in his article, "Thornton Wilder Says 'Yes'," Barnard Hewitt (1959) discusses Stimson's pessimistic presence in *Grover's Corners*, asserting:

The ugly side of American small-town life is not entirely missing from *Our Town*. Simon Stimson, the drunken, disappointed organist is there [...] Wilder keeps Simon close to the wings. His purpose is not to present a complete picture of small-town life but rather through its little cycle of daily activity and its big cycle of birth, marriage, and death to discover for us the value of the ordinary in human life any time, anywhere, every time, everywhere [...] To have given more prominence to Simon Stimson and his like would only have distracted from Wilder's purpose".

So, Stimson is not a stumbling town drunk who raises laughing; he is a disappointed, tortured, self-destructive man whose cries for help are ignored by denying, proud, and selfish people.

Accordingly, Wilder demonstrates how society fails to help its citizens, addicted or not, due to systematic ignorance. It is also believed that Stimson is an outsider within the small town of *Grover's Corners* and "other" in a culture that views him as such because of his deviant behavior. As a drunk, Stimson does not raise laughter rather he reflects his self-destructive soul that is eager to listen. What raises readers' interest is that Wilder, as an expert dramatist, does not present Stimson in *Our Town* as the person who raises laughter, a wretched of a diminished personality, or a marginalized identity. To Wilder, individuals, like Stimson, decided to be isolated in their very own actions. Subsequently, Stimson is felt sorry for, avoided, and gossiped about but never talked to. Such a treatment is universal for it addresses the human experience and psyche. Penelope Niven (2012), Thornton Wilder a biography writer, says, "[i]n almost all of his work he's looking at the particular juxtaposed [with] the universal [...] That's the key to *Our Town*." Niven (2012) also adds that Wilder is "thinking about the individual and the human experience, the repetition by millions and millions of people of the fundamental patterns of human existence".

In Act I, for instance, Stimson stands before the church choir to stop the rehearsal, stating that music pleases almost everyone: "Music comes into the world to give pleasure. —Softer! Softer! Get it out of your head that music's only good when it's loud. You leave loudness to the Methodists. You couldn't beat 'em, even if you wanted to. Now again. Tenors!" (Wilder, 1967). Stimson keeps asking his choir about who will be able to attend an upcoming wedding, he wonders: "Art Thou Weary; Art Thou Languid?" It's a question, ladies and gentlemen, make it talk". Ironically, Stimson, who is an artful musician, and an individual who appreciates the beauty of music, is not seen as a musician or as a beauty lover. Stimson's behavior as a drinker overshadows any other aspects of his identity.

Following the choir practice Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Soames, and Mrs. Webb converse about the "troubles" Stimson has been through:

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MRS. SOAMES: Naturally I didn't want to say a word about it in front of those others, but now we're alone—really, it's the worst scandal that ever was in this town!

MRS. GIBBS: What?

MRS. SOAMES: Simon Stimson!

MRS. GIBBS: Now, Louella!

MRS. SOAMES: But, Julia! To have the organist of a church drink and drunk year after year. You know he was drunk tonight.

MRS. GIBBS: Now, Louella! We all know about Mr. Stimson, and we all know about the troubles he's been through, and Dr. Ferguson knows too, and if Dr. Ferguson keeps him on there in his job the only thing the rest of us can do is just not to notice it.

MRS. SOAMES: Not to notice it! But it's getting worse.

MRS. GIBBS: No, it isn't, Louella. It's getting better. I've been in that choir twice as long as you have. It doesn't happen anywhere near so often... My, I hate to go to bed on a night like this.

Stimson is presented as an individual aside from his involvement with the church and his drinking. This conversation highlights Stimson in comparison with Act I and II combined. Women agree that Stimson who drinks too much was drunk at that evening's practice. That is why his behavior has been reported to his supervisor, Dr. Ferguson. The members of the choir are fully aware of Stimson's behavior as well. What they disagree with in this discussion is whether Stimson is improving or not. While Mrs. Gibbs announces that Stimson is getting better than he used to be, she suddenly changes the subject. This raises doubt about whether to convince herself of the opposite or not. In Act III the purpose of Stimson's inclusion into the play is shown by Wilder's employment of Stimson not as somebody who is attempting to "make it" through an unfulfilling life, but rather as an individual who is masking his emotional pain and his depression by using a substance. Stimson cannot get away from his torment even after ending his own life, and more tragically, his attachment to the liquor is recalled by the individuals who stay in the domain of the living (Elliott, 2013).

Our Town is not only about death but also about taking life for granted. It is Wilder's call to be aware of the valuable time people are given. Changes to Grover's Corners in nine years are also emphasized, they tell the audience that the setting takes place in a graveyard in which the individuals sitting in the chairs on the stage have died, Stimson being among them. Stimson almost immediately, even in death, has not lost his scorn for the living as he states, "I'm always uncomfortable when they're around". In a conversation between the undertaker, Joe Stoddard, and the former resident of Grover's Corners who has returned for the funeral of his cousin, Emily Gibbs, Stimson has left behind a memory of himself associated with his drinking:

SAM CRAIG: (reading Simon Stimson's epitaph.) He was an organist at church, wasn't he?
—Hm drank a lot, we used to say.

JOE STODDARD: Nobody was supposed to know about it.

In previous acts, every character talked about Stimson and his drinking; little was done by Stimson to shroud his activities. It was the others' decision not to discuss his circumstances. Not talking about it was also not a decision made because the people around Stimson had established some sort of boundary or were attempting to show Stimson a version of "tough love." They decided not to talk about the matter since they felt it was wrong, it was not their concern. Even after hanging himself, Stimson is left with drinking as his legacy (Margulies, 2003). Stimson's anger and bitterness remain, illustrated in the following exchange with his dead cohorts:

MRS. SOAMES: Childbirth. (Almost with a laugh) I'd forgotten all about that. My wasn't life awful— (with a sigh) and wonderful. SIMON STIMSON: (with a sideways glance) Wonderful, was it? MRS. GIBBS: Simon! Now, remember!

Reproached by Mrs. Gibbs for having a contradictory opinion of the norms and traditions, Stimson projects his anger even further upon Emily's return from a spiritual re-visiting of her twelfth birthday, he disparages Emily for one last look at life:

SIMON STIMSON: (With mounting violence; biting) Yes, now you know. Now you know! That's what it was to be alive. To move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those... of those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion, or another. Now you know—that's the happy existence you wanted to go back to. Ignorance and blindness.

Judged by others, Stimson feels isolated but sees the living people as a selfish group who are unaware of their lives and unable to see beyond them. In contrast to Mrs. Soames' idealism, Stimson's negative view of life which leads him to be indulged with alcoholism makes him commit suicide. In this sense, "Wilder chooses to abstain from moralizing on the type of life which Mr. Stimson lived or the reasons that he takes issue with Mrs. Soames' blatant rhapsodizing".

Wilder cleverly likens ending one's life to the setting of the play. Also, William P. Wiles (1997) asserts, "the cycle is complete. The play began at daybreak and ends at night. It began with birth and ends with death. It began with the particulars of daily life and ends with eternity". Besides, as representative of the town's culture, Stimson's bitter troubles are only mentioned but never explained. That is why he commits suicide in act III. The epitaph on his grave puzzles two townsmen, who see it as "just some notes of music," while the audience learns that the death "was wrote [sic] up in the Boston papers at the time". Dr. Gibbs comments that "some people ain't made for small-town life," which the play illustrates as culturally undistinguished (Wiles, 1997)

Kenneth Elliott (2013) sees Stimson as an archetypal "Small Town Closet Queen," a covert reference to homosexuality that could not be presented on stage or screen. With Stimson's suicide, the play acknowledges that not everybody is at home in a town without art, a town that takes for granted, in the Stage Manager's words, that "Most everybody in the world climbs into their graves married". Stimson capitulates to a destiny that Wilder never needed to go up against. The unhappily married choir director, whose compositions Boston celebrates but whose relationships tie him to Grover's Corners, is a dark shadow, a path not taken, of the playwright who does not marry and serves the community with well-wrought drama. One part of Wilder's life was nearer to that of the Stage Manager, indifferently changing humble community life into workmanship and this convenience among craftsmanship and urban life is conceivable. Grover's Corners is founded on a state of contact with a cosmopolitan universe of expressions and letters. He could feel comfortable yet still associated with a modest community New England milieu that he thought about quintessentially American (Roberts, 2019).

Simon sums up human faults more harshly than Emily. To him the living people move in a "cloud of ignorance . . . at the mercy of one self-centered passion, or another." Perhaps he is bitter because he wasted his own life on alcohol. He recognizes that he "trampled on the feelings" of others. Consequently, he feels that life was a terrible experience. The other spirits acknowledge that Simon's summation contains a kernel of truth, but they insist that life had good

points (Kernan, 1967). Disengaged throughout everyday life and unpleasant in death, Stimson projects severe mindfulness that the living people are egocentric and uninformed, and he is allowed a chance to verbalize his emotions, a chance not offered to him throughout everyday life. Grover's Corners is portrayed as a Protestant/Christian town where individuals go to chapel consistently, sing in the ensemble, get hitched by an appointed pastor, and are given a Christian entombment, yet in death, there is neither Heaven nor Hell. Stimson was a confined person when living, who at last capitulates to his apparent pressing factors and ends his own life. On account of Stimson-as-the Despondent Drunk, the exemplification of sadness, discouragement, lack of care, and sharpness epitomized in a character is taken note of. In any case, it is upsetting to perceive how, in the present circumstance, these feelings are not settled in death. Even though readers may see a slightly deeper more nuanced side to Stimson than shown in previous acts, this side is also diminished as Stimson is told to be quiet by Mrs. Gibbs and continues to be denigrated by Joe Stoddard, Sam Craig, and presumably, anybody else who remembers Stimson not as the church organist, but as the church organist and Grover's Corners "town drunk."

Unlike Stimson, each character is content with her/his graveside presence, passively watching and commenting on a life long gone, having come to terms with their current positions. While Stimson may have confronted his situation, he still resents living. Although he is the topic of a conversation, he is not allowed to participate in the conversation, nor is there a desire by others to include him. The residents of Grover's Corners do not think of Stimson with fondness. Wilder does not allow readers to see any complicated views regarding Stimson. Not only is Stimson still feeling what he felt in life, but others remember him only as the church organist and the drinker. Wilder lessens Stimson's practicality by keeping him trapped in his resentment and contempt. *Our Town's* use of Stimson illustrates the alcoholic as Despondent Drunk in that he is a troubled individual attempting to drown larger problems or troubles, and while readers may apply the archetypes of Architect, Dreamer, or perhaps Martyr, the character is not allotted enough stage time for readers to get to know Stimson beyond how others view him and react to his behavior; thus, he remains a stereotype. Seeing Simon Stimson through the eyes of the other characters illustrates a disdain for the alcohol abuser, and by extension, Wilder effectively portrays the Despondent Drunk stereotype as an irredeemable individual who takes his self-loathing and bitterness with him everywhere, he goes, even into death. In this case, readers are offered a possible message from Wilder, which is saying, if this is how you behave in life, this will be your fate in death.

Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*: Nuanced Characters

. Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) presents the most nuanced characters who are dealing with alcohol use and abuse. The play is regarded to be one of the supreme plays in American literature. O'Neill's play puts the inescapable debilitation of alcohol abuse at the vanguard of the story and explores the problematic nature of how the disease is perceived and discussed. It digs deep inside the Tyrone family to look at the disease as the entire family struggles with their respective associations with substance abuse. In Act One, the family appears to be a jovial, loving family, yet readers quickly learn that Mary has recently returned from the sanatorium in an attempt to treat her morphine addiction. Furthermore, James is a drinker, proud of his Irish roots, and disdainful of his elder son, Jamie, who is unlike his younger son, Edmund, who is lazy and has lost control over his ability to drink. What is so significant is that, throughout the day, each member of the Tyrone family falls deeper and deeper into their

“fog” of substance use/abuse. In other words, they are intoxicated, downhearted, and disconnected from each other despite physically occupying the same space, and isolated despite their proximity (Campbell, 2013).

Jamie addresses other people in dismissive ways—as if he talked to himself in the same demeaning manner—but nobody ever hears the conversation he has with himself or even cares for him. Ironically, James has attempted to control his eldest son’s drinking habits, but he expresses his inability to do that like his son’s inability to control people’s attention. So, addiction and miscommunication are stressed. James has given up on Jamie, labeling him as a lost cause or having less willpower than a normal person would have. Jamie is different in his father’s eyes, he is “other” and “outsider,” and James has no problem pointing this out to his son. Ironically, James who acts as a violent villain in reprimanding Jamie’s inability to drink “appropriately,” concurrently claims that his excessive drinking is never a dangerous issue. Thus, the fight continues for a while and then diminishes as the two turn their attention back onto Edmund and Mary. Both are in arrangements about next to no besides the way that the two of them need their mom to stay in her present status, and not relapse into her morphine-initiated dimness. Also, they are opposed to telling others of their unsafe circumstance (with Mary or Edmund) as they each consent to keep things as apparently “typical” as could be expected. However, consumption in 1912 was a virtual death sentence, and they are also concerned as to what effect the news would have on Mary:

JAMES: Yes, this time you can see how strong and sure of herself she is. She’s a different woman entirely from the other times. She has control of her nerves—or she had until Edmund got sick...Yes, it will be hard for her. But she can do it! She has the willpower now!

James and Jamie are trying to keep Mary calm, they keep such information from her, therefore aggravating her concern as she becomes more and more paranoid that people are gossiping about her behind her back.

Despite James’ underlying energy and idealism and his oldest child’s ability to help his mom, the Tyrone family is tormented by little adversities, which led Mary to a condition of stress. She is by all accounts more mindful of the instability of her circumstance than any other person as she portends the approaching backslide: Mary says, “I mean, take advantage of the sunshine before the fog comes back. (Strangely, as if talking aloud to herself.) Because I know it will” . Mary is directly being watchful because before the finish of the demonstration Mary has trusted that the night has left her in an uncomfortable state, and pressures are intense as James anticipates news from Dr. Strong for Edmund. Jamie endeavors to keep the environment light, yet when the demonstration closes, readers get a feeling that the haze is moving back in around the whole family.

Mary’s abuse of morphine is provoked by her anxiety over her younger son’s health. To Michael Hinden (1990a), readers are “told that Mary’s struggle with morphine began with Edmund’s birth when a cheap hotel doctor hired by her husband administered the drug to ease her pain”. Throughout the play, the miserly Tyrone bears the blame for his wife’s addiction: “If you’d spent money for a decent doctor when she was so sick after I was born,” Edmund screams at his father, “she’d never have known morphine existed!”. Justifying himself, Tyrone, like everyone else at that time, knew little about drug addiction: “What did I know of morphine? It was years before I discovered what was wrong.” He claims that he has spent “thousands upon thousands in cures” for Mary, but nothing has prevented her periodic relapses (Hinden, 1990b).

The abuse of substances is ubiquitous in Tyrone's life. But the characters do not acquiescently discuss the matter beyond remarks or judgmental statements. In effect, it is evident that they are unable to even understand how the issues should be addressed. Furthermore, the overall themes within the play refer to the omnipresence of addiction. For instance, Mary speaks metaphorically to Cathleen (the housekeeper) regarding the approaching fog, and readers see Mary's desires to embrace her impending return to morphine: Mary states, "It hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed, and nothing is what it seemed to be. No one can find or touch you anymore" (Hinden, 1990b). In this sense, O'Neill portrays a baffled family, an aimless unit of individuals, everlastingly attached, yet incapable to convey their feelings of dread and failure to comprehend what is going on.

Mary's character is one example of how O'Neill depicts addicts. In Hinden's words, "O'Neill's detailed psychological portrait of Mary reinforces the observation that her recurrent bouts with morphine are personality linked." In other words, Mary is depicted as "a woman who has longed for escape all her life" because as an adolescent, Mary was an idealist daydreamer who wanted to be a pianist or a nun someday ("The Pharmacology," p. 48). For Mary, addiction is also painkilling. Mary's emotional disruptions, recollections, and fears prompt her to seek a hidden syringe: She confides to her maid, "It's a special kind of medicine [...] I have to take it because there is no other that can stop the pain? all the pain? I mean, in my hands" (Hinden, 1990). Nonetheless, her self-conscious confession gives away as she needs her "special medicine" "to muffle her emotional pain, which is far more overwhelming than rheumatism in her hands, to which she alludes" (Hinden, 1990a).

These characters are crying for help, yet unable to vocalize their desires. These characters are representative of the playwright's personal experiences. To link them with O'Neill himself readers will provide additional insight into the case. Similarly, Travis Bogard (1988) writes that the parallels between O'Neill's life and the events in *Long Day's Journey into Night* are extensive (p. 110). It is noted prominently that O'Neill's battles with alcohol and his erratic behaviors when drinking is extensively related to the events. Some of the scholarship on O'Neil displays an undesirable partiality that exemplifies the cultural stigmas O'Neill would have faced. For example, Stephen R. Grecco (1974) provides an immediate connection between O'Neill and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, stating that

O'Neill began drinking and getting drunk at a very early age [...] Becoming intoxicated by one means or another was almost a family ritual. His brother Jamie was a confirmed alcoholic [...] died a drunkard's death; his mother became addicted to morphine [...] and spent most of the remainder of her life in a semi-narcotized state; and his father, who normally started the day with a pre-breakfast cocktail, became so possessive about the liquor that he decided to lock it up in the cellar out of reach of his perpetually thirsty sons.

Such a description shows that the character judgments mirror public opinions that have been persistent for generations. These judgments could easily have been a contributing factor as to why O'Neill was hesitant in releasing *Long Day's Journey into Night* during his lifetime. However, the play mirrors deeper dimensions that could show the negative impact of alcohol abuse/dependency. The nuances of emotional and mental turmoil O'Neill endured are true to be reflected in the play but they are employed as a warning.

O'Neill and his *Long Day's Journey into Night* are instinctively associated, not just through true-to-life likenesses, but rather in message and heritage. Such an extensive amount is associated with the impression of compulsion. Every individual of the Tyrone family takes a

gander at another part and sees her/his conduct as a freak. Socially, the practices sanctioned by an individual experiencing synthetic alcohol abuse/dependency are viewed as freak too, yet engaging whenever seen in good ways. Current approaches to recovery dialogues are using *Long Day's Journey into Night* to initiate dialogues about alcohol abuse/dependency. The fact is that the culture in which O'Neill lived saw the abuse of substances as a moral weakness, and as a result, conversations on the topic were subjugated to stereotypical portrayals and associated with negative stigmas.

Another character shows how drugs and addiction function in the play. Edmund describes the reasons that make him drink. He uses alcohol as an escape from thought. While describing the night, Edmund was trying to kill himself. His father states that he was gloomy because he was drunk, but Edmund replies, "I was stone-cold sober. That was the trouble. I'd stopped to think too long" (Hinden, 1990b). Romantically, he also quotes Baudelaire to express his feeling about the past and escape the present, "Be always drunken. Nothing else matters: that is the only question. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time weighing on your shoulders and crushing you to earth, be drunken continually" (Hinden, 1990a). Edmund uses alcohol to forget everything about everyone. Ironically, "everything that happens that day makes it impossible to forget the past, and the intoxication only worsens the problem" (Bloom, 1984).

D. Conclusion

Alcoholism is a social disease that not only affects society but also the family. It is the main cause of addiction, depression, and death or suicide. In both plays: *Our Town* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, alcoholism and its addiction are openly acknowledged, but purposefully not discussed to relieve individuals or families. Alcohol abuse/dependency is understood as an issue that should be ignored or addressed behind closed doors hoping that the individual's willpower can grant her/him the indispensable strength to be a productive member of the family and community. Albeit Wilder and O'Neill are reflecting a cultural ideology of their respective periods, contemporary playwrights are still addressing the issues of alcoholism in their work by using unfortunate character portrayals which bring about the distressed character(s) being portrayed as morally weak, socially stigmatized, and psychologically denigrated. Like Wilder's *Our Town*, O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* explores the problematic nature of how the disease is perceived and discussed. However, unlike *Our Town's* depiction of a single character that is experiencing a negative relationship with alcohol and how this person is viewed by others from a distance, O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* takes readers inside the Tyrone family to look at the disease as the entire family struggles with their respective associations with substance abuse. The rhetoric used in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* is similar to that found in Wilder's *Our Town*, mostly because the plays were written only two to three years apart each other. In Wilder's *Our Town*, Wilder has not been an alcohol addict whose habit is reflected in the play. While in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, there is a different case of alcohol addiction in the family history. In the first play, the emphasis is on only one character but in the second it is on the family members. Hence, the paper is so significant for humanities studies since bringing two works concentrating on a social disease like alcoholism, which causes mental and psychological dis-ease, reveals numerous sides from different perspectives: socially, psychologically, and mentally. In the first one, people will be more aware of such cases when meeting them on the streets. Secondly, psychologists and

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mentalists will get the benefit of studying such cases of alcohol addiction to be aided by real situations and can treat their patients successfully.

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