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### Water by the Spoonful

*Water by the Spoonful* is an award-winning play by the renowned American author and playwright, Quiara Alegría Hudes. A commendable sequel to *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*, the play has been staged on various mentionable venues, including Broadway Theatre in late 2011 (Roman, 146). The text features a dynamic cast of characters and is centered on the post-war life of the main protagonist, Elliot Ortiz, an injured military vet who is back home from a tour in Iraq (Pulitzer.org). The author addresses various thematic concerns, with a bias in favor of the attempts to cope with post-war life, and the adverse social impact of drug addiction. This is realized and exemplified through the life of the protagonist's mother, Haikumom, whose actual given name is Odessa Ortiz (Hudes, 7). Through the various characters, the author addresses the detrimental impacts of drug addiction and conscious efforts to escape them.

An in-depth critical analysis of the play is highly informative and gives a lot of insights about the untold impact of drug abuse on the family, and society. It is readily apparent that drug addiction and its far-reaching consequences have significantly affected the vast majority of the characters in the play ("Water by the Spoonful," 1). Further, the adverse impacts of drug addiction, as depicted in the play, are potentially multi-faceted. To this end, they may have a direct empirical effect, or alternatively, the impact of drug addiction may be drawn as an inference from various observations (Noriega, 37). Directly, drug addiction has affected the protagonist's mother, Ginny, resulting in deterioration of her health. This is critical to the plot, which culminates in her

untimely death, and ensuing plans for her internment (Kurup). Similarly, drug addiction has directly affected Orangutan, Chutes & Ladders, and Fountainhead. These supposedly recovering addicts have since grown dependent on Haikumom's safe space (Young, 193). There is also the ever-present risk of possible relapsing due to seemingly inescapable drug addiction.

The playwright is commendable in her rendition of the core thematic concern of the text. She offers an unprecedented insight into the complications antecedent to drug addiction and recovery, with a bias in favor of relapsing (Ybarra, 51). It is a worthy concession that the concept of relapsing is a prominent feature of her interrogation of drug addiction. From a critical analysis of the lives of the various characters, plausible inferences on the likely causes of relapse may be drawn. Admittedly, Orangutan and Chutes & Ladders are introduced to the audience as beneficiaries of Ginna's efforts to offer a safe space to recovering drug addicts (Playbill Inc). This program gained a relative success, up until Fountainhead's unsolicited entry (Hartford Stage, 3:08). The events that follow are characterized by a breakdown in the fraternal bonds holding the group of accomplices together, culminating in relapse. From the foregoing, it can be correctly inferred that the primary cause of relapse in the text is a growing mistrust stemming from seeds of deliberate discord, and which worked to undermine the foundation built by Haikumom (Gale, 14).

In addition to an unexpected collapse of the social fiber sown by Haikumom, it is imperative to note that the various individuals close to the relapsing characters also played a significant role (Koren, 141). Inarguably, Fountainhead was the author of vast portions of the ensuing disarray and is largely responsible for the relapsing of Orangutan and Chutes & Ladders. It is also worthy of note that Ginna's death effectively extinguished any possible revival of the safe space she had curated for recovering addicts. This robbed the recovering addicts of their sole source of comfort, exposing them to the ravenous grip of drug addiction (Walter *et al.* 356). In

addition, Odessa is significantly impacted by the death of Ginna, as she is consequentially compelled to offer financial support against her will (Second Stage Theatre). Odessa is also shamed on the online forum, prompting her final relapse.

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