

RESEARCH ARTICLE**A PICTURE OF ARID SPIRITUALITY IN ARTHUR MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN***

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Abstract: This research article points out the existential, expressionistic, realistic, psycho-analytical, and absurd aspects of Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*. The play belongs to the era of Post World War II phase but is a replica of modern times. Applying all possible logical ways of life to the structure, characters, and themes of the play, this multi-variant play unveils the inner realities of man. Engrossed and webbed in the external noises of life, the inner silence is often ignored and locked up in inner- long-forgotten nooks and corners. The absurdity of the main characters of the play is compared and contrasted to the absurdities of Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*. The clamor of spiritual barrenness appears stark naked on the infertile land. The post-modern and post-colonial literature marks the vivacity of man to overcome all hurdles beyond birth and death. Humanity carries the seeds of freedom waiting to be sown, watered, harvested, and reaped by man.

Keywords: American Dream, Existentialism, Expressionism, Realism, Absurd Theory.

Introduction

About the Author: Arthur Asher Miller was born on Oct 17, 1915 in New York. He breathed his last on February 10, 2005 in Roxbury, Connecticut, aged 90. During the Economic Depression period, he witnessed the financial ruin of his father, who then was a small manufacturer. Miller experienced and deeply sensed the insecurity of modern existence. This shaped his mindset to demonstrate to the world the factual and cruel realities of the times.

Works: Miller's first public success was the novel, *Focus* (1945), which was filmed in 1962. It was a novel about anti- Semitism. The play, *All My Sons* (1947) was filmed in 1948. It was the play about the faulty war materials. This play was the first major collaboration with the director Elia Kazan. It won the Tony Award. His next play, *Death of a Salesman* also won the Tony award and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It was enacted on the stage in 1949.

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The Crucible (1953), written on the witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692-93. This play too won the Tony Award. *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), this play is based on Miller's own experiences, and focuses on the group of desperate workers earning their livings in a Brooklyn Automobile parts warehouse during the Great Depression in the 1930s. *A View from the Bridge* was first staged in 1955 was initially not successful. Later, it was revised and extended and was premiered in London in 1956. This play is based on Italian American longshoreman whose passion for his niece destroys him.

After the Fall was premiered in 1964 and is concerned about the failure in human relationships and its consequences. Miller's autobiographical play, *Holocaust*, though he denied that it is autobiographical, but many threads in the play can be connected to Miller's life, was staged in 1964. *Incident of Vichy* premiered in 1964 examined the Jewish identity. *The Price* (1968) deals with the theme of guilt to oneself and to others by examining the strained relationships with two brothers.

The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977) dealt with the Soviet treatment of dissident writers. *The American Clock* (1980) is a series of dramatic vignettes. His later plays include: *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991); *Mr. Peters Connections* (1990); *Resurrection Blues* (2002). He wrote a screen play, *The Misfits* (1961) for his second wife and actress Marilyn Monroe. His last play was, *Finishing the Picture* (2004). His collection of short stories is: *I Don't Need You Anymore* (1967); *A Collection of Theatre Essay* (1977).

He published the autobiography, *Timebends* in 1987. In 2001, he received the Japan arts Association's Premium Imperiale Prize for theatre/film.

Structural Analysis of *Death of a Salesman*

Beautifully and variantly structured play, *Death of a Salesman*, revolves around a realistic theme in consonance with the post World War II aftermath. The economic Depression of 1930s gave a beautiful ending to the decisions of the protagonist. The dashing down of the American Dream as visualised by the common man is perfectly portrayed. Lost in the world of confusions and chaos between the past and the present, Willy Loman, the central figure of the play, finds himself a failure in the economic world. He fills the economic vacuum with his life.

The **Act I** commences with Willy Loman's return from business trip. He narrowly misses an accident on the road while driving the car. This happened as he was lost in dreams while driving. He is sixty and is quiet tired as he has over worked and he cannot focus on the present. He is always lost in his thoughts thinking that if he would not have taken up the profession of a salesman then he could have earned more. He is also worried about his elder son, Biff, aged thirty four, who is yet to settle in life.

He goes to his boys' room, Biff and Happy and finds that they too are interacting with each other lost in their dreams. Simultaneously, he mumbles to himself in the parlour. His frustration is visible and he hopes for his and his son's bright future. Neighbour's son Bernard comes in and Willy revels about Biff's superiority over Bernard and flaunts about his salesmanship. But, soon

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after Bernard leaves, Willy admits to his wife Linda that he is a failure. He cannot make money and people ignore him. And, he analyses that he fails because he cannot work according to the modern times. Linda assures him that he is capable and handsome. This very word handsome takes him back to the past where he met a Woman during one of his road journeys. And, he bears the guilt for the same. This memory shows that despite the factor that he is rooted in his family; it might prove to be an indicator of his tragic downfall and the cause of his up rootedness. His memory confuses that Woman with Linda, which is scenically highlighted and loudly conveys his split personality. His present is dominated by the past which is responsible for his downfall.

Willy's neighbour, Charley, visits and they both play cards. Through this scene the gap between Willy's aspirations and achievements is projected. As they play cards, simultaneously Willy keeps talking to Ben, his dead brother. Charley gets irritated and leaves. Willy continues his conversation with Ben. Willy gets deeply engrossed in Ben's tale of adventure. Charley and Bernard return to inform Willy that Biff was being chased by the watchman for stealing. Willy is not moved by their warning and asks them to leave him with his dreams.

The next scene follows between Linda and Biff which is in stark contrast to the previous scene between Ben and Willy. The previous scene shows that Willy wanted to conquer the world and the following scene shows that how Biff considers his father having no character. Linda tells her children that when they were children and Willy was young, he was very successful. Now, when he is old and unsuccessful, they ignore him and do not respect him. The contrast dissolves when a proposal comes before them to start sports business with Oliver. The children start obeying their father.

Act I reflects over various aspects of Willy's character. Willy, is a different self to be understood by the characters in the play and as well as by the audience. Linda and the Woman represent as Willy's own character traits, and even Charley and Biff are part of Willy. Besides, Willy's character is reflected in Biff in his self-confidence and despairing state. Act I, plays out time and character possibilities, both realistically and expressionistically. It ends on an optimistic note, wherein dream triumphs over the factual reality.

Act II begins charting out the dream proposals which were talked about in Act I. Willy is supposed to meet Howard to talk about the his promotion and position in New York, and Biff is supposed to meet Oliver to seek his help for the proposal. This Act dramatises the structure of the split present which turns out to be a total failure of the dreams.

At Howard's office, Willy has the most shattering experience of his life. He is not only denied a position in New York but is fired from his job as he is too old to carry on. A powerful naturalistic scene in the play makes Willy bitterly remark that he is eaten like an orange and thrown away like its peel. He tries to fight back the frustration which he gets from there by going back to Ben and the past. He fights back the present failure by self confidently rejecting Ben's offer to accompany him.

In the next scene, in Charley's office, he does not even accept Charley's offer of a job. In the following scene he comes to know that Biff failed even to talk to Oliver. This deepens his

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understanding of the reality of life. The next scene, in the hotel room, Biff finds Willy in the company of the Woman. And Biff alleges his father that he is fake. Every scene in Act II forces Willy to admit the hypocrisy of the social success and even the picture of a devoted father crashes to the ground.

Act II shows Willy, self-battered by the world, withdrawing within him as he faces the reality. An interaction with Ben follows and Willy wants to be successful like him. He wants to bequeath a legacy to his son in the form of an insurance amount of twenty thousand dollars through self-inflicted death.

The last scene shows Biff's self-recognition, though it is because of his father. Self-appraisal comes in a different way for Willy by driving his car to the wall and to his death.

Act II builds up a realistic understanding on the part of Willy and Biff. In this act reality triumphs over dream through understanding, recognition and self-willed sacrifice and death.

Requiem at the end of the play sums up what Miller attempted through the two acts. He presented through Willy the whole socio-familial order in America. He makes his audience understand that they are not individuals but compendia of diverse socio-familial values and dreams. Their inescapable but optimistic struggles for these values, irrespective of success or failure, provide the existential ethos for the society.

Analysis

Arthur Miller in the introduction to the collected plays writes that, "*Death of a Salesman* explodes the watch and the calendar" (Martin 1978: 116). The collapsing of time particularly of the past and the present, in the mind of Willy Loman creates an expressionistic structure within the broad realistic form of the play. Realism is dictated by the conformist role which Willy Loman seeks to play both in the family and the society. He accepts and cherishes both the familial and social codes. Nevertheless, he is forced in to a social struggle by a temporal maladjustment. He tries to live by an increasingly non-existent socio-familial code. Consequently, expressionistic thrust in the play is a pressure of time both at the thematic and structural levels.

Split between the private and the social life of man makes it difficult for dramatic form to present human reality comprehensively in any particular structure. Memory plays an important role in bringing in this conflict. It brings the conflict in the two moments – one present as it stands on its own and the second as shaped by the past. This conflict has several levels and dimensions in the play.

The first scene which Miller creates on the stage was- 'the inside of his head' and it was a mass of contradictions. Miller aimed at an expressionistic internalization of socio-familial issues in

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the mental processes of the character and thereby creates a new structure of the play where the human mind rather than the society emerges as the primary social premise.

Willy is the centralized force of the play, yet, his point of view is one among many. He is not an individual, but a world of individuals. Miller presents through Willy, a deindividualized focus on the individual. It is evident that the dramatic structure is coextensive with the dramatic vision. All experiences fall into the existential pattern. The play ends with what it had begun, showing the ending in the beginning and the vice versa.

Inspiration For the Play

In the autobiography, *Timebends*, Miller reveals that he found the inspiration to write this play from real life. He based Willy Loman on his own uncle, Manny Newman, who was a salesman and a competitor. Manny's son, Buddy is the base of Biff's and Happy's character. Buddy was a sports hero and was popular with girls. Miller split these characteristics of his into two characters, Biff and Happy. Buddy never made it to college because he failed in high school, and so was Biff. Besides, Miller's relationship with his cousins was similar to Bernard's relationship with Biff and Happy in the play.

In the autobiography, Miller described Manny's wife as the one who bore the cross for them all. This can clearly be seen in the character of Linda Loman, in the play.

In fact, Miller states that the writing of the play began in 1947, soon after the chance meeting he had with his uncle outside the Colonial Theatre in Boston, where his play *All My Sons* was having its pre-Broadway preview. He described the event as the spark that brought him back to an idea to write a play about a salesman. Ten years back he had written a short story on it. In April 1948, he began to write the play that would become *Death of a Salesman*. From such humble beginnings cropped up America's most famous play.

American Dream

Willy Loman's character can be identified as a depiction of the American Dream. Three characters in the play had a profound impact on Willy's vision of success. One was the success of Ben, his elder brother. Second was his role model Dave Singleman. And, the third was his eldest son, Biff. All these three characters shaped Willy's dreams. Ben inspires Willy that he can accrue wealth with a little enterprise and no hard work.

Ben claims, "When I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty one I walked out...And by God I was rich" (Miller 2022: 46).

This success story becomes Willy's mantra, and he keeps on relating it to his sons about how Ben found diamonds.

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Willy elaborates on Signalman's funeral and how "In those days there was personality in (salesmanship)...There was respect, comradeship, and gratitude in it" (Miller 2022: 78-79). Miller shows the profound impact Singleman had on Willy's life, career, and dreams. He met Singleman in the Parker House. Though, Willy had already decided to go and locate his father in Alaska with his brother, Ben. But, Signalman's success story inspired Willy to become a salesman. The concept of being popular and having a big funeral are taken by him to be the marks of success. The irony in the play twists and this very concept of successful career and death initiate the events leading to Willy's death. Neither Willy's career nor funeral turns out to be as he had envisioned. Willy misses his opportunity of becoming affluent in Africa with Ben and is stuck in a job which leaves him dissatisfied and unsuccessful.

Biff also confirms Willy's ideals with his athletic success in high school. Biff gets scholarship offers from three universities and he practices with a stolen football. Part of Willy's dream seems to be that Biff will be successful and popular through personality and business.

Willy believes that America promises success to those who are physically attractive. This dream of Willy was similar to the vision of success many Americans had possessed from the mid-1900s to the present day. It contradicts the traditional core of the American Dream. While modern Americans value magic, America's founders valued character. Willy Loman achieved success through adultery and lies, but hard work and integrity formed the core of the American Dream in the eighteenth century.

Many alternate versions of the American Dream have emerged. During the nineteenth century, a Wild West variation of the American Dream emerged, promoting ambition, manual labor, and self reliance (Kamp 2009). Then, in the twentieth century, Americans began to value security, prosperity, and freedom, especially during the 1950s. Americans began to see happy families, working fathers, home making mothers, and moderate wealth as the visual realization of the American Dream (Kamp 2009). Mathew Warshauer writes in his article about the modern American Dream from the late twentieth century to the present day, that people's perception of the American Dream had morphed into a vision that promises instant wealth in the form of lotteries, gambling and lawsuits.

Arthur Miller's play does not show the demise of the American Dream. On the contrary it clarifies what the American Dream is in reality. It is taking back the Americans to the core values on which United States was founded. It reminds that hard work, honesty, humility and integrity can make one realize the limitless possibility which America promises to its citizens (Kamp 2009). Those who grasp this dream in the right order can earn respect, prosperity, fulfilling jobs and satisfaction of a good day's work.

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Death of a Salesman opens with a flute 'telling of grass and trees and the horizon' (Miller 2022: 9). It is the story of something more than a salesman's story. It is the Dream of America of the Salesman and the common man, which is fading as that horizon shrinks to a Brooklyn backyard. It is the story of the poem that is America, whose form is no longer perfect and easy to sustain. And, a poem which is fast running into prose. As Miller remarks in the *Bomb Magazine*, "what we do privately has consequences. But since trying to trace that in concrete terms is almost impossible we are backed up into metaphor and analogy and poetry, which is the only way you handle it anyway" (Rifkin 1994).

Arthur Miller never wanted to be known or described as a realistic writer. He said in an interview that, "Theatre is intrinsically poetic, it thrives on metaphor" (Eyre 2009: xiii). He also remarked that he did not write plays, he wrote metaphors. He was an experimenter who was interested in the unconscious poetry of those struggling to express their needs and hopes. For him, poetry of the play was constituted from all aspects of theatre which lift words from the page and bring it onto the stage. He remarked, "I recall thinking that all important things were between the lines, in the silences, the gestures, the stuff above or below the level of speech...Music begins *Salesman*, not by accident; we are to hear Willy before we see him and before he speaks. He was there in the hollow of the flute, the wind, the air announcing his arrival and his doom" (Bigsby 2005: 116). Miller refers to Tennessee Williams who said that "poetry doesn't have to be words...In the theatre it can be situations, it can be silence" (Miller 2009: 34). Willy Loman lived and died the life of a salesman. He was a person of no significance, a commoner. No one came to his funeral except the family members and a friendly neighbour. He sat in the dark for sixty years listening to the fading sound of a flute until, in silence, the word and the pain became one.

Expressionism

Expressionism was a cultural movement in poetry and painting which originated in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its main feature was to present the world in a subjective perspective. This would naturally highlight emotions and using symbols to portray emotional effects to evoke ideas or moods. Expressionist artists sought to express the meaning of being alive with emotional experience rather than on physical reality. This movement gradually made its way into drama and fiction.

Death of a Salesman can be put under this category. In this play the flow of time and use of space is unconventional. The playwright blends realistic images of modern American life like cars, aspirin, refrigerators, etc. with symbolism and expressionism. For example, Ben's character is not real; rather he is the expression of Willy's desire for escape and success. The play does not follow a linear time-flow pattern. It moves back and forth between the past and the present using the flashback technique. Willy's life history comes to the forefront as splashes of the present and the past are thrown on to the canvas of the theatrical stage as in real life.

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Miller suggests the use of several stage devices to distinguish time and place in the play. One such device is lighting. As the first memory scene in Act I begins thus:

Willy's form is dimly seen below in the darkened kitchen. He opens the refrigerator, searches in there, and takes out a bottle of milk. The apartment houses are fading out, and the entire house and surroundings become covered in leaves. Music insinuates itself as the leaves appear (Miller 2022: 26).

The light then rises on the kitchen and Willy, who has been mumbling to an invisible Biff, shuts the refrigerator. By lowering and raising the light levels, Miller signals to the audience that the time frame is changing. It is another way to suggest time shifts in movement. In the opening stage directions Miller writes:

Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall – lines, entering the house only through the door at the left. But in the scenes of the past, these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping 'through' a wall onto the forestage (Miller 2022: 10).

In addition to light and movement, the playwright creates sound motifs to underscore some of the characters in the play. Willy has his own theme music which is played on a solo flute. This flute is the instrument which his father made and played. The flute theme accompanies Willy in the present and is heard at the end of the play as Linda speaks over Willy's grave. Ben also has his own recognizable theme music. And, the raucous laughter always signals the arrival of the Woman.

Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophy which focuses on human existence.. Existentialism basically urges one to live the life to the fullest and with passion according to one's own individual understanding. The importance of human freedom to make choices, and the responsibility to do so consciously is one of its basic features. Solomon writes, "the message of existentialism, unlike many more obscure and academic philosophical movements, is about as simple as it can be. It is that every one of us, as an individual, is responsible for the way we face and deal with the world, responsible, ultimately, for the way the world is. It is, in a very short phrase, the philosophy of "no excuses!" (Solomon 2000). According to Sartre (Sartre 2002: 40), there are two kinds of existentialists, viz., theistic existentialist and atheistic existentialism. Theistic existentialists are Jasper and Gabriel Marcel. Atheistic existentialists are Heidegger, Albert Camus and Sartre.

In *Death of a Salesman*, the playwright illustrated the dilemma of Willy Loman who is beset by many problems in life. He has problems about his workplace and in the family. It is closely related to existentialist condition where he chooses how he wants to live. He has freedom of choice but he is surrounded by ego, anxiety, dilemma and futility or nothingness of life. These problems

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are well arranged in the narrative and in the technical and structural elements. As a common man, the protagonist faces the problem of making choices. He needs to make the right choice as it is not only he who will be affected by that choice but it revolves around the life of his family members whom he loves. He can succeed if he solves the dilemma by making the right choice but not if he flees away from it. There are some situations in the play which push Willy Loman to decide to end his life by committing suicide. Willy ends his life by crashing himself in order to get insurance money for his family and his son, Biff. Biff Loman can use the insurance money to start a new business.

Psycho Analytical Aspect

Willy Loman represents a common man, but his actions and behaviours need to be analysed on psychological level. Only then one can comprehend the play well. Willy's obsession with success and recognition becomes a burden for him. Consequently, he starts creating unrealistic expectations about his life, career and his son's career and life. Willy is in the delusion that he is successful and this takes him into some paranoiac stages and various psychological disorders appear in his mind.

Willy's behaviour changes step by step as he gradually realizes the truth. The deterioration of his mental health begins once he realizes that he is unable to change his fate and ends by deciding to give up on his life as an excuse of saving his family from economic crash.

The first stage of Willy's mental breakdown is when he realizes that he can no longer control his mind and he easily get distracted when his sharp focus is required. He mentions the fact that he was driving and he suddenly went numb and lost the idea of time. The state of numbness is a common characteristic among those suffering from borderline personality disorder.

In order to clear his anxious mind and relax, Willy tends to go back in time very often. He does so by reliving the moment in some delusional way and by going back in memory. This can directly be connected with Sigmund Freud's theory about narcissism and about the fact that narcissists tend to receive pleasure from objects but also the fact that they seek for ideals that made them feel good and completely happy as children (Fonagy 2018: 78-79).

A narcissist personality has those ideals about themselves that they must fulfil, no matter what happens. Hence, when it does not happen, they cannot compromise and be happy of what they have. They instantly feel disappointed about themselves and that often makes them feel as if they are not enough (Fonagy 2018: 189). So, Willy never admits that he and his family have problems or that his children turned out not how he expected them to be. This is the very stage where Willy starts losing control over his life.

In the second stage, Willy gets more and more delusional. According to Sigmund Freud, libido is the sexual desire of a person and when it is increased it tends to have a particular behaviour (Fonagy 2018: 4). Most people see the process of making love as a caring and loving action, a

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narcissist sees it as a way of being powerful. Even if he/she is happy with the partner, they seek the attention of someone else and they will let their desire of being in control, taken over by someone else. Narcissists also tend to find people who serve their purposes. Linda, Willy's wife is like a mother to him. She takes extra care of him. The way Willy interrupts her while she is talking seems like he does not really appreciate her but rather uses her so that she can take care of him. On the other hand, the Woman that we see him cheating with serves him a very different purpose. She serves the purpose of the sexual pleasure and also the pleasure of feeling that he is actually attractive.

At this stage Willy becomes more delusional and gets distracted by being busy with his fancies and illusions. It is a way to get away from reality by pursuing his thoughts.

A big part of Willy's confusion comes from his unrealistic dreams about his sons and more specifically Biff. He thinks that Biff's life should be similar to his. Though, Biff tries to explain to him that he wants to live a different life but Willy ignores him. And, this leads to a worse relationship with his son. Actually, Willy sees Biff as his own extension and not as a different individual. He cannot imagine and expect that Biff has his own dreams and expectations. It happens so because of Willy's egoistical personality.

When Biff met him in Boston, he found out about his mistress and that disappointed him so much that he refused to go to summer school to make up for his grades. The fact that Willy has erased that from his mind shows the actual trauma that Willy has experienced since according to Freud, repressed memories come from traumatic events (Freud 2011: 206-208). That makes Willy incapable of actually admitting his failure as a father or even understanding his son's behaviour and feelings. Instead, his anger rises in a way that he is trying to play the victim, at least, in front of Bernard. He tries to cover up for himself and hide the fact that he is actually guilty.

In that way, he thinks that his family could both receive the insurance money that they need but also his feelings of emptiness, sadness and despair that have occurred, will vanish. At this point Willy is also embarrassed by his suicidal thoughts so he does not want to face Linda.

Once again, he tries very hard to lie and hide the truth and that is actually his final point. He can clearly no longer control himself and his mind. When Ben completely takes over Willy's mind, Willy sees it as a great opportunity to make his family proud. He strongly believes that money is the only answer to their problems. In that way we realize that Willy stayed true to his American dream of putting wealth first.

"LINDA: Willy! Come up! WILLY: Yes! Yes. Coming! It's very smart, you realize that, don't you, sweetheart? Even Ben sees it. I gotta go, baby. Bye! Bye!" (Miller 2022: 132).

One can easily follow Willy's mind through this analysis and that his choice to commit suicide arose from his melancholic state, anger, strong attachment with ego and feelings of loss. Suicide appears the nearest solution to all his problems, and so he abides by that choice.

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The theatre of the Absurd came as a reaction to World War II. It took the basis of existential philosophy and combined it with the dramatic elements to create a style of theatre which presented a world which could not be explained logically. But, can be summed up in one word that life is ABSURD!

The term refers to a particular type of play which first became popular during the 1950s and 1960s. It presented on stage as a philosophy articulated by Albert Camus, a French philosopher, in his essay, 'The Myth of Sisyphus'. He defines the human condition as basically meaningless. Camus argued that humanity had resigned itself to recognize that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach. In that sense the world was ultimately to be seen as absurd. Martin Esslin regarded the term 'Theatre of the Absurd' merely as a device by which he meant to bring attention to certain fundamental traits discernible in the works of a range of playwrights. The playwrights loosely grouped under the label of the absurd attempt to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety, and wonder in the face of an inexplicable universe.

Death of a Salesman carries many traits of absurd theatre. To justify this point I would like to compare and contrast this play's concepts with that of *Waiting for Godot*, a perfect example of absurd theatre. *Death of a Salesman* is written by an American playwright and *Waiting for Godot* is an Absurd drama written by a British playwright Samuel Beckett. Both the plays were written after World War II. Although, the two plays were written by two different playwrights in two different places, they contain many similarities. Both the plays were written during the same period by two greatest playwrights reflecting the same problems, yet they contained many differences in its themes and characters.

The **similarities** of the characters in both the plays are as follows: characters from both the plays are centered on middle class American and British societies. Willy Loman and his family are from middle class and Vladimir and Estrogen in *Waiting for Godot* are two tramps. Both Miller and Beckett design characters those who are liable to the pain of existing since they are alone and free. There is no deity or anyone to help them. This results in an endless distress for the characters and leads to life long suffering. In both the plays the main characters fail in achieving their purpose they want to get in their life. Willy Loman fails and does not succeed. Vladimir and Estrogen fail to meet Godot in order to solve their problems. In both the plays the main characters are badly connected and have conflicts. As Willy and Biff have their conflicts, similarly Vladimir and Estrogen do not have clear and good connection between them.

The main themes in both the plays concentrate on uncertainty of life, absurdity and illusion. The characters in both the plays strongly believe in the uncertainty of life, hence they do not make any changes. They believe that everything they do will vanish in an instant, resulting in no reward for their time in *Waiting for Godot* and hard work in *Death of a Salesman*. In *Waiting for Godot*, the two tramps are not sure of their action which is waiting for an unknown person. It means that

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the two men's decision is quite different from the reality of the method that they choose for continuing to live when they are bored to death.

Similar to that, in *Death of a Salesman* the main characters do not believe strongly in the way they choose to live.

The second similarity in both the plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Death of a Salesman* is that they deal with the theme of absurdity. The main characters in *Death of a Salesman* work hard to achieve and live successfully but at the end nothing happens. Willy commits suicide; Biff and Happy do not get better work and Linda loses her husband and stays alone. *Waiting for Godot* also deals with this theme, because Vladimir and Estragon live in absurdly way, waiting and losing their time but at the end nothing happens.

Both the plays are alike in dealing with the idea of illusion. Their main characters are all unable to distinguish between what is real from what is not real. When the main characters in both the plays dream or want to get something successfully, reality always faces them or works against them, so, their hopes and dreams clash with reality. In *Death of a Salesman* this appears when Willy's dream to get work in New York is destroyed by reality and the boss of his company fires him. In *Waiting for Godot*, this appears when Vladimir's and Estragon's hope to meet their saviour is destroyed by reality when Godot's messenger tells them that Godot will not come.

However, the main characters of the two plays are very different in some aspects. The first **difference** is the question of independence. In Beckett's play, because Vladimir is more intellectual, active, more logical, and strong and has better memory, while Estragon is lazy, hopeless, weak, and has weak memory, this makes Estragon dependent on Vladimir. Unlike, Miller's main characters do not depend on each other. For example, Willy Loman depends on himself to get his goal in life, the American Dream, denying any aid from his friends.

The main characters in the aforesaid two plays are unlike each other in their capabilities. In *Death of a Salesman*, the main characters are more serious and active and work hard to achieve success. Whereas in *Waiting for Godot* the main characters are careless and they just while away their time by waiting for nothing. The situation of the main characters in both the plays is different. Arthur Miller's characters seem to be free in their action. There is no power above to control them or to limit their freedom. In contrast with Samuel Beckett's characters, who suffer from the limitation of their freedom. They cannot move, they simply accept the situation that Godot has the power over them.

Besides, there is a difference of themes in Beckett's and Miller's plays. The main theme in the two plays is the theme of time. We notice in *Waiting for Godot*, characters are waiting for the future without living their present and there are no flashbacks. Moreover, they wait for a better future and forgetting their present moment. The two tramps Estragon and Vladimir think that their problems will be solved just by waiting for Godot. They suffer from the present condition and they cannot make any change and nor can they change their situation. Therefore, they believe that they will find a comfortable life in the future. Differently, in *Death of a Salesman* Arthur Miller

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intermixes past events with those of the present. This appears when Willy Loman uses flashbacks in his present life. In other words, he is in and out of the present moment.

Waiting for Godot is a play about nothing and it is a play about everything. It is a play that makes you question your very existence. This is what makes it a great play and Beckett a genius. Willy Loman, in *Death of a Salesman*, gave the impression of a man who had been a true mountain within the family, and the dysfunctional values of American society killed him and not his dreams.

Despite all the differences between Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, they are considered a transformative and highly influential plays. They are perhaps, the most significant plays of the twentieth century, particularly for their impact on the later playwrights.

Post Wwii Theatre

World War II brought in themes such as race, power, democracy and human behaviour. Financial crisis, the aftermath war condition of stress and cultural chaos was reflected everywhere in literature. Lots of experiments were being made in the field of writings to suit the existing psychology and times. The body of work created during these times was chaotic, confusing, conflicting, and rudderless, anti-colonial, feminist, post-colonial, post modern.

In England what could be seen in most West End theatres were so-called well-made plays, originating in late nineteenth-century French theatre. These were the plays that centred on an upper-class hero undergoing a crisis, which would mark his progression from ignorance to knowledge, bound by a plot fixed by the unities of time, place and action. Norwegian playwright, Ibsen had added naturalism to the well-made play, thus opening the way for the drama of social and political content written by G.B. Shaw in England. By the 1940s, the well-made play was sounding too artificial –the twist endings too contrived– and naturalism, especially in acting, was gaining ground.

The main playwrights of the time were **Noël Coward**, **Terence Rattigan** and **J.B.Priestley**, though the more experimental plays in verse by **T.S.Eliot** and **Christopher Fry** also enjoyed considerable success.

Absurdist drama of Samuel Beckett proposed a reflection on the form of drama, drawing the audience's attention to the artificiality of speech, plot and characters on the stage. Socially critical theatre of **John Osborne** invited the audience to consider the new sense of social alienation of the rising lower middle-class, also shattering conventions as to the decorum so far observed on the English stage.

It was also in the 1950s that **Harold Pinter** presented his masterpiece, *The Birthday Party* (1958). Pinter, still regarded today as the main figure of the English stage, set with this absurdist play an apolitical alternative to Osborne's theatre. His characters move in a void, in a bizarre world best defined by the adjective

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In addition, **Brecht's** political and experimental theatre offered a useful synthesis that attracted many followers. **Brechtian drama** also encouraged the use of new architectural styles for new play houses –less formal, with less marked differentiation between audience and stage– and a much more open acting style, with a new emphasis on the possibilities of body language.

The **fringe theatre** appeared in the mid-1960s. According to John Elsom (1979), two events from the years 1963-64, the establishment of the **Traverse Theatre** in Edinburgh and the **Theatre of Cruelty** seasons at LAMDA, inaugurated the modern fringe. Fringe theatre typically depends on the existence of very small venues, where highly experimental drama, addressed to small audiences who would avoid mainstream theatres, can be performed. The experimentalism of fringe theatre focuses, above all, on acting styles.

The late 1960s also brought the end of stage censorship: the rule of the Lord Chamberlain was abolished in 1968. This gave younger authors a greater freedom of language and allowed them to go much further than the **Angry Young Men** or the working-class dramatists in their virulent social criticism.

By the beginning of the 1950s the vitality of American theatre was acknowledged around the world. The international reputation of **Eugene O'Neill** was complemented by two potent young dramatists: **Arthur Miller**, who turned the ordinary man into a figure of tragic stature in *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and drew a parallel between U.S. Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade of the 1950s and the Salem witch trials of 1692 in *The Crucible* (1953), and **Tennessee Williams**, who created a world festering with passion and sensuality in plays such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1954). At the same time, the director Lee Strasberg, together with Elia Kazan, was codifying the teachings of Stanislavsky into the method, which generated both controversy and misunderstanding. Although the **Actors Studio**, founded by Kazan in 1947, produced many fine actors, including Marlon Brando, Geraldine Page, and Paul Newman, the method proved inadequate as an approach to acting in classical plays; it was best suited to the realism of the new American plays and films.

During the 1930s, African American theatre artists found work in the WPA Federal Theatre Projects segregated Negro Units. Trained in every aspect of theatrical production, this vital labour force emerged when the Federal Theatre Project was disbanded in 1939. The **American Negro Theatre of Harlem** in 1940 fostered a generation of black actors and dramatists including **Sidney Poitier**, **Alice Childress**, and **Ruby Dee**. Also important was **Harlem's Club Baron**, during the early 1950s. With its premier in 1959 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in New York City, **Lorraine Hansberry's** *A Raisin in the Sun* became the first drama by an African American woman to be produced on Broadway. Its director, Lloyd Richards, became the first African American to direct on Broadway, and he went on to collaborate extensively with August Wilson. In 1970, **Charles Gordone** became the first black American to receive the Pulitzer Prize for drama for *No Place to Be Somebody*. **Ntozake Shange's** *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the*

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Rainbow Is Enuf (1975), featuring seven women's experiences performed in monologues and dance, represented a break from the predominantly realist family dramas that had dominated black theatre. Many of the works of Suzan-Lori Parks, Anna Deavere Smith, and Robbie McCauley, all trenchant commentators on the intersections of race and gender in modern America, also abandoned realist traditions.

Conclusion

World War II created not only social, cultural, economic and historical destruction but a spiritual barrenness. A vacuum in the inner access of the heart and mind of man was created which was difficult to overcome. Till date the world and its inhabitants are suffering from the colossal spiritual emptiness. All branches of literature fiction, drama and poetry aim at bringing the spiritually lost beings back Home. It may be any work belonging to this phase, like that of T S Eliot's *Wasteland*, Henrik Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, Wole Soyinka's *The Road*, W B Yeats' *The Second Coming*, A D Hope's *Australia*, W H Auden's *The Unknown Citizen*, Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, the list is endless. From one corner of the world to the other, from one work to the other, from one genre to the other, one can hear in a single voice – a single sound - All pointing towards the spiritual wantonness. Internal realities have been overshadowed by the external realities. The ripe times have befallen to check out the suction of spirituality. The unheard and silent voices are to be heard in the still realms of the inner consciousness. The root cause of suffering is because man is tarrying on the wrong route. Step by step, the colossal body of man is being eaten up by the worm of wealth and fame.

On the infertile land lie the fragments of love, passion, respect, worship, humility and spirituality. The wonder of the rooted problem is that we know the solution, yet, are unable to reach the goal. Like two tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, we all are waiting...waiting for a miracle to take place, waiting for the Saviour to save us. Far and wide the rain droplets from the sky fall down to surpass a ray of relief. But, in the Arabian desert of the consciousness these few droplets dry up within no time. We transmigrate helplessly into vacuum of silence and nothingness. On the rough surface lies no smoothness, but, a disciplined mind is capacitated to transform crudities into fertile plains. Freedom is the choice of man. Conquering the intellectual space by weaving it with the thread of humanity, love and spirituality can be a conscious and successful step towards eternity. Nothingness and meaninglessness can easily become the instruments of eternal success. Awakening of the internal consciousness is a pure tag which helps in crossing over the internal mountains radically and gradually.

Literature in the present times deals with such like streams of consciousness to insinuate the sparks of the memory where man actually belongs. The darkness afore birth and beyond death is opened up in this postmodern and post-colonial literature. The outer reality blurs when inner realms are brought out of the cave and recognised. Behold! That time is not far wherein the literature will

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stand a winner across the realms of humanity. Where beyond arguments, simple features and facts will embellish and replace complicated chaos in man.

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