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# **EUGENE O'NEILL AND THE FRAGMENTATION BETWEEN PERSPECTIVES**

Tesis para optar al grado de Licenciado en Lengua y Literatura Inglesas

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# I. Introduction

As T.S. Eliot once reflected, the work of an artist cannot be separated from the cultural baggage the author has inherited. Contextualization is a powerful force and sometimes it jumps out of the text to gain a meaning that surpasses the realm of narrative or dramatic writings. Nobel award winner Eugene O'Neill gained his reputation by creating complex and disturbed characters and often putting them in equally difficult situations. The seeming despair displayed in the bulk of his work has much to do with the current state of affairs in American society as well as with his own thematical interests and orientations.

The corpus that will be taken into consideration in this project are the plays The Iceman Cometh (1940) and Long Day's Journey Into Night (1956). According to the author the stories are set in the year 1912, just a couple of months before the First World War started in Western Europe. For the sake of the analysis we will add the whole beginning of the twentieth century as the period of time that we will be taking into consideration in the analysis, because of their irreversible transformational events and processes that helped to the set of the Modern period.

The notion this project will attempt to establish is that, by writing plays such as The Iceman Cometh or Long Day's Journey Into Night full of outsiders, limit situations and outcasts of society, what O'Neill is actually trying to do is portray a general impression of the American society during the pre-World War I period. At first, the general impression may be that the characters live in the margins of society, some of them rejecting it altogether, but this is an actual expression of the common sentiment of an epoch, the blossoming of a society where all of its members are scattered away. The point of view is negative and pessimistic; members of society are controlled by addictions and live a life of self-delusion. The loss of faith is more clearly understood when we take into account the number of religious allusions that are placed in the plays that will be part of the corpus. To summarize, the fragmented society O'Neill has represented to us is composed of a failed religious attempt of control. The strains have finally ceased and, in a world where certainties are no longer present, borderline personalities, radical discourses and erratic behavior become common and dangerous, at times. The loss of control is an element understated in Eugene O'Neill's body of work and it will be used to make an interpretation of the psychological state of the members of a fragmented society.

The rupture between two perspectives can also be perceived if we analyze the large tradition of American literature. The plays are realistic and leaving little to the comparison with other artistic movements of great influence, such as Transcendentalism or Romanticism. In this manner, O'Neill is a clear representative of the Modernist movement and his plays are followers of a tradition that is closer to Henrik Ibsen or August Strindberg than any of the movements that were popular and/or created in America.

The notion of intertextuality is important to take into account when approaching an analysis of his plays. O'Neill portrays some elements that are borrowed from his own heritage, in this case, the Judeo-Christian influence. Addressing to this element, the objective that the analysis will refer to is the change of perspectives encrypted in O'Neill's selected corpus. From the establishment of colonies in the New World by the immigrant Europeans, Puritan values erected as the unitary element that helped the community to

stay together and prosperous in a wild environment. Puritans believed in the notion of “New Canaan” that America embodied, a new place in the world where they would construct a human utopia, based on a religious orientation. The teocentric experiment worked for a while, until wars and conflicts started mining the homogeneous feeling that existed in the beginning. For the approach on this subject, several sources will be considered to form the literary basis of the analysis. Firstly, the definitions made by Roland Barthes in The Death of the Author and by Jacques Derrida in From Work to Text, and, secondly, the essay Deconstruction, The Death of the Author, and Intertextuality by Patrick Fuery and Nick Mansfield, which shows a more embracing focus from a literary point of view, with inherent consideration for Derrida's and Barthes' perspectives.

This is where we can locate the object of study of the project, social fragmentation. Society shifted from a homogenous to a heterogeneous perspective and that sentence can be asseverated in O'Neill's plays. Different variables helped to the fragmentative state of American society during twentieth century. Off the top of our heads we can name the successive wars the country had to endure, wave after wave of external influence present in the form of immigrants and the economic disillusion that signified the crisis of 1929. Although the stories are not set in the particular time set of the post-World War II period, a societal change is a long term process, it does not occur over night, and during this period (added the fact that the plays were written in the forties, when the process of society change was under way and going forward with strength) the origins of it are well expressed. The factors previously mentioned are irreversible and it shows in a straight forward comparison with the beginnings of the nation. In this sense, O'Neill gives us a relatable plot line in The Iceman Cometh, the return of the prodigal son and a new message being delivered to wandering and aimless souls. At this point there is little difference between this and a biblical pamphlet. However, the story makes a turn for unexpected developments, with consequences that resemble the change in society, added to O'Neill's own interpretation of the biblical myth.

Fragmentation will be the major theme of the analysis and the methodological approach that will be given has to do with a systematic examination to different aspects that serve us to make a point proving the thesis statement already given. The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey Into Night are important pieces marked with fragmented issues and situations. In the former play the characters live in such a state of self-delusion that they appear to live in space where time seem to have forgotten. This limbo serves as a non-fragmentative space, where they all share a similar set of experiences and ambitions. The ambitions are also non-ambitions. The character of Hickey is the one that fragments this state, provoking an emotional uprising. The later depicts a family broken by ailments and addictions, their fragmentation is deeply installed at a psychological level, the Tyrone family is composed by drug addicts or alcoholics and live a life where concealment, denial and refusal breaks them apart and far away from each other. The principal bibliographical source from which we can refer to this fragmented state will be extracted from The Theatre of Revolt by Robert Brustein, which offers a detailed study of both of the plays from a perspective similar to the one being employed in this analysis.

The loss of control is the other major avenue of this study. Characters are mostly left in an aimless state of mind that makes them susceptible to the loss of control. From a formal point of view, their state of mind might be produced by various factors, from the addiction to a substance to the death of a loved one that unchains a delirious state. Without a grasp to reality, they start wandering around a close space in which they can feel safe and left alone to their ill-conceived perception of human life. The uncontrolled state start becoming the normal and rutinary way of living, ambitions are suppressed, life becomes monotonous.

Only a few chosen ones are aware of their state and this happens to the characters that are most adamant and, in a sense, proud of their condition. It remains to be analyzed if this dormant self-awareness is enough to represent a change in their horizon of expectations and fuel an improvement in their living. From a literary point of view, the loss of a discourse, the change in the perspectives and the radicalization of postures forces the characters to an unbalanced state. Their decay it is also the decay of a generation and a form of speech, the new modern environment does not take up with their current condition. Hence we can observe the loss of control, from a psychological and physical standpoint (as characters and as representatives of a discourse). The invalid new context makes them adrift in a world that was of them once.

Another specific objective that will be addressed is the messianic aspect that it is portrayed by the protagonist of The Iceman Cometh, Theodore Hickmore, "Hickey". This character's actions can be understood differently but the approach the analysis will take it's focused on his revelatory function. Just like a prophet, Hickey was given a revelatory truth and he sees as his destiny to change the lives of their friends. He is the sanest of the insane characters and his final message transcends as the disillusionment with religion.

Concerning the literary theories involved in the analysis, many of the references will be made towards the Modern Literary Theory. As we may know, this set of theories is quite extensive and we will not refer directly or extensively to most of them, but we will reflect on some of them, principally the intertextual approach which derives from Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction. Other alluded concepts will be Existentialism, Archetypes, and the notion of Discourses (from the New Historicism theory). Some of them may be used without further specification in order to provide a more direct analysis.

## II. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Eugene O'Neill

This project will look into the most important body of work, as it is considered by a long string of literary scholars, of American playwright Eugene O'Neill (New York City, 15 October 1888 – Boston, 27 November 1953). The American dramatist was well considered by the critical circles, being awarded several Pulitzer Prizes in the Drama category (1920, 1922, 1928 and posthumously in 1957) and the Nobel Prize in 1936, even though his plays were not considered commercially successful (except for some of his earlier works). His plays are realistic and of a modernist style, with a resemblance with other characteristic authors like Maxim Gorky and Anton Chekov and, in terms of thematical features, he constantly deals with personal tragedies and pessimistic surroundings. Overall, his body of work is composed by more than 30 plays and about 10 one-act plays. Of all of his extended corpus only one of his plays is a comedy, "Ah, Wilderness" (1933), the remainder are all dramas. In the beginning of his career, O'Neill concentrated on experimental theatre, heavily influenced by Greek mythology and Judeo-Christian traditional elements. Early titles, like Mourning Becomes Electra (1931) and Lazarus Laughed (1925-1926) make reference to his initial influences as a playwright.

If we consider the cultural canon of America it is undoubted that his most relevant, transcendental and critically acclaimed plays are The Iceman Cometh (1939), which was published in 1940 and premiered in 1946, and Long Day's Journey Into Night (1941), published in 1956, three years after the death of the author and premiered in the same year. These two plays are uncharacteristic in terms of topic and themes, they share the same elements than the others, but they are more focused in an underlying issue, giving more importance to the existential development of the characters than to stylistic features.

### 2.2 Intertextuality

A text is not merely a text, is the reflection of a culmination of interpretations of a determined view of the world. Texts are not meant to be seen in isolation, they connect with one another in an intricate network which has been named "intertextuality". Briefly put, this is what authors like Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes exposed in their most influential works (From Work to Text and The Death of the Author, respectively).

This conception is heavily influenced by the structuralism movement, a dominant school of linguistic and anthropology thought during the first half of the twentieth century in which the basic unit of language, the linguistic sign, is made of a two-part constituent, a signifier, the concept, and a signified, the material or immaterial object. This relationship is arbitrary, and one of these constituents in isolation is totally meaningless. The movement generated by Ferdinand de Saussure eventually started influencing several areas besides linguistic, and traces of it can be found in the work of Russian Formalism crafted by Roman Jakobson and others. For the literary structuralists, the structures were located at the core of every

literary text and novelty and innovation in literary creation could only lie in the complete change of the structures previously mentioned.

Then, the rationalization was further expanded by Barthes, who questioned structuralism from a deconstructionist point of view, in which he saw that signifier and signified are part of the general equation, with the whole construction “criss-crossed” by many different impulses and associations. In this sense, literary works are not longer seen as stable units, the elements are constantly reworking and reinterpreting them as the reader sees fit. Texts are defined as objects and the subject is the member of the relationship that is responsible for its place in the continuum. This is why intertextuality can be seen a model for culture itself, not just the vehicle for it. A model that is dynamic and complex, with mixed cultural meanings and diverging positions. As it can be stated, the direction of a discourse may change from a period to another, as the subjects require it to do so.

So, from an intertextual standpoint, the work is constantly reutilized and reinterpreted. We can present the most accurate example coming from the most important texts in human history, like the Bible or Greek mythology. Their elements are repeated time and time again during the confection of several other texts, without importance to the time or the space in which they are made. This construction can be transferred to the work of Eugene O’Neill, and, especially to his play The Iceman Cometh. In it, we see diverse elements of Christian tradition being reused in his text. We have a character who assumes a type of personal discourse similar to a messianic nature. The location of the plot resembles an intermediary position between heaven and hell, a place where time seems to have stopped. There are people who are portrayed as followers but also as traitors of this overreaching message. All of these elements are not placed randomly; an underlying discourse is being crafted and a position is being taken by the author. There is a conjugation of elements, the transference of Christian-infused notions to this piece of realistic theatre that serves to make the valid lecture that the change of perspectives occurred during a determined period of time, the embodiment of a new discourse being born from the previous discourse that, in a sense, gave birth to it.

To conclude, we can say that the literary objects in the play are working for the transmission of a message taken by the subject. The final intentions as interpreted by the analysis will be addressed in the next stage of the study.

## 2.3 Fragmentation

The phenomenon of fragmentation may be explained taking in consideration different positions or disciplines; we may find definitions for the term ranging from the chemistry field down to the sociological meaning. Of all of these variants for the term, in this study we will refer to the social fragmentation that appears patent in the work of Eugene O’Neill. Social fragmentation, in very mundane terms, refers to the decline in social cohesion and an increase in social exclusion. This definition refers to the selected group of people in a society who have not benefited from new opportunities created by economic and political restructuring, thus, restringing themselves to a secluded location, with weakened bonds of kinship and community, as well as a direct and increased contact with lawlessness, corruption and crime. As we may imply, the work of the author analyzed is characterized by the presence of elements that suggests the fragmentation of elements in a social manner.

In order to accommodate the theoretical aspect of the term to the thesis being proved, fragmentation will also be understood in a more literary and quite pedestrian manner, as an event, action or performance that provokes a clear rupture in a sequence. Every aspect in the narrative may serve to act as a fragmented construct; it can be represented by physical spaces or discourses. This fragmentation is derived from the rupture between the perspectives that once existed and were the forces that helped the integration of a singular discourse in American society. This causes the emergence of limitless new discourses, as well as new perspectives.

As it was explained, in this project, the theme of fragmentation will be intimately connected with modernism and the modernist point of view which the author uses to surround his plays. The instances of fragmentation always have to do with the transitional aspect of the shifting perspectives which dominated the American cultural landscape and, more importantly, the literary and dramatic creative process.

During the beginning of the colonization process, a single Puritan discourse was used as a glue to keep the spirit of a young nation together. Thinkers like John Winthrop had great plans and ideas for the new continent to be inhabited, a place where it could be achieved, following a religious-fueled concept, a full spiritual development. The discourse affected the common life of members of society, as well as literature, as evidenced by the work of well-known authors like Emily Dickinson and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The discourse was firstly damaged by the first major event in the country, American Civil War. The rising of industrialization, a new economical model and conflicts abroad helped the acceleration of the fragmentation of the Puritan perspective. We arrive to the first decade of the twentieth century with a nation whose society is totally heterogeneous in terms of membership and fragmented in terms of discourse and values. The consequence of this modification in the structure is reflected in the play; several elements are disjointed or stranded in a place that is seemingly unknown. The characters represent a force of the past, old speeches and traditions, even old and almost forgotten wars, holding little resemblance to the world today. We can also reach this conclusion by looking at spaces in the play and what they stand for, the outside being almost forbidden to some of the characters, only a space as restricted and stationary as a bar is left to the old members of a common structure. They also represent this multi-cultural expression that becomes America, a place in the world made by immigrants who were rejected in the Puritan years and now coming back to reclaim their position.

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## III. Puritanism

Perhaps a quick reflection on some Puritan themes and historiography is needed because in the course of the analysis some reference to them will be made. We shall not go into much detail and try to dedicate to the New England Puritan culture of the seventeenth century.

Puritan communities were the first to assent in America, escaping from the religious persecution they were suffering in England. Their way of approaching culture was much more open to the conventional, European way. Education was a pillar for them, based on their emphasis on work as a pathway to eternal salvation. Because of this, learning to read and write was exclusively devoted to the study and lecture of the Bible and not to the activities of leisure. All forms of culture should be based on a Christian principle, sermons, diaries and poetry was to be aimed towards a religious objective, fictional literature or poetry was ethically forbidden or considered as wrong. As a result of this, education and faith were very much related, one needed for the other in a symbiotic relationship. Nevertheless, some important work was made, like John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in England and the poetry of Anne Bradstreet in New England.

We have to take into account that Puritanism, as it was conceived in Britain, had a very apocalyptic point of view towards civilization. For them, society was on the brink of destruction and is for them the task of rebuild humanity in a broad sense. This was one of their main reasons to leave England, "*New England was to be a New Israel—a covenanted community. Its founders... were to form themselves into a community of saints for the enjoyment of God's ordinances and the elevation of their colony into the status of a chosen people*" (Simpson, 23). Its New Zion was supposed to be a homogeneous, closed community, with a strong communal sentiment and an ecclesiastical apparatus of political power. Preachers and reverends like John Winthrop or Thomas Dudley were also named Governors in the state of Massachusetts, as a proof of the little difference they intended to establish between politics and religion.

The relationship between Puritans and God was very strong and influential in the lives of the new colons of America. For them, God was to be found in their daily lives, as a part of the routines they executed. They also developed a seemingly extreme idea of good and evil. These were two totally antagonistic notions, they represented what was good in the world and they should fight and vanquish the evil. In the new world, the evil was represented by the Indians because they were heathens and they successfully set up on a mission to eradicate them, instead of evangelize them, as it was common for the Roman Catholic tradition.

If education was important, art was most definitely the least of their worries. The mission of creating artistic representations was not one of their goals; their pragmatic stance prevented the emergence of an influential artistic movement. However, rhetoric was an entirely different affair. Since they did not wanted to plunge too much humanistic notions in their discourse, Puritan preachers and reverends looked for figures, symbols and metaphors they could insert in their teachings, psalms and preachings. While they explicitly did not wanted to make their points obscure and hard to grasp, "*Truth feareth nothing so much as concealment, and desireth nothing so much as clearly to be laid open to the view of all: When it is most naked, it is most lovely and powerful*" (Haller, 140), they did attempted to embellish the discourse by means of rhetorical devices, "*The point was that stylistic virtuosity*

*must push the pike of the spirit. Whatever contributed to edification was but a means of preaching naked Christ... The puritan preacher was quite prepared to use anything he knew as means to his end...*" (Haller, op. cit., 140). They always appealed to the masses so they avoided metaphysical wit, learned allusions, tags of Greek and Latin, snatches from the heathen poets and philosophers and references to the aristocratic or esoteric culture. In conclusion, this was the higher form of art the Puritan movement could conceive, without actually wanting to achieve it.

Finally, the cultural inheritance of the Puritans in the culture and the way of living in America is undeniable, even if the movement was unable to expand to the west of the country. We find traces of Puritanism in Transcendentalism and Unitarism, as Emerson and Whitman were influenced by the absolute ways and the rhetoric, rather than the dogmatic and religious applications. A moral barometer was founded in the new world and it affected the rise of the young nation. The rupture between good and evil as contradictory and indefensible terms, the ascetism, the life devoted to a bigger-than-life cause without needing evidence and the embellishment of the discourse were part of the American way of thinking for many years to come. The arrival of new theories and perspectives from Europe altered and transformed the Puritan ideology and wars and internal conflicts threatened to suppress it, but traces of it are embedded in the American idiosyncrasy, as it can demonstrated in the analysis of the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

## IV. Intertextuality

This segment of the analysis will primarily concentrate mainly on the notion of intertextuality present in The Iceman Cometh and secondarily in Long Day's Journey Into Night. The elements to be mentioned next are representations of a past perspective of important influence on American society. This is relevant to the analysis so that we can trace a connection between both perspectives that are being mentioned, and not random elements of discussion. First of all we must take into account that *“the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable”* (Benjamin, 7). A work of art cannot be imitated and the context of interpretation is always evolving so the notion that we have of it is changeable.

We must take into account the *“intertextual network, the constituent parts of a text refer back to, quote, and react with all the other texts, indeed all the other signifiers, that exist around them, and that have existed before”* (Fury, Mansfield, 56). So, the text only operates as a part of a larger network that creates its context. The context in which the story develops itself has much to do with O'Neill's' own upbringing, presenting elements that are familiar to him, like in this case, the religious aspect, more specifically, the Christian imagery brought upon by the Puritan perspective that existed previously in America. So, in a way, both the text and the context are mixed together and can be analyzed as two interconnected entities. These several pieces of reflection on the imagery serve for O'Neill as a model for reformulating a new form of discourse, not simply restating an already known and common tradition. The author may use this to emphasize some of the elements present in the text, because he wants to link them with a previous discourse in order to give focal importance to his own understanding of the state of affairs.

We may agree on several aspects that are quite literal and clear:

***“Hickey as a savior has twelve disciples. They drink wine at Hope’s supper party, and their grouping on the stage, according to O’Neill’s directions is reminiscent of Leonardo Da Vinci’s painting of The Last Supper. Hickey leaves the party, as Christ does, aware that he is about to be executed. The three whores correspond in number to the three Marys, and sympathize with Hickey as the three Marys sympathize with Christ... One of the derelicts, Parritt, resembles Judas Iscariot in several ways. He is the twelfth in the list of dramatis personae; Judas is the twelfth in the New Testament of the Disciples. He has betrayed his anarchist mother for a paltry \$200; Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver...”*** (Day, 334).

All of these features are undeniable but they serve mostly as a statement of contrastive elements between two perspectives rather than showing a re-interpretation. However, these are all elements that do appear in the play and they can serve as an initial point of reference to commence the analysis with a documented base.

A notion that can be assumed to be a symbolic representation of Puritanism in the play is the concept of a close community. The characters all live in the same place and spend their lives without considering leaving this place, until the arrival of Hickey. The same idea was applied in the beginnings of the nation, small communities were supposed to be

secured from outside influence and maintain purity. The boozehounds in the play follow these patterns, though they have their doubts at one point, their instinct was greater than the common sense that impeaches the new discourse.

The most important element that groups the characters together is the fact that they all share a common set of frustrations concerning their past lives and a sense of avoidance of responsibilities and expectations. They all share a common discourse, a sense of membership, as it is expressed by Larry Slade, their most accurate speaker, "*What is it? It's the No Chance Saloon. It's Bedrock Bar, The End of the Line Café, The Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller! Don't you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That's because it's the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they're going next, because there is no farther they can go. It's a great comfort to them.*" (O'Neill, 25). He also addresses the fact that happiness plays an important role in their way of life, this is their decision and their own path to the fulfillment of their goals in life, in an almost-religious manner, "*They manage to get drunk, by hook or crook, and keep their pipe dreams, and that's all they ask of life. I've never known more contented men. It isn't often that men attain the true goal of their heart's desire.*" (ibid., 36). This sentiment is clearly deviated, only part of a superficial assessment of the situation and it is not present when we analyze in a deeper level.

Concerning the main idea of the latter point, the author was probably trying to convey a personal point of view. Having been raised as a Roman Catholic by her mother, O'Neill had to endure her addictions to substances like morphine, a fact that he knew during his formative years when the young playwright-to-be was reading Wilde, Shaw and Ibsen. The Catholic values he learned from her mother, a woman who considered joining a nunnery when young, were affected and transformed into the radical discourse we can perceive now. These are all facts that are part of the plot of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* which is considered his most autobiographical play, though some authors go beyond that and actually give *The Iceman Cometh* an autobiographical connotation, as well, "*several characters in The Iceman Cometh suggest O'Neill's father, and as O'Neill's memories of the old actor were less haunting than those of his mother and brother, so are their dramatic re-enactments here less haunting.*" (Manheim).

A religious belief has a complex nature; it requires the ability to believe in something which does not have any empirical proof to ground its veracity. It is sustained on a transmitted discourse that it is given from generation to generation, with a changeable capacity so it can be maintained from the course of times. At a different scale, the same happens to the inhabitants of Harry Hope's hotel and bar, who all share a communal identity. However, this sentiment is corroded, the ties that bind them are weak, expressing only in the form of alcohol and pipe dreams; the characters lack real communion, they are ready to betray one another in order to get the next drink. On the other hand, they do share a common story, the mythology of the iceman, the story Hickey tells all the time when he reunites with Hope and the others for their sporadic parties.

They are always intrigued whether if the story is actually accurate or not, "Remember how he works up that gag about his wife, when he's cockeyed, cryin' over her picture and den springin' it on yuh all of a sudden dat he left her in de hay wid de iceman?" (ibid., 4). Hickey constantly teases with the idea of his wife abandoning him for the iceman, a story the derelicts of the bar are never sure if it is true or not, but it amuses them beyond belief, "...Remember that gag he always pulls about his wife and the iceman? He'd make a cat laugh!" (ibid., 61). This baseless story can be compared with the grounding event that builds a religion, a story which occurred in times immemorial with little to no evidence of it actually happening. Since they are all heavy drinkers and partiers they are also heavy believers and

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the presence of Hickey in the bar is one of the things the drunkards are looking forward the most, like the arrival of a divine entity.

The problem arises in the final act, when the story is set straight from Hickey himself. Suddenly, the whole spell he puts on his friend at the bar breaks loose. Even Hope turns his back on the self-proclaimed savior, "Give us a rest, for the love of Christ! Who the hell cares? We want to pass out in peace!" (ibid., 240). Hickey's personal crusade and at-scale religion was overwhelmed by the veracity of the facts, the story of the iceman was a delusion, one of many "pipe dreams" argued throughout the text and the drunken derelicts started drinking once again, with the flavor of the booze recomposed. O'Neill is cryptically narrating the end of a belief, the changes in the behavior of the members of the society does not change abruptly, as a matter of fact, they step backwards to their common self's. But, at the risk of sounding like a cliché, a breath of life has left the characters, as they fail to acknowledge the confession made by Parritt and his posterior demise. Only Larry Slade, the one character that stands apart from the common behavior, is able to notice it and feel the burden of it.

Now we may include another characteristic to the persona of Hickey, the one of a messianic hero, "The messianic hero, in short, is a superman, combining the qualities of a benefactor and a malefactor...As a malefactor, the messianic hero desires to kill God and destroy the old order; as a benefactor, he desires to build an order of his own." (Brustein, 18-19). The role of the malefactor is one that fits Hickey to the bone. He desires to change his friends, to show them a reformed and open-eyed view of reality, in other words, to kill their God, alcohol. The benefactor role is also quite accurate; he wants to establish his message and the learning of his path. The problem arises when we take into account the "hero" portion of the concept. Hickey simply cannot be a hero, if anything he is an antihero, a character so damaged that he starts a complete change in his life, only to realize his own insanity. He lacks the moral fiber a hero must have; his intentions are possibly good and honest but they emerge from the most horrendous act possible, the slaying of his own wife. Salvation is possible but to consider him a heroic figure is an overreach. Nevertheless, we might call him a messianic antihero. After all, antiheroes do encapsulate "the... rejection of traditional values of Modernist literature in general. The continuing popularity ... may be based on the recognition that a person is fraught with human frailties." (Erikson).

This frailty is not at all noticeable during the first three and a half acts of the play. Even though he has to endure the attacks of Larry Slade concerning his intentions, Hickey shows himself as a confident and reassuring person, a moral guide who knows the perils of drunkenness and self-delusion, "I know how he feels. I wrote the book." (ibid., 192) is a phrase he reiterates quite often, like a new version of the iceman story with a different intention. He takes a stance as an emotional pillar; he absorbs the punches of the derelicts whom show a declining degree of intention and resolution of following his advice, until the final dialogue of the third act, when he confesses the death of his wife. Up until this point, the role of the messianic antihero is clearly defined and Hickey fulfills his role splendidly. Unfortunately for him, things fall apart in the final act when the truth is revealed and we see a different side of his personality, contrived and inconsistent, bursting out, crying and self-absorbed in his own narrative, depicting a irrefutable case of a psychological unbalance (especially at the very end, when he tries to negate all that he has said to that point), "I've got to tell you! Your being the way you are now gets my goat! It's all wrong! It puts things in my mind--about myself. It makes me think, if I got balled up about you, how do I know I wasn't balled up about myself? And that's plain damned foolishness." (ibid., 231). In this sense he resembles the final behavior of Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night,

withdrawn from reality, both characters exhibit similar rhetoric properties, mixing timeframes, a characteristic that has to do with the loss of control, a topic we will examine later.

The end of the story leaves the reader uncertain of the true nature of Hickey's intentions or about his true essence (if he was a mad character all along, playing with the reader's horizon of expectations), but we need to take into account that he did try to overcome the shortenings of his own qualities by helping others, an antiheroic quality, even as misguided as it turned out to be.

The principal problem Hickey faced was internally related with his messianic essence as a messenger. Just like the prototypical messianic figure, Jesus of Nazareth, who was conflicted by his double dimension as holy and human, Hickey is marked by a double dimension of illusion and disillusion. His happiness was never achieved; his marriage never seemed to give him any peace of mind, like it did happened with Harry Hope, but he kept on acting with seeming happiness, never showing his true feelings, always pranking with the iceman story. His double life was expressed by his continuous affairs and slips. They were all calls for attention but his wife also lived in a state of delusion, she was willingly blind to his husband's disloyalty preferring to have him around to not having him at all. Hickey ended up despising and murdering her, "*I even caught myself hating her for making me hate myself so much. There's a limit to the guilt you can feel and the forgiveness and the pity you can take! You have to begin blaming someone else, too.*" (ibid., 239).

The same process is echoed from the Hickey ordeal; the patrons began hating Hickey because alcohol lost its effect as an excuse, just like Hickey hated his wife for not caring too much, another excuse. The tragic of it all was that Hickey, who thought he was living the truth, was living another pipe dream. Trying to preach his perverted truth to the derelicts was meant to end badly, because the essence of the discourse was based in another ill-conceived depiction of reality. As a consequence of this we may formulate that O'Neill subverted the biblical image of the savior, the times were not inviting for salvation or change. There was a deep sense of hopelessness that prevented this from happening. So Hickey irremediably turns from a redeemer to an iconoclast without actually intending to be one, he is hopeless and defeated without achieving his goals, even with his own conception of reality questioned and, finally, proven to be wrong.

The role of Larry Slade is quite more intricate and less established than the savior-turned-madman Theodore Hickmore's. His presence in the story is the one of an antagonist to the protagonist position of Hickey. He also is the outsider in a play full of outsiders, the one who devoted a large part of his life to a baseless and utopical religion like Anarchism. His symbolic status does not end there, "*Larry Slade becomes the only real convert to Hickey's religion of Death –he is, like Saint Peter, the rock on which Hickey builds his Church.*" (Brustein, op. cit., 344). The final suicide of Don Parritt has too much to do with Slade's conversion to actually give credit to Hickey as an inspiration to his change of heart, his death touches the most personal and cherished part of his past, the time during the Movement and quite possible the memory of the women he loved. We may say that this change in the interpretation of the character of Larry Slade is an example of the intertextual capacity of a text, the meanings are evolving constantly and we find new ways to reinterpret their elements. If anything, we may say that Larry stands with the reader or viewer rather than as an archetypical character of the play, he demonstrate more "human" characteristics, mainly only because he is the only bum who can elaborate a reflective discourse to justify their stance as outsiders and drunkards as a life philosophy, the "Old Grandstand Foolosopher", other of the derelicts' common elements of communion. We can also make a case for Hugo Kalmar, a character who seems to be in an unconscious state nearly all the time but who

can also make compelling arguments from time to time. Unsurprisingly, he was also part of the Anarchist Movement so we find another case of an illustrated man who had a rough life.

At this point we have made clear that the religious aspect is under the surface of *The Iceman Cometh*, never fully explained but not too hard to infer at a detailed view. Another element in the play which works with the puritan disillusionment effect is the bar. According to biographical investigation, for the writing process of the play, O'Neill "reached back to his days at Jimmy-the-Priest's and other New York bars, flop houses and saloons, like the Hell Hole" (Bryer, Hartig, 415). The latter name gives some evidence to exercise a symbolic interpretation of the place. The bar is the only location in which the play is set; the only "wandering" characters are the street walkers, Cora, Margie and Pearl, as well as Chuck Morello, a day time bartender and fiancé of Cora. Rocky Pioggi, the Italian night time bartender is the only relevant secondary character who is able to leave the place. All of the others are bound to this place, out of self-complacency or because they really do not have another place to go to.

The mood of the place is also revelatory; the ambient is dark and quiet, a catatonic peace only interrupted by some drunk shouting. This mutual silence can be critically discussed, "*the community is almost Utopian. Before Hickey comes, the men live in relative harmony... keeping hope alive through the anticipation of significant action on a day which never comes*" (Brustein, op. cit., 342). The Utopian aspect is quite accurate; another element of Puritan descent, there is a perfect balance between the pipe dreams and the motionless state, all fueled up by alcohol. The living corpses who constitute Hope's bar realize they are not dead yet, this is only a purgatory-like state, which can be defined briefly as "*the condition, process or place of purification or temporary punishment in which... the souls of those who die in a state of grace are made ready for heaven*" (Encyclopedia Britannica, definition of 'purgatory'). Characters are so consumed by their past and their delusional willingness to execute their dreams that they live in a condition similar to souls who seek absolution to enter Heaven, according to the Christian imagery, their never ending punishment is to reminisce about their youth and the happiest time of their lives. The irruption of the New Messenger Hickey disrupts the silence and creates an unwanted new focus of attention. Following this logic we can't really assess whether Hickey is acting accordingly, if it is out of true Christian compassion or as a product of a self-centered, egocentric wimp.

What Hickey essentially offers is the truth. From an ontological standpoint, reality is best conveyed in the outside world rather than in the four walls of Hope's bar. He wants to pull them away from limbo and into reality once again. What he does not realize is that the derelicts could not be less interested in such offer. They do make an effort to change their ways, mainly based on pride. This is the case for most of the characters, Joe Mott does it from a racial position and Piet Wetjoen and Cecil Lewis do it from a personal rivalry mixed with senility. Willie Oban does it from professional pride; he truly believes he could have been an exceptional lawyer. James Cameron does it from professional pride mixed with a fulfillment with past promises (he is known as Jimmy Tomorrow, after all). Harry Hope does it to make amends with the past; since his wife passed away he has not been able to step outside his property. Only Pat McGloin and Ed Mosher do it from a perverse pride, as followers of the pack they want to secure their place in the hotel and the saloon and are willing to make whatever Hope would ask them to. The effort lasts what it is supposed to last. Obviously, Larry Slade is the one who delivers the truth, that they are not interested in it, "*To hell with the truth! As the history of the world proves, the truth has no bearing on anything*" (ibid., 9). What Hickey fails to acknowledge is that Harry Hope and their regulars are not interested in going from purgatory to the real world. They actually want to go to Heaven; the

purpose of their lives is no longer existent or it has been achieved, as miserable as it may have been. For instance, Harry Hope's purpose was defined by his wife; now that she is no longer living he lost all will to live and is peacefully waiting for his turn.

Intertextual notions are also to be found in the other work considered in the corpus, Long Day's Journey Into Night, though they are totally different than the ones we find in The Iceman Cometh. First of all, there are no indications of a direct reinterpretation of the Puritan tradition in the play to the point that we find similarities between the Bible and some passages of the play. The main protagonists of the story, the Tyrone family, are all of Irish descent, educated under the Christian influence but with different results. While the parents, Mary and James Tyrone, do show that they lean towards the Christian principles, they are not especially devoted in the typical manner which the Church requires. They do have their own peculiarities, James Tyrone is adamant about his position regarding suicide, he considers a dishonorable and punishable act, but the truth of the matter is that his father left his family so that he could die in his homeland, possibly by his own hand. Other than that he is relaxed in his religiosity, only showing disgust when his sons quote from poets and authors he considers "*whoremongers and degenerates*" (O'Neill, 135). Mary is quite different from her husband; she truly desired a life of devotion, as she explains to the family in her final soliloquy, "*I had a talk with Mother Elizabeth... I told her I wanted to be a nun. I explained how sure I was of my vocation, that I prayed to the Blessed Virgin to make me sure, and to find me worthy.*" (ibid., 175).

It is hard to ignore the transformation of the most devoted character in the play, from a young, naïve and beautiful girl to a drug addicted, rheumatic, detached and delusional old woman. Mary always spoke of her youth as the happiest period of her life but was unable to make a successful transition to adulthood and she could not offer protection to her sons from the hardships of the future. It can also be considered as a failure the fact that her two sons never presented any inclination for her own beliefs. This ultimately represents the defeat of the tradition and the rise of newer, modern elements, Mary Tyrone's own failure is represented as the failure of the entire paradigm.

The play does not give much importance to elements of Christian tradition (at least not to the extent of The Iceman Cometh), but it does state a clear presence of new poetic, philosophical and sociological discourses as a part of the intellectual background of James Tyrone Jr. and Edmund Tyrone, which may present some connection with the rupture between traditional and Modern perspectives from a symbolic standpoint. In the beginning of the play we notice that O'Neill gives his characters a rich and extended collection of authors as part of the Tyrone library, "*Against the wall between the doorways is a small bookcase with a picture of Shakespeare above it, containing novels by Balzac, Zola, Stendhal, philosophical and sociological works by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Engels, Kropotkin, Max Stirner, plays by Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, poetry by Swinburne, Rossetti, Wilde, Ernest Dowson, Kipling, etc.*" (ibid., 11). The majority of the texts were read by Jamie and Edmund and, which symbolizes the union between the young Tyrones with the new perspective, to which they belong. It is of no surprise that the only collection of books that belongs to James Tyrone is the Shakespeare one, which subsequently represents his alignment with the past perspective. He has little respect for the most Modern texts, considering them morbid nonsense, depressive and of perverted wisdom, while William Shakespeare is the stick under which all texts should be measured. James Tyrone, as Mary dreamt of being a nun, longed for his youth years when he could have become a Shakespearean actor and his own devotion for the English playwright represents his own conception of the traditional discourse as a part of his own self.

The monolithical aspect of Shakespeare certainly has many characteristics in common with Christianity and, most specifically, the Bible. Both conceptual notions hold an aura of ineffability on them, they are regarded as fundamental in all sorts of cultural studies, as well as being considered life models, *“Why can’t you remember your Shakespeare and forget the third-raters. You’ll find what you’re trying to say in him --as you’ll find everything else worth saying”* (ibid., 131). The idea that we can align ourselves within a line of thought inspired by a reflective structure based upon a text is something both Shakespeare and the Christian tradition have in common. As it occurred to Mary, Tyrone fails to transfer this sentiment to his sons, whom are well-read in Modern literature and only think of Shakespeare from a pitiful feeling toward his father.

Similar to what occurs in *The Iceman Cometh*, we find the behavior of the young characters being determined by the actions of the older ones. Like Rosa Parritt and her abject belief in the Movement catapulted his son into all kinds of deviated acts, the young Tyrone are deeply influenced by the shortcomings of their father. The refusal of Tyrone to give them a proper family home affected them to the point they do not feel they belong in any specific place, reflected on Edmund’s sailor phase. Alcoholism is other trait that was transmitted from father to son, in this case Jamie. His addiction is probably caused by his fathers’ preference for alcohol, even though he tried to hide it, he always ended up feeding drinks to his sons, even when he was a child, *“if he had a nightmare when he was little, or stomachache, your remedy was to give him a teaspoonful of whisky to quiet him”* (ibid., 110). We can conclude that the failure of a perspective will create a rupture in the cultural continuity and gives birth to a damaged generation, where obscure and existential thoughts will take place, over concealment and false premises.

Finally, the autobiographical aspect of the play may come as a paradox to the analysis. *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* is unmistakably inspired by true events regarding O’Neill’s own life, all of the characters represent his family (he himself takes the form of Edmund, while his deceased younger brother Eugene is, in fact, a real brother O’Neill lost named Edmund). According to the intertextual perspective, we must separate the author from his own writings, which would correspond in a depersonalization of the text. The text will become a new, standalone creative form, O’Neill himself being transformed into a *“paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work; there is a reversion of the work on to the life (and no longer the contrary)”* (Barthes). In this sense, we can trace a difference between Edmund Tyrone and Eugene O’Neill that serves us to consider them as two different entities. For the author, the exercise of writing about these events comes as a reconciliation with the past but also as a search for his own dramatic voice. O’Neill searches for meaning and creation while Edmund has no direction in life and an uncertain future, both subjects cannot be considered as similar, the playwright is close to develop a distinct artistic way of expression, the wannabe poet is merely finding his way into getting another drink of whisky. We are not dealing with examples of reproduction as we are in front of a true reinterpretation, an essential feature for intertextual writing.

The reutilization of all of these elements combined gives a symbolic dimension to O’Neill’s writings and, most importantly, a link between his work and the Puritan perspective. It is a critical and negative view; all of their elements are distorted or discarded (Hickey, the messianic entity, is rejected as a mad man, Mary Tyrone, the devoted would-be nun, converted into a drug addict). For most part of the analysis, we can deduce that his work offers a fragmentation between this past but also an influential perspective in the American literary and social landscape and a new perspective, one that would be imposed as the primary movement of the rest of the twentieth century, Modernism.

## V. Fragmentation and Modernism

The fragmented aspect of Eugene O'Neill's work is clearly defined by the transformation of a society and of a new standpoint to which measure all cultural production. At the beginning of *The Iceman Cometh* we find a sample of the diverse group that conform his personal conception of this process of transformation. The postcolonial process is represented through the characters of Piet Wetjoen, Cecil Lewis and Jimmy Tomorrow; all of them were part of the Boer War in South Africa during the nineteenth century. Joe Mott and Rocky Pioggi also represent different ethnicities and origins. They represent a heterogeneous group; this notion can be supported by their mode of speaking. From Rocky and the street walkers, who are uneducated and O'Neill shows it in writing, with abbreviation of words and pronunciations, to Larry Slade and Don Parritt, who are far more articulated. The rest of the patrons also evidence some particular characteristics, for instance Hugo, who combines a loft speech permeated with his political sensibility mixed with his own drunkenness which makes him misspell some words, "*Capitalist swine! Bourgeois stool pigeons! Have the slaves no right to sleep even?... Buy me a trink!*" (O'Neill, 11). This shows that all of them have a distinctive voice even if they together seem to be just one coral character. In this sense, O'Neill works on the dramatic conception of the new perspective using traditional elements, and the attributes of the modernist construction of the themes and topics and how they complement each other.

O'Neill may not be from the direct group of authors who were named by Gertrude Stein as "The Lost Generation" but he surely shares many of the features which gave them such fame. Some of them are "*the experimentation in the plays, alienated and disilluminated characters, the symbolic representation of a world without God, the use of stream of consciousness*" (Lye), used in this sense as an outlet to allow the exposition of the inner psyche of a character (like in Hickey's final revelation), these are all major characteristics that are shared by all modernist tradition.

Another aspect that gives evidence to the fragmentary state of the play is the border-type of settings and characters that inhabit it. During this period we find an increase in the use of alienated elements in literature, some of them showing psychological or physical malformations, from Hemingway to Woolf. O'Neill in *The Iceman Cometh* does not go that far to include physical deformations but he does portray characters that are psychologically damaged. Harry Hope expresses bitterness and sadness that are fitting to his condition as an old-timer, but he also shows the profound damage the death of his wife provoked in his psyche and confidence, "*...Can't help thinking the last time I went out was to Bessie's funeral. After she'd gone, I didn't feel life was worth living. Swore I'd never go out again*" (ibid., 194). Here we notice a man, maybe the most human of the characters in the play (we perceive he and Larry Slade to represent the viewer's perspective in the deployment of the story), who is deprived of hope, as if his last name were an ironic joke. The main idea of the last sentence is most certainly a purposeful gimmick used by the author to express his interpretative voice in the play. He is unable physically to abandon his bar, the only place on Earth where he feels comfortable, because it was a space once shared with the woman who we, as readers or viewers, perceive as his *raison d'être*. We have little doubt that his demeanor was different when his wife was alive. When he lost Bessie Hope all of his certainties toward life were lost with her, a transitional life begun, an aimless, even

godless life. So, we see in Harry Hope's psychological transitional state, the transition of perspectives, from an absolute one (Puritanism) to an uncertain one (Modernism).

Returning to the point concerning the ironic dimension of Hope's last name, the same can be said of *The Iceman Cometh* as a whole. Structurally, the play is quite unfragmented, we find the usual dramatic unfolding, with a climatic event when the opposition between two forces is overtaken by one of them. This can be deceiving because the themes and topics depicted represent quite the opposite. Here we can refer to an ironic dimension present in the play, even its title is a part of this, the reference to the iceman, a figure that never comes, mainly because we are not even certain it exists.

As for the structural nature, we have to refer to a concept that will be deepened in the section regarding loss of control. Modern writings are layered constructs and O'Neill's plays form part of this category, we find a primary, superficial layer with all the elements which are directly exposed, like the light reflections the derelicts make and the self-delusional acts which they recurrently perform, the pipe dreams. Then we find a deep layer, where all of the real intentions are found, the reality of the pipe dreams is exposed, as well as the attitudes of some characters. For instance, in the final revelation of Hickey we are looking at a deep layer of conscious, where the character is completely open and sincere; a feature that it is rare throughout the play and eminently Modern.

Moving along, life without God is one of the most important and documented themes of Modernism, and one that implies the factual rupture from the previous paradigm. Here we see the fragmented state of the system of beliefs of the characters at different levels. One case that it is interesting to point out is the situation of Larry Slade and Hugo Kalmar. Both of them belonged to the Anarchist movement which was fairly prominent during the beginning of the twentieth century. Ultimately, they wholeheartedly believed that society should not believe in anything. Still, it is a religious devotion that one person needs to feel to be part of a movement which is practiced in the frontier of legality. They both devoted their youth and part of their adulthood to it only to end up with a feeling of irritation towards it, as Larry Slade expresses when he is re-acquainted with Don Parritt, "*...to hell with the Movement and all connected with it! I'm out of it, and everything else, and damned glad to be*" (ibid., 20). These two believers eventually became frustrated and left the movement with a vague sense of proletariat pride mixed with hopelessness. They represent the same as Hope, the border subjects who stopped believing in absolutes, for entirely different reasons, although in the story is suggested a romantic link between Slade and Rosa Parritt, Don's mother and the head of the movement.

We should also take notice of the type of religion O'Neill chose to give his devotee characters. Anarchism is a revolutionary movement and a flawed one, which did not know how to endure the change of times. The ideals, while intellectually challenging, were too radical to be applied in a real state or society, they were not even consistent in their basis, some of them advocated for complete collectivism, others for an extreme individualism, without being mutually exclusive traditions of Anarchism. Eventually, this wide philosophical array of ideas proved to be nonsensical. However, the irrationality of the movement is very much in sync with the spirit of the play. The hopelessness of the characters sometimes seems to be auto-imposed and forced a consensual confinement in a small bar in Manhattan. This irrationality is also an example of the fragmented state of Modernism and their new currents, "*...the definite rupture is explained if one considers ... (that) the surrealists rose to defend irrationality to the death*" (Camus, 217). So, as the definition says, the defense of an irrational movement was part of the modernist expression and, in the case of this play specifically, it also deals with the notion of an allegoric representation in which the system of

beliefs is portrayed as something flawed and ineffective. From one reason or another, all of these believers, of higher or mundane faith, went to Hope's bar as damaged human beings.

In a more global point of view, the irrationality can influence decisions, and during Modernism the world experimented some of their tragic consequences. The rising of fascist and totalitarian movements is not a random event; these were all atheist movements which proclaimed drastic action towards fellow human beings with no logical or scientific basis. The loss of absolutes generated, as a byproduct, the need for new ones to replace God, and some societies may have chosen the most radical ones.

The concept of irrationality as a modern characteristic can also be associated with the existential sentiment of the period, which, consequently, is connected with the concept of repetition of faith. Repetition can be described as *"the way the self relates itself to itself and to the power which constituted it, i.e. the repetition of faith is the self"* (McDonald). This is the religious act that occurred in Hope's saloon; the derelicts repeated the story of the iceman in order to believe in it, thus believing they were forming a community through means of shared knowledge. The arrival of Hickey as a messianic figure did nothing but invigorate this feeling until it was crushed during his cathartic episode. The derelicts were oblivious to this fact since they were drunk, but Larry Slade was the one character which had the ability to reflect on this fact, *"Be God, I'm the only real convert to death Hickey made here"* (ibid., 258). If we interpret Harry Hope's saloon as a space where perspectives clash, this is the final result of the confrontation.

Irrationality is also present in the Tyrone household. In *Long Day's Journey Into Night* we also have a devoted character, in this case to a proper religion like Catholicism, utterly destroyed by irrationality. Unlike Larry Slade or Don Parritt, Mary Tyrone is not ashamed of reminiscing about the days when she considered joining a nunnery. To her it was the happiest time of her life. The choice that she made affected her without her being aware of. The irrational choice of marrying James Tyrone (she became infatuated with him after she met him backstage) ended up affecting the future of her life, and eventually damaging her consciousness as it was ravaged by her addiction to morphine.

Moving forward, the character of Don Parritt also deserves to be looked at more carefully. He is thoroughly stranded apart in the development of the text. For example, he is the only one of all the characters of the play who does not know previously who Theodore Hickmore is, who is the catalyst of the action and the movement of the plot. He is also, by far, the youngest patron of the bar, or, if we take in consideration the bartenders and the street walkers, the only one who is not related with the underground night life of New York. In other words, he is the purest of the impurest souls around. Like Hugo and Larry, he comes from the Anarchist background, but he is a part of the new generation, that does not believe in absolutes. This rupture of perspectives is more distinguishable when we take into account the defensive position Larry Slade assumes when he is having conversations with Parritt. Larry only wants to avoid accountability (his old beliefs) and Parritt longs for understanding, even scolding. Even so, they were civil for the most part of their relationship until the last soliloquy by Hickey:

**LARRY--(snaps and turns on him, his face convulsed with detestation. His quivering voice has a condemning command in it.) Go! Get the hell out of life, God damn you, before I choke it out of you! Go up--! PARRITT-- Thanks, Larry. I just wanted to be sure. I can see now it's the only possible way I can ever get free from her... She'll be able to say: "Justice is done! So may all traitors die!" She'll be able to say: "I am glad he's dead! Long live the Revolution!" (He adds**

***with a final implacable jeer) You know her, Larry! Always a ham! LARRY--(pleads distractedly) Go, for the love of Christ, you mad tortured bastard, for your own sake! (ibid., 248).***

Firstly, we should take notice of the style of language Parritt chose for this pivotal moment in the plot of the story. The concepts of “Justice”, “Revolution” and “traitors” are all well-known to him and to Larry Slade, even more so, they are part of the basis of the movement her mother raised him in. By doing this, Parritt acknowledges the influence his mother represented on the person he is today (at least from the discursive point of view), as the previous generation helped to the emergence of the new one. He also is referring to loft sentiments, popularized in the French Revolution and revitalized in the twentieth century, that are linked to an overwhelming feeling that is above the mere human experience, he is talking about the transcendence of his own act of committing suicide, one that will have an important resonance in the psyche of Larry Slade. This shows us the maturity Parritt reached throughout the play, he started as a troubled kid who was basically running away from home and its bad situation there and ended making a symbol out of his own existence, crafting deep new psychological layers in his psychology.

Modernism also has to do with the political necessity the subjects felt they needed to address, all of these concepts had a different meaning in the traditionalistic, Christian approach. In it, society was stratified and the members were all devoted to a superior cause which made all privations worth it, because of the expectance of an eternal reward. Additionally, supposedly divine figures, like kings and queens, were considered representatives of God and held the grace to enslave people and take away the liberty of their people. Taking this into account, terms like “Revolution” and “Justice” are re-appropriated by a new, Modern discourse and shifted towards what we understand now as Justice or Revolution. This means an intertextual principle has to occur, the reutilization of elements, giving a signifier a different signified. However, we have to contextualize, for the anarchist movements, the concepts are much elevated and hold a deeper and radical meaning. For instance, Revolution actually means the total destruction of the entire conventions of society and the systems of control.

In this sense, Don Parritt seems to be an intensely political character, his upbringing was very distinctive and he was always surrounded by political figures engaging in discussions and arguments. At the same time, not one of these subjects was a paternal or affective figure, with her mother being too occupied in the Movement; even the seemingly cold Larry Slade was considered a paternal figure for Parritt. This longing for paternal love and the absence of care is shown in Parritt’s journey to New York. Though he never actually states it, searching for Larry must have been one of the underlying reasons for the trip, fueled by the guilt of the treason he brought upon his mother. This is why his final speech rapidly turns from a political statement of beliefs to the realm of emotionality, where he is letting him an entrance point to his own self. Regrettably, Larry Slade realizes this a moment too late.

The previously described scene marks the definitive fragmentation between the two symbolic representatives of the respective perspectives, the old one who does not care for the new one. As we know, Don Parritt incurred in one of the worst acts possible, the treason of his own mother, a fact that haunts him all the way to the East coast, where he thought Larry would help with the burden. Larry, as has been pointed out before, comes as the only truly reflexive characters, and he demonstrates it by being the only one moved at the end of the story, mainly because he becomes fully aware of his own responsibilities in life and in this particular case. Whether he likes it or not, Parritt is the son of the old perspective, one, which Larry was a devoted part of, but he chose to incur in self-delusion and denied

accountability. In this sense, it would be appropriate to associate the lack of cooperation of one generation to the other as an element that permits the establishment of a new, radically different perspective.

Regarding this last thought, we do not see a linear progression of evolution in social behavior rather than abrupt change in paradigms. Ultimately this comes to support the sociological notion of the philosophical theory of the structure of scientific revolutions. Although this theory emerged from the scientific field, it has been extended to the fields of philosophy and sociology as a way to explain the shifts in theoretical standpoints throughout history. A new perspective holds little resemblance to the old one, incorporating elements that did not belong to the past perspective and dropping others that were considered as an unquestionable truth. Also, the objective is somewhat lost by the catalysts of the change, in the case of *The Iceman Cometh*, Larry was ineffective to assist Parritt, an event that would have brought closer the two characters who, for the purpose of the analysis, are symbolic representations of the two perspectives in place.<sup>1</sup>

Following this lead, the play functions as an expository piece on the short period of time of transition, a space in between these two cultural instances that seems to be just as stranded from reality as O'Neill make us believe. We found little if any proof or evidence of the space of time the play makes mention to be occurring, except from Parritt, the bartenders and the broads, these last two share only limited information of life beyond the bar. As we have stated earlier, the setting of the saloon helps to this perception, the stained windows do not allow the light of the sun to enter clearly, so the derelicts are in a constant state of twilight. This further reinforces the intertextual notion of the bar as the limbo or purgatory in which the characters appear to be encapsulated in a stationary timeframe. Also, this reinforces the notion of a sort of dual capacity which affects some of O'Neill's characters in the play, they function as both a social level (some of them with a clear political view, as we have seen with Parritt and Larry) and also as a emotional, as it was expressed by Parritt in his last scene and by Larry in his own final piece of dialogue. To clarify, we can define that there is an *"opposition between consciousness on the one hand, and natural and social conditions on the other"* (Fokkema, 21), a condition that affects characters who are brought upon a modernist environment. This opposition permits characters to act as the embodiment of a new discourse as well as characters with a point of view that sometimes does not necessarily agrees with their own representative state.

All of this brings out a reflection on Modernism and our own horizon of expectations into consideration. When we think about this new force that represented the younger generations that became part of the new Modernist movement, one element we need to take into consideration is that we expect this force to be a source of renewal and productive energy in order to create new and distinctive works. If we change our focus of attention, the same occurs in another of O'Neill's creations. In *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, the newer generation, in this case represented by the sons of James Tyrone, are less inclined to having productive and meaningful lives and prefer to romanticize about alcohol and prostitutes. Their aspirations do not revolve around creation and finding new forms of expression, contrasting a great deal with their father, a self-made man who overcame poverty to become a successful commercial actor. His sons are quite the opposite, with fewer barriers for them, they chose self-depreciation and put an effort in keeping their lives in an endless loop of

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<sup>1</sup> The structure of scientific revolutions was a theory developed by American Physicist and Philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) that claimed Science undergoes periodic paradigm shifts, instead of progressing in a linear way. The new approaches the new paradigm offers could not have been considered as valid by the previous paradigm because they are "incommensurable", paradigms cannot be understood by shared conceptual framework or terminology (Pajares).

underachievement, as Jamie pointed out in his confession to his younger brother Edmund, *“What I wanted to say is, I’d like to see you become the greatest success in the world. But you’d better be on your guard. Because I’ll do my damndest to make you fail. Can’t help it. I hate myself. Got to take revenge. On everyone else. Especially you.”* (O’Neill, 166).

What can really be extracted from *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* is that this new perspective may hold some introspective or counterproductive features embedded to it, in the sense that a form of “dead” argument will be part of the whole modernist expression. Basically, a nihilistic connotation is also part of Modernism. *The Iceman Cometh* is not short of references alluding to the dead argument that can be interpreted, *“The cops ignore this dump. They think it’s harmless as a graveyard”* (O’Neill, 25). But the presence of the dead argument is not fault of the younger generations as much as it is the fault of the previous one.

One of the instances that may be associated to the decay of the creative force is an element present throughout the development of the plot, an object omnipresent and transversal to all characters, *“dreams and drunkenness became not the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life but a superficial wall behind which mankind seeks to hide its wounds”* (Broussard, 33-34). Alcohol fuels the mortuary-like evenings in Harry Hope’s bar, serving as a distractive element that prevents reflection and amplifies their feeling of self-pity. Only when alcohol is missing, its “kick” at least, is the only time in which the characters became aware of their real condition and what they can do to remediate it. This is the moment when we see the creative force running through them as noticeable as it can be. Jimmy Tomorrow, Piet Wetjoen, Cecil Lewis, Willie Oban, Ed Mosher, Chuck and Cora all started searching for that element which gave their lives some type of meaning. Once all covers are blown and the truth about Hickey is exposed, alcohol regains its kick and the creative force disappears once again. Again, this only has an effect on Larry Slade, the one that did not believe in Hickey’s messianic message but through other different means. This extended allegory makes it easier to determine why the action is set on a bar, the once place filled with alcohol, once in which no creative force can presumably be unleashed, this is the negative scenario in which Don Parritt found himself into, he was a young boy, only 18 years old, so his involvement with alcohol must have been brief, we can assume. Parritt, then, became the one true victim to alcohol and its destructive nature, spreading misery to old and young people alike.

A similar situation occurs in the Tyrone household, with the sons of James Tyrone became accustomed to alcohol from a young age, mainly because they were imitating their father. The negative effect of it can be shown especially in Jamie, who is consumed by the addiction to the point he is rejected by his parents who consider him a lost cause, *“You’re not like your damned tramp of a brother. I’ve given up hope he’ll ever get sense”* (O’Neill, 128). In this sense, we can say that alcohol is a multi-interpretative element, that may appear to explain many situations in the play, but it mainly creates a rupture between continuities, between truth and falsehood, reality and pipe dreams and, most dangerously, between present and future.

We may now return to the already-introduced concept of nihilism. A nihilistic perspective can be extracted from the “dead” argument argued before. The existential issues that affect Don Parritt are characteristic of the modernist thought. The absence of beliefs play a key role in this respect, finding in Parritt a clear representative of the transitional state of the cultural landscape of the twentieth century, the procession from a state defined by the system of shared and defined beliefs to the loss of the absolutes. As we have mentioned already, absolute terms like “Revolution” and “Justice” that once had a great meaning in his life are

totally disposable, as he takes his own life as a constant reminder of this new found absence of certainties affected his own will to live. The issues that affect Parritt make him more a character with existential problems rather than a person with a nihilistic approach to life.

As for the rest of the characters in the play, they represent a more Modern definition of nihilism, in which they all follow a recurrent pattern in which they are depicted as mindless, repetitive and utterly downfallen subjects. In this sense, they are close to Soren Kierkegaard's definition of nihilism, in which he refers to a process called *levelling*, different from the modernist definition of nihilism (commonly associated with Friedrich Nietzsche) in which life never has held any true meaning, purpose or value. In this process, distinctive personalities were lost up to the point where the person's uniqueness becomes lost or non-existent. Nothing this subject may do holds a meaningful or creative aspect, a state that resembles life in a limbo-like state, as the same Danish philosopher himself established, "*levelling at its maximum is like the stillness of death, where one can hear one's own heartbeat, a stillness like death, into which nothing can penetrate, in which everything sinks, powerless* (Kierkegaard, 51). In this respect, the bums of Harry Hope's bar do not fall in the category of the Nietzschean nihilistic character, they are all flawed people, but they all had something that served as a purpose at some point in their lives. The most irrefutable example, Harry Hope, an old man who refuses to go outside the saloon after his wife passed away twenty years ago. Fulfilling his role as the play's most introspective character, Larry Slade validates the state in which the derelicts are in, although he awards the pipe dreams as the element that keeps them from turning to the other side altogether, "*That's because it's the last harbor. No one here has to worry about they're going next, because there is no farther they can go. It's a great comfort to them. Although even here they keep up appearances of life with a few harmless pipe dreams about their yesterdays and tomorrows, as you'll see for yourself if you're here long*" (O'Neill, Eugene, 25). Following this logic, pipe dreams do not fall in the category of creative thought; instead they stand as mere reminders of the past. Nihilism is not an action but a state of mind, one that numbs any sense of self-awareness and it completely isolates subjects or groups of them in a pseudo-existential limbo, with the fueling additive of alcohol. Hope's patrons are never happy or sad; they are in a continuum of chronic carelessness and withdrawal from self-improvement, losing sight of their own individual self.

The nihilistic environment in which Don Parritt finds himself, at a crucial phase in his life, turns out to be a difficult place in which to make constructive resolutions. The representation of the saloon is truly depressive; "*two windows, so glazed with grime one cannot see through them, are in the left wall looking out on a backyard. The walls and ceiling once were white, but it was a long time ago, and they are now so splotched, peeled, stained and dusty that their color can best be described as dirty. The floor... is covered with sawdust*" (ibid., 3). The state of the saloon clearly reflects on the general mood, there is no interest in reflection, growth or even decency, there seems to be absolutely no interest in anything, let alone cleanliness, a true nihilistic atmosphere. Also, the condition of the saloon can be connected with the purgatory dimension we assigned the bar through means of intertextuality, if the group of Harry Hope's regular represent lost souls waiting for absolution, then the physical state of the setting will appear to be as if the place where completely deserted, dominated by dust and grime.

If we agree on themes like the dead argument and nihilism being present at some extent in both plays, we can safely state that O'Neill's plays represent the ultimate shift between perspectives as they do not only reflect on commonly Modern subjects but also question some of the old Puritan concepts. As we have already presented, one of the themes

found in Puritan writings is the notion of good and evil, clearly separated and irreconcilably antagonistic. Modern writings create a blur in the boundaries of both concepts, characters are neither good nor bad in a stereotypical fashion, they are presented as realistically as possible, conveying human characteristics under the circumstances depicted by the author.

The vehicle for portraying the blurry image between good and evil is insanity. Both plays have characters that are or appear to be at the brink of insanity. For Hickey in The Iceman Cometh, insanity is the element that puts a veil of doubt in all of his actions. Readers can never be absolutely sure if his deeds were provoked by an unbalanced psyche or if he was really faking the whole act, as he pleads for sanity, *"No! That's a lie! I never said--! Good God, I couldn't have said that! If I did, I'd gone insane."* (ibid., 242), after having confessed to the murder of his wife. Then he repents and argues for insanity, *"Yes, Harry, of course, I've been out of my mind ever since! All the time I've been here! You saw I was insane, didn't you?"* (ibid., 243). The origin for the plea is uncertain, it may be because he wanted to avoid the capital punishment or he wanted to create an excuse, the only thing that is sure is that all of Hickey's acts are tarnished in doubt as the doings of a mad man, having all of Harry Hope's bar at his perverted disposal.

The same can be said of Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night, though there are important differences. She is not actually insane, never acknowledges it like Hickey, but her mental state is far from being balanced. In this sense, her insanity seems more real, a mental state that is not accepted or perceived by the subject that makes her absent-minded and unaware of her surroundings, helped by the ever-present morphine addiction. As Hickey, her insanity-like state is shown at her full potential during the last scene of the final act, where she descends to the first floor, looking younger, paler than ever. The difference lies in that she has not descended into madness to make a revelation or an attempt for absolution, she is merely reminiscing, making a mournful speech about the blighted hopes, the personal imprisonment, the emotional ambivalence and the illusions that compose familiar life.

As a concluding remark, we may state that what O'Neill has done in both plays holds a direct resemblance with a transitional state between two opposing literary perspectives; he utilizes the topics and themes of one of them and turns them upside down or creates his own interpretation of them, thus establishing a true, creative piece of writing, one that may be influential to generations to come.

## VI. Loss of Control

Modernist narrative has many traits and distinctive features which make it different from the previous writing styles. How the topics and themes are structured is one of them, *“modernist literature is marked by a break with the sequential, developmental, cause-and-effect presentation of the 'reality' of realist fiction, toward a presentation of experience as layered, allusive, discontinuous; the use, to these ends, of fragmentation and juxtaposition, motif, symbol, allusion”* (Lye). We could argue that O'Neill employs this technique in his own style of writing. The fragmentative state of his works is determined by multiple layers he employs in the plays. We are not presented with linear plot development, romantic or metaphysical elements, or strategically-placed *raccontos*. Instead of it, narration is layered down. These layers are constructed by means of control. The controlled layer is a self-deluded state in which the characters are profoundly affected by shortcomings. In the superficial layer we can notice this situation of control. But, as we further analyze the play and the behavior of the characters, we take notice of the state of loss of control which is one layer deep within the superficial and that takes control of the character's scaffolding.

This is especially characteristic of Long Day's Journey Into Night. We have one character that it is truly dominated by the loss of control, Mary Tyrone, the failed matriarch. Her life can even be defined by that statement, according to her last piece of dialogue in the play. She never really intended to marry James Tyrone, the true motivation in her life was to become a nun (a religious vocation) or, at the very least, have a try at becoming a concert pianist (a vocation that demands religious-like devotion). Once she met Tyrone, her grasp of control is lost once and for all. Several elements that represent this uncontrolled state are presented by O'Neill throughout the play; Mary was forced to live as a gypsy following her husband in all of his tours, denying her the home she wanted to properly raise her children, the lost of Eugene, his second son, who she had to give away to the care of her family to continue following his husband, incompetent doctors who started her in the ingest of morphine to calm the pain of her rheumatism that directly caused her addiction and subsequent fall, her own father, a figure she idolizes was in reality a drunk and died of consumption, the illness that now affects his youngest son. All of these elements combined form the old woman Mary finishes being, a detached person, who seems to see everything from a distance, without wanting to form part of the damaged family she is part of.

Her own transformation from start to finish in the play is one that can only be judged as an out of control situation. In the start of the play she tries to fulfill the role of concerned mother, preoccupied about the situation of her younger son Edmund who appears to be sicker than she wants to recognize. Additionally, she wants to act as a conciliatory figure between his husband and the oldest son Jamie, trying to support him in spite of his shortcomings in life. The conditions of the climate also changed as the play started to become more psychologically complex with light and dark alternations. The air outside is fresher; it appears that the fog which infested last night will retrieve. When the fourth act comes upon us, we find a totally different situation, *“by the end of the play, of course, Mary has totally withdrawn, but even then the effect is hardly intended to horrify. She appears in pigtails, like a young girl, and Jamie quite aptly compares her to Ophelia, whose “mad scene” should elicit extreme compassion but never the horror which accompanies other mad scenes in literature.”* (Manheim). The climatological conditions also changed, the night

came as the fog is as thick as never has been and darkness is impenetrable. Her mood also changed from the sunny morning to the fogbound night, her cheery demeanor evolved into utter despair. Here we find the modernist change in sequences and layers, Mary Tyrone started as an adult mother looking after his children and finished as a reminiscing infant, mocked by the ones she earlier tried to defend, stranded from reality and from control.

Her constant reminding of the past is what fueled her return to a child-like stage and some symbols are presented in order to make this rather noticeable. By Mary Tyrone's own narration of her life, it is made quite clear that she was the happiest of girls in her youth years, with her inclinations and intentions well aimed. Then she met Tyrone and all changed, she fell for him and gave up on all her past ambitions, this may also be a part of her youthful condition, the infatuation with a famous matinee idol like James Tyrone, as example of how fickle and changeable attention can be during youth and adolescence. During the third act when she starts with heavy reminiscing along with the use of morphine, the element of the wedding gown comes into place. She is quite exaggerated to praise the beauty of the dress, but she also gives it another quality, "*that wedding gown was nearly the death of me and the dressmaker, too!... She couldn't have bought a lovelier gown... Oh, how I loved that gown! It was so beautiful! Where is it now, I wonder?*" (O'Neill, 114-115). From a point of view, the wedding gown represented the end of one stage of her life but also the beginning of the other. The problem arises when her new life is not as fulfilling as she thought it would be, so, in the end, she starts reminiscing more frequently about what could and could not have been, and the dress represents the past and, consequently, the happiest part of her life. When the dress finally makes its appearance in the final part of the fourth act, it is non other than James Tyrone, her infamous husband, the one who takes it away from her, relieving it from her with the excuse that, in her condition, she will spoil it, but also taking away her own material proof that the past once existed and it is not merely a construct of her oft-deranged psyche.

The loss of consciousness is very much linked to the uncontrollable state of Mary. She is so submerged in her drug addiction that we progressively take notice of her falling into a dementia-like state, one that will appear in the final act, when she takes the stage without noticing her surroundings, answering the concerned pleads of her children or her husband with nonsensical allusions to the past. Consciousness has abandoned her and the only thing that preoccupies her is the wedding gown she loved so much.

The loss of control is not only proven by material objects but also if we examine her interpersonal relations with her children and her husband we can take notice of the effects of the stranded mind of Mary Tyrone. Jamie, always cruel when drunk, has no kind words for his mother when he return from the town, "*Where's the hophead? Gone to sleep?*" (ibid., 161), or when she makes her final appearance "*The Mad Scene. Enter Ophelia!*" (ibid., 170), an example also of the intertextual property and the transference of cultural images. He appears to be sympathetic for the condition of his mother but does a poor job in showing it, only contributing in hurtful remarks that provoke the rage of his brother who even punches him. Edmund's attitude is somewhat different. He was not present during her worst episodes and he was kept out of the situation by his father and brother because he was very young. He has a more helpful and understanding position, burdened by guilt, that sometimes resembles pity, "*Never mind me. You take care of yourself. That's all that counts*" (ibid., 43). Additionally, Edmund is stricken by the fact that his brother Eugene died very young and throughout the play the characters infer that he was born as a replacement for his lost brother, an event that would also unleash Mary's addiction. James Tyrone is also quite disturbed by the situation. In the beginning we see him as a kind person, complementing the new found

figure of her wife, calming and encouraging her as much as he can. At the end of the first scene of the second act Tyrone finally realizes her wife is resuming her morphine intake and his immediate response fluctuates between anger, "*I understand I've been a God-damned fool to believe in you!*" (ibid., 69), and grief, "*For the love of God, why couldn't you have the strength of keep on?*" (ibid., 69). In short, the loss of respect is similar in all three cases, her descent into addiction caused her to lose her place as a mother and step back to a child-like state where all the members of the family are worried about her, just like the reverse aging process we have already presented.

As we have seen, the uncontrollable state which permeates all characters has a similar consequence in the other three male characters. Sharing some similarities with Don Parritt of *The Iceman Cometh*, the younger Tyrone's are somewhat nihilistic in their life choices. Just as the derelicts from Harry Hope's joint, Jamie and Edmund exhibit little care about life and goals but, unlike them, they do not have delusional daydreams in which they set a date for success. Also, they are much younger, Jamie is in his thirties, Edmund in his twenties, so this refusal of creating a dynamic in their life, instead choosing living in a static way, is uncharacteristic for their ages. The loss of control is reflected in the juxtaposition between Mary and her sons; they show radically different approaches and attitudes to life as their age would commend so.

Taking this into consideration, adding to what has already been discussed about Mary Tyrone, we can safely argue that O'Neill is very fond of combining time dimensions into one single narrative, considering this term as the action developmental progression. Present, past and future become one, if we analyze the play as a whole we can realize that there is no classical moment of catharsis, or even an unexpected climatic act, like we do find in *The Iceman Cometh*. Rather than this, the play is more concerned in the everyday twists and turns of a very singular family, attacked by fierce foes like self-hatred and unhappiness.

In the center of these changes we have James Tyrone. He is the motor of the family, the one with the tough childhood and hard decisions, unlike the other members of the Tyrone family who, at least, had an easy start. Eventually, all of his decisions have a cost in his family, for better or for worse, being the latter the one idea that imposes the most, "*With some justice his family blame Tyrone for most of their afflictions—his wife's need for drugs, one son's alcoholism and the other's illness and insecurity. Not only his desire for money, but his stubborn ignorance and defensive pride in his Irish-Catholic origin, re-enforcing his drive to outdo the Yankees have been at the root of the family ills.*" (Falk, 186). Tyrone assumed from the start the control of the family, by which he removed the control first from his wife, then from the kids. Consequently, all that occurred later becomes his responsibility as the catalyst for change. Initially, he has a good demeanor with his wife, who seems to be out of the use of morphine. He even tries to engage on an amiable relation with Jamie, who he thinks is a failure without realizing his prominent share of responsibility in it. Additionally, he has a plan for Edmund that involves cheap and questionable Dr. Hardy, who would recommend some sanatory for him to treat his illness, and then meet his friends in the bar downtown where he would see a business that involves the acquisition of land. Finally, the audience and Tyrone himself acknowledges the failure of some aspects of his life and also a mild case of self-delusion (after all, Tyrone was very fond of alcohol, just like the patrons of Harry Hope's). It is undoubted that Tyrone found success in his life but he also was the main contributor in the failure his family turned out to be. We can also refer to what was said first about the deep and superficial layers of control; James Tyrone is currently under the superficial layer of control where he lives pretending everything is the way he wants to be. But as we transit

to the three following acts, Tyrone has to accept the fact that a deeper layer of loss of control is actually more accurate for their situation.

Addictions are, once again, a part of the symbolical dimension of the play. Just as The Iceman Cometh is constantly surrounded by alcohol, the same occurs with Long Day's Journey Into Night but in a more nuanced manner. The bottles of whisky are kept outside of the house and, every time someone drinks, the bottle of whisky that remains in the house is watered. Also, the use of drugs by Mary is never made explicit; she always goes to her study room in the second plant of the house by herself. Just like the fog that spreads in the outside, characters try hard to deceive one another into thinking that things are superficially normal. As we could infer, loss of control is one part of the definition of an addiction, and the two characters that are more addicted to a substance are the ones who seem more withdrawn from reality. The case of Mary has been reviewed; we shall now take care of Jamie. The oldest son of Mary and James is a self-proclaimed alcoholic with no aspirations and dreams (quoting from Rossetti he recites, *"My name is Might-Have-Been. I am also called No More, Too Late, Farewell"* (ibid., 45)) who lives exclusively for the next shot of whisky, *"If he's ever had a loftier dream than whores and whisky, he's never shown it"* (ibid., 129). He seems to be quite at peace with the fact that he would never achieve anything, even though years of alcoholism made him a bitter and filled with self-contempt, as he demonstrates in the final confession to Edmund. These traits can be traced back to his upbringing, living in motels and seeing his father drink with his theatre pals, he became enchanted with big cities and bright lights, where it would seem likely he will find his final demise.

The romantization of alcohol and drugs are part of the differences between the plays that are being analyzed. Achievements are also very much different. While the older characters in both plays have, at a large scale, experienced some level of success in their lives, the younger characters are determined to have an unsuccessful live, even if they do have some valuable experience. Jamie had a very brief stint in Broadway where he became more acquainted with booze and Edmund spent some time travelling abroad as a crewmember of a ship. Both projects left them dry and utterly lost in the world, Edmund even went to a bar in New York to try to take his own life, without success. Lack of projects or encouragement to find and accomplish them left the two Tyrone brothers wandering aimlessly in the world.

The topic of the loss of control is perhaps less frequent in The Iceman Cometh but it is certainly present in some instances. Alcohol mainly fuels the underlying state of nihilism present in the play, and one of its byproducts is the generation of an organism of control. All the characters are bound to alcohol; in it they find a perverse but meaningless peace and an access to their dead aspirations and dreams. It is also a recursive element that forces them to return to it as soon as the glass is half-empty. In short, alcohol provides them with a false sense of wholeness and accomplishment, as Larry Slide proudly declares, *"I've been a philosophical drunken bum, and proud of it"* (O'Neill, 31).

We can apply two perspectives surrounding the arrival of Hickey and the impact it generated on the bum's way of life. The first makes reference to the liberation Hickey executed, he set them free from alcohol and they resumed their will of living, without considering the consequences. It is quite obvious that the whole enterprise was a failure, except for Larry and Hickey himself, the rest seemed not to notice all the changes that happened in their whereabouts. The second is, from a personal point of view, a little more accurate. Hickey replaced a control structure for another. If the rule before demanded alcohol, the new one demanded the absolute absence of it, even if Hickey never really says it, on the contrary, he is not to make anyone do something against their will, *"You don't think I'd come around here peddling some brand of temperance bunk, do you? You know me"*

*better than that! Just because I'm through with the stuff don't mean I'm going Prohibition.*" (ibid., 79). But he does make it clear that the only way to stop the pipe dreams and delusions is to give up on alcohol, so the substitution of systems of control is present as the only path to salvation, as Hickey preached, even if he does not admit it. He did it quite masterfully, first making an instant connection between him and them with his numerous "I wrote the book" references to finish with a lecture in which he was absolutely sure that a change will be for the better. Slowly but surely the derelicts start following Hickey's teachings.

The element Hickey underestimated was the willingness of his followers to actually accomplish all the things they blabbed about. His own system of control stumbled and fell down, taking himself also as a casualty, Harry Hope and the gang were sick of hearing Hickey's attempts to reform them, "*Who the hell cares? We don't want to hear it. All we want is to pass out and get drunk and a little peace!*" (ibid., 228), and never really intended to fulfill their pipe dreams, "*It was all a stupid lie—my nonsense about tomorrow... I was fired for drunkenness... I'm much worse now.*" (ibid., 229). The change in the narrative did not help much, if anything it reinforced the previous system of control as the true, valid one, and Hickey ended up being ostracized and denied as a mad man.

The main issue with systems of control, as we have referenced them in the previous paragraphs, is that they deceive and create their own, wrongful version of the truth. In The Iceman Cometh, Hickey tried to escape from the unpleasant reality, and he thought he was living the truth, when he really was living just another pipe dream. Modernist constructions are always concerned with the search for the truth and that is what O'Neill is trying to achieve in the body of work that has been analyzed. In the previous, Puritan perspective, truth was covered up, institutionalized and branded as a feature of their credo. In Long Day's Journey Into Night, truth has been detached from its control structure and, while the reality the characters find is not at all pleasant, it is their own reality and they have the task to confront it. The fifth character in the play is O'Neill himself, and the play he wrote is there to remind him that escape and fulfillment is out there, he found forgiveness and reconciliation in the form of art, dramatizing his own life in order to liberate himself from the control apparatus that was holding him back.

Concerning the issue of systems of control, we need to reflect on the spaces the play's action occurs. Both spaces are meant to be strictly private and secluded, even though Harry Hope runs a bar and a hotel, he has no intention of interacting with people outside his close circle. Mary Tyrone serves better for an interpretation point. She does want to connect with people outside her family circle but she is unable because of her own personal struggles, her disease being the most important one, she is too self-conscious about it to let anyone be close to her. Even though the characters in the surface appear to be controlled by this force, the control spaces ended up being transformed into a paradox. Major uncontrollable situations occur behind the walls like drug and alcohol addiction, suicide and insanity, which cannot be contained by the locations in which they happen. In this sense, the notion of control is overtaken by a deep sense of unbalance and unpredictability, characters in O'Neill's plays are depicted as true human beings, not archetypes of a determinate sensibility, and their actions tend to be sometimes irrational and illogical, but always aiming to a plausible human reaction, as farfetched as the situation maybe .

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## VII. Conclusion

In the final section of the project we may present some general principles that can be extracted from the general interpretation of O'Neill's plays.

The main purpose of the analysis was to present factual evidence that in both The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey Into Night we can find instances of the progression regarding social and literary perspectives which dominated the past two centuries of American culture, Puritanism and Modernism. The progression was evidenced by the state of rupture or fragmentation the play's characters would show in their behavior, as an incontrastive proof that the old perspective was wearing down. The most important characteristic we possess to make this asseveration concerning fragmentation is the element of loss of control we find in the plays, with significant differences between perspectives, one being the loss of absolutes; characters are damaged by this fact and their actions distorted and uncontrollable.

Firstly, to prove the unmistakable relation between O'Neill's plays and the Puritan tradition, an exercise of intertextual recognition had to be put in place. O'Neill presents elements that are common and well-known by the majority of viewers or readers as a part of their common upbringing. What he does with these elements is to approach them with his own distinctive voice and give them a new, entirely different meaning, as an expository piece of the transitional stage in which American society was. We find several and different instances, like the messianic antihero Hickey becomes, the purgatory characteristic given to Harry Hope's bar and the presence of monolythical pieces of discourses in both plays, the story about the iceman in The Iceman Cometh and the Shakespeare collection in Long Day's Journey Into Night. The iceman fable can be used to explain an important reflection regarding this section of the analysis. The story served as a connective point between all of the members that compose Hope's circle of bums, very much like the members of a cult. The obscurity of the origin and the uncertainty of its factuality was a central part of its appeal, just like a religion, it demanded a perverted leap of faith, and as long as Hickey kept it as a personal secret, he could exert his domination over the hopeless bums. Once the story is revealed and the truth is set free, his higher position was lost, he even descended deeper than the derelicts could, affected by the ultimate disease of the conscience, insanity. O'Neill is adept to altering the discourse, like the devoted Christian Mary Tyrone devoured by drugs; these are all signs that represent the decay of the old, traditional discourse and the rise of the Modern perspective.

We shall continue on to the analysis of the role of fragmentation in the establishment of the modernist parameter. There are various events in the plays that help us to identify stages of social and literary fragmentation. Irrationality is a topic that is treated similarly in both plays, Mary Tyrone makes the most important decision of her life based on irrationality and the pillar of faith in which Hugo Kalmar, Larry Slade and Don Parritt lean to, Anarchism, proves to be irrational and they decide to abandon it. In the character of Don Parritt we find significant evidence of the current transitional state of the discourse. His coming to the bar is a rupture between the calm and unproductive condition of the patrons of Harry Hope's and the consequence of his final action is one of the few events in the play that have a profound effect in the mentality of the characters, or at least in one of them. This character is

also helpful as a symbol for the opposition between perspectives. Growing up to become a political man, believing in a movement that demanded submission and devotion, he became disenchanted and committed an act of treason towards this perspective, specifically the person who represented it, his mother.

Also, we find several concealed elements that give us the impression that we are in front of Modern pieces of drama, with the shape and themes that are common in traditional plays. As it was introduced in the previous paragraph, the theme of irrationality is present, as well as the blurry limit between good and evil, there are not two prototypical forces struggling for domination over the other, as it is common in standard, dramatic pieces. Characters are well-rounded human beings with the capacity of good and evil, success and mistake without transforming into villains or heroes. Another feature is the nihilistic discourse that appears in key characters in both plays, like Parritt and Jamie Tyrone. The lack of creative drive, the harmful environment which they encounter, existential issues and the unfulfilled potential are shared notions by both of them to some extent. In this context, a form of dead argument is born into the new discourse, an anti-creative force that is brought upon by the same traditional perspective.

Finally, some of the characteristics we have reviewed have many traits in common with the final stage of the analysis, the element of loss of control which affects both plays at a different level. Ultimately, as the analysis has intended to prove, the loss of control is one of the central features that promotes this evolution into a new perspective. Individuals, actions and themes were so controlled in the past, that it fueled a dynamic process in which we detect alterations of every kind, ranging from the behavior of the characters to the structure of the play itself. Again, in O'Neill's plays we find proof of this, Mary Tyrone undergoes a regressive aging evolution, even demonstrated by physical change. On the other hand, her sons' age faster, Jamie Tyrone, in his thirties, lives contently a pointless, alcoholic life, and both of them show concern about her mother in a reverse manner. The temporal dimension is mixed; past reflections are part of the present events, as it is depicted in the final act, when Mary appears to be totally withdrawn from reality, preferring to live in her memories. Between all this we find James Tyrone as the steer of the family, but actually represents the control figure in the play, everything he does is to control the other subjects and, ultimately, damage the family relations. Because, as a reflection, we can extract that the control structures aim to deceive and hide the truth, Tyrone wants to make his family think everything is good when it is not, just like Hickey and the situation with the derelicts, he wants to help them even though he is the one that needs help. In the modernist constructions, the truth is unchained and the characters are affected by it in all possible ways, but they need to confront it.

Modernism is a realistic form of expression, while Puritanism was concerned only with a limited portion of reality. This type of discourse started becoming obsolete in the nineteenth century but it was during the next century when it was openly questioned and considered not a fit interpretation of reality. In his plays, O'Neill acknowledges the influence of the Puritan tradition in the recurring themes and values, but utterly rejects it by reinterpreting their themes, depicting fragmented elements and creating situations where the characters are devoid of control.

As a concluding observation in this subject, we can interpret that the plays that compose the corpus represents a transitional space in the current dominant discourse in the American landscape. The author combines elements from both perspectives, but ultimately gives a negative connotation to the traditional discourse. Characters that are from the previous perspective are presented as flawed individuals, like Rosa Parritt, or as main contributors to the failure of their family, like James Tyrone. Because of this, the subjects that form part of

the new perspective may appear also as flawed and failed, but only as a consequence of the old perspectives. This amalgamation of approaches serves as the establishment of the new form of literary writing, Modernism, where new and distinct forms and types of discourse can be found and created.

Finally, concerning the projections of the analysis, we can allege that the field of Modern literary theory is quite fertile for investigation. In this sense, fragmentation as a theme is not very much analyzed, yet it seems to be one that is present in many Modern texts, dramatic or narrative. From a personal point of view, it would be relevant to have a comprehensive and extensive study on this subject considering many literary disciplines and combining some other theories of Modern literature and drama.

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