Chapter – III

Characterization
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Characterization is how characters are represented and the ways in which this is accomplished, such as, how the writer limits one’s responses, questions or observations, for instance. Any playwright may also describe a character through his or her gestures or speeches. The writer chooses the themes and they are generally concretized through characters in the plays. Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller excel in their art of characterization. Their characters belong to all ranks and files of American society. Each of their heroes is involved in a struggle which results from either his acceptance or his rejection of an image of himself. This image grows out of the values and the prejudices of the society. It is, therefore, natural that the playwrights planted their characters firmly within a family structure which reflected in turn the pressures of society at large.

Eugene O’Neill’s art of characterization is inseparable from his vision of life. He wrote symbolic plays in which, instead of resorting to depicting a crowd, he began to create representative individuals, concepts turned into characters. Characters, tragic heroes especially, are symbols of dream and illusion, courage and fortitude, higher ideals, poetic sensibility, rebellion, struggle against an alien world. Being dissatisfied with the ordinariness of surfaces of the realistic method of character portrayal, he experimented with expressionism. The Emperor Jones is his first expressionistic play and Brutus Jones is his first expressionistic hero. The play, sometimes called
“monodrama”, where the distinction is motivated by a character’s state of mind and where that character is still a human being. The *Hairy Ape* apparently developed in the direction of expressionism. Its position is somewhere between the expressionism of *The Emperor Jones* and that of playwrights like Toiler or Kaiser; realistic and stylized elements are mixed, and there is still quite a lot of emphasis on characterization but also on social ingredients.

Freudian psychoanalysis developed O’Neill’s insight into the depth of human psyche and he created characters representing psychological complexes in plays such as *The Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. In the last phase of his career, however, his art matured considerably and keeping in view the serious nature of the plays he wrote, he created three-dimensional characters. The characteristic of the dreamy eyes appears consistently throughout the plays. In *Lazarus Laughed*, Miriam’s mask is described in these words: “The eyes of the mask are almost closed. Their gaze turns within, oblivious to the life outside, as they dream down on the child forever in memory at her breast.” (43). And in *The Great God Brown* Margaret is described thus “She is almost seventeen, pretty and vivacious, blonde, with big romantic eyes, her figure lithe and strong, her facial expression intelligent but youthfully dreamy, especially now in the moonlight.” While Dion’s face is not described by the word “dreamy”, a synonym serves to convey the same idea. “His face is masked. The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face—dark, spiritual, poetic, passionate) super-sensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life.” Robert, in *Beyond the Horizon*, “is a tall slender young man of twenty-three.
Marsden in *Strange Interlude* is another member of the hapless company of idealists who are incapable of accepting the reality of the world and are destroyed by their own dreams of beauty. He is described: “His face is too long for its width, his nose is high and narrow, his forehead broad, his mild blue eyes those of a dreamy self-analyst, his thin lips ironical and a bit sad. There is an indefinable feminine quality about him, but it is nothing apparent in either appearance or act.” He is a man fascinated by his own idealism and at the same time conscious of the limitations of his ideal. Even old Ephraim Cabot in *Desire Under the Elms* is described in these words: “His eyes have taken on a strange, incongruous dreamy quality.” (24)

In all his plays, the individual is brought to a tragic end because he asks more from life than life can offer him. He is incapable of reconciling himself to the limitations of the world in which he lives. The narrow confines of his environment irk him, and he dreams beyond the horizon into an imaginative world where all is beautiful and good. Living in this divided world, the one of reality, the other of imagination, the individual is continually tortured by the passionate longing of his ambitions and the grim reality of his immediate environment. In fear of losing their power, they are nervous, fretful, discontented. The efforts of O’Neill’s people are concentrated on tiling to or holding on to their middle position. For instance, Brutus Jones and Jim struggle against being driven back to their original colour lines. Yank accepts the embrace of death rather than sink back to his pit of not “belonging”. In Nina and Lavinia the will to power is to extreme and insistent as to reach near hysteria. (Gupta, Monika. *The Plays of Eugene O’Neill*)
But their rebellion, being incomplete or negative, proves inadequate to cope with their situation. The result is that these characters are invaded by doubts which split their personalities. It was O’Neill’s startling innovation to give theatrical form to the dissociated personality through the visions in *The Emperor Jones*, the masks in *The Great God Brown*, the “double talk” in *Strange Interlude* and the change of personality in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Brutus Jones repudiates and is repudiated by both blacks and whites. What is here projected through the twilight consciousness of one person is dramatized in the later plays, where O’Neill extends the technique of dissociation to the point where it becomes a naturalistic form. In *The Great God Brown* he would have us see the split in his characters by their use of masks; in *Strange Interlude* he would have us hear the evidence of their duality.

In O’Neill’s two major plays, *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the action pivots on a war scene which serves as the background for the inner wars of the characters. Nina rebels against her father’s intervention which kept her from consummating her love for Gordon; Lavinia and Orin trespass all natural boundaries in defiance of their father’s strict morality. Deprived of love, Nina rejects love itself, giving herself to men and marrying without love. Even her child is conceived in loveless “scientific” planning. Having freed herself from all outer authority, Nina is trapped by the authority within herself. In *Strange Interlude* the characters still manage to live and talk themselves out. In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, all expression is turned inward. Here, love is for oneself, sinful and guilty love of daughter for father, son for mother, brother for sister. The “rich exclusive
Mannons” feel guilty in no longer being capable of productive love. They snatch at love stealthily from those below, from Marie Brantome, the nurse girl with the joy of life (reminiscent of Regina in Ibsen is *Ghosts*), and her son, Brant. Nina was still able to produce “in secret”. The Mannons cannot do even that. The war has maimed them, and after the public civil war is over they continue a private civil war within themselves. Even as they succeed in keeping the murders from becoming public, the acts carry on their secret “publicity” within the characters themselves. The result is the secular tragedy in which suffering constantly mounts without alleviation. Lavinia, the master will in all three murders, hopes, by her acts of “removal” to free her self for simple love. But what Lavinia cannot control is the effect of the action on her self. With each physical removal, she adds to her inner burden. The dead souls rule the living ones. She retains her wilfulness to the very end, refusing to atone, but the, confession and atonement take place nonetheless in the form of her self-rejection.

“There’s no one left to punish me. I’m the last Mannon. I’ve got to punish myself.”

With these words she enters her church of hell to practise love or hatred on herself.

In the play *Mourning Becomes Electra* through Nina and Lavinia, O’Neill presents the ultimate in self and social alienation. Both are the masochistic products of modern rationalistic probing. Both attempt to wield and possess people’s lives, as if they were “god and had created them”. Nina renounces at the end. Lavinia remains defiant even in her acceptance of suffering. Her very, self-surrender and self: immolation have the character of challenge and insubordination. She remains in the grip of the Furies. In the midst, of their sophisticated schemings, O’Neill’s characters
yearn for the state in which there is no knowledge of sin, where man is not tormented by “dreams of greed and power”. The business characters in O’Neill’s later plays, unlike Marco Polo of the earlier one, become problematical in that they question their status. Brown doubts that he is “the great God Brown”; Sam Evans inherits Marco Polo’s innocent acquisitiveness, but his success is illusory and planned for him by, the sensitive and guilty characters, Nina and Darrell. He himself no longer enjoys the robust health of Marco, and while the insane streak in his family passes him by, he dies a sudden, “non-natural” death. What was an “instinct” of acquisitiveness with Marco Polo becomes neurosis with Nina and Lavinia. What was simple reasoning with him becomes tortured self-analysis. Marco Polo was intent on accumulating information and goods. The modern characters having gathered them, question their meaning, want to know what lies “behind” them.

O’Neill’s *Beyond the Horizon* deals with the lives of two brothers, Robert and Andrew. Both Robert and Andrew are brothers and are opposite to each other in nature but fall in with the same girl, Ruth. Robert is a young farm born dreamer, whose romantic mind and frail body yearn for the open sea. On the other hand, Andrew has no interest in all sorts of romantic imagination. He is a real ‘Mayo,’ a true son of the soil, born to do nothing but work in the fields. The play begins with the incident that Robert is about to ship on a voyage with his uncle. His brother, who is happy with the farm, is looking forward to his marriage with Ruth Atkins, his childhood sweet-heart. When Robert tells Ruth that he loves her, her response causes him to abandon his chance of escape and to marry Ruth, while Andrew replaces his
brother on the sea voyage. Robert falls in despair and brings the farm to slow
disintegration and ruin. He realizes that his wife, who has become resentful and
morose, has always loved his brother. Anyhow, they have managed to pass their time
for the sake of their daughter and mother. But after the death of his mother and the
baby, Robert becomes more helpless and faces a lot of economic crisis. Then, Andrew
returns, successful and wealthy, and finds Robert surrounded by the ruins he has
created and dying of tuberculosis. On his death-bed, Robert still dreams of freedom
beyond the horizon and of reconciliation between Ruth and Andrew. At first we find
Robert sitting on the fence, reading a book in the beauteous atmosphere of the fading
sun. His appearance expresses his personality: “There is a touch of the poet about
him expressed in his high forehead and wide, dark eyes. His features are delicate and
refined leaning to weakness in the mouth and chin” (6) This individuality of his
character keeps him apart from the rest of the characters in the play. It seems that he is
haunted by a sense of isolation which ensues from his romantic nature ever in search
of beauty. On the other hand, Andrew is returning from his work in the field, “an
opposite type of Robert- husky, sunbronzed, handsome in large-featured, manly
fashion- a son of the soil, intelligent in a shrewd way, but with nothing of the
intellectual about him” (6). This shows his devotion towards work in contrast to
Robert’s worship of beauty. Both the brothers are sharply distinguished by their
thoughts. Being a farmer’s son, whose duty is to work in the field, Robert’s
expectation lies beyond the horizon. His high ambition is the cause of his loneliness,
which compels him to seek some peace in a lonely atmosphere, for which he is
isolated from his family. Robert thinks that his search for identity may be fulfilled by his urge for beauty. Robert’s longing for beauty is marred by the confession of Ruth. On the eve of his departure, he comes to know that he is being loved by Ruth, who, he thought, loved Andrew. At first, Robert insists Ruth to accompany him in his voyage. But she refuses, citing the reason of her mother Mrs. Atkin’s illness and her own outlook on life. She says to Robert:

I wouldn’t want to live in any of those outlandish places you were going to. I couldn’t stand it there, I know I couldn’t – not knowing anyone. It makes me afraid just to think of it. I’ve never been away from here, hardly and – I’m just a home body. I’m afraid (30)

Her bent of mind is entirely practical, contrary to the poetical mind of Robert. In fact, she is trapped in the cage of illusion- she hopes she will lead a life of conciliation with Robert. But the nature of Robert is incompatible with hers. Robert is a man living in the world of imagination such as poetry, and she, for this transitory charm, woos him. (Gupta, Monika. *The Plays of Eugene O’Neill- A Critical Study*)

Jones in *The Emperor Jones* is the major character whose manners and appearance make him a different being and because of his own nature he is cut-off from the society. Neither in the United States nor in the West Indian Island has he established any social links with anybody which is natural instinct in every social being. Identity is nothing but a farce for him. Being a convict, he becomes ruler at the cost of his identity. But the identity which he assumes in the island becomes false because he has again done the same mistake. It seems that treachery is part and parcel
of his nature. He always faces the problem of identity. But whenever he gets identity by his tricky efforts, he misuses it. He never considers himself a Negro; rather he thinks that the black people of his race are inferior to him. It clearly shows that he has no sense of fellow-feeling. Again and again, he calls “nigger,” “bloody nigger”, which indicates that he has no sense of brotherhood and belongingness. Always he is haunted by a sense of isolation; he belongs neither to himself nor to his own classes of people. While Smithers warns him of the danger he has to face in wild forest, he calls him: Look – a- heat white man; Does you think. I’su a natural bo-n-fool? (13). It shows his false confidence and egoism which keep him isolated from the society. He hates both the white and black people, and this ultimately separates him from the society. His over smartness places him in a lonely state. He is confident that he can make people fool in any circumstances at any time. Jones’s false pride and vain courage always make a dividing line between him and society. None but he himself is responsible for this conflict which keeps him aloof from the trend. Neither he considers anybody’s suggestion nor understands the capacity of others.

In O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape* Yank is the principal character whose sense of belongingness is the main theme of the play. When this belongingness is shattered by Mildred Douglas, he falls into despair. He is a stoker in a transatlantic liner and other characters do not know about his whereabouts. Yank tells Long that on Saturday nights his parent's fighting was so intense that his parents would break the furniture. Ironically, his parents made him attend church every Sunday morning. After his mother’s death, Yank ran away from home, tired of lickings and punishment. In the
beginning of the play, Yank seems fairly content as, if not proud to be a fireman. He defends the ship as his home and insists that the work he does is vital—it is the force that makes the ship go twenty-five knots an hour. Mildred Douglas's reaction to Yank is the catalyst which makes Yank come to class awareness. His attempt to get revenge on Mildred Douglas widens to revenge on the steel industry and finally the entire Bourgeois. Throughout this struggle Yank defines "belonging" as power. When he thinks he "belongs" to something he gains strength, when Yank is rejected by a group, he is terribly weak. However, Yank is rejected by all facets of society: his fellow firemen, Mildred Douglas, people in Fifth Avenue, The I.W.W. (Industrial Workers World) and finally the ape in the zoo. Yank symbolizes the struggle of modern man within industrial society—he cannot break class or ideological barriers, nor create new ones. Yank is the outsider and eventually just the freak at the zoo for people to cage and point at.

In *Desire Under the Elms* Simeon and Peter, the two important characters are disgusted with the life, provided to them by their father. They are aware of the hardships they have met in cultivating the stony land of their father. They are so much disgusted with him that they do not hesitate to wish him dead or mad. It clearly indicated the Ephraim’s principle of worshipping the hard god is solely responsible for the isolated lives of his sons. No one is free from the tyrannous eyes of Ephraim. Eben accuses his brothers who did not stand beside their mother when she was suffering and leading a lonely life. Eben believes that the spirit of his dead mother still haunts the house. Eben’s desire to possess the farm is a type of unconscious revenge
upon his father’s tyranny. When they assert their rights over the property, Eben
violently opposes: “ye’ve no right. She wa’n’t year maw; it was her farm. Didn’t he
steal it from her? She’s dead. It’s my farm” (Desire Under the Elms 148)

Eben sticks to his possession of the farm, and believes that the whole property
belongs to him. He gives the reason: “it’s maw’s farm agen! It's my farm! Them’s my
cow! I’ll milk my durn fingers off fur cows o’ mine!” he is even ready to pay for the
share of his brothers (151). Simeon’s and Peter’s search of new life compels them to
be alienated from their own land, and so they sell their share to Eben for six hundred
dollars. In the meantime, Ephraim returns with his newly married wife, Abbie, whose
marriage to Ephraim is entirely based on her self-interest. It is for security that she
marries Ephraim. She narrates the insecure life of her by-gone years to Eben thus:

I’ve had a hard life, too – oceans o’ trouble an’ nuthin’ but wuk fur
reward, I was an orphan early an’ had t’ wuk fur others in other folks’
hums. Then I married an’ he turned out a drunken spreer an’ so he had
to wuk fur others an’ me to agen in other folks’ hums, an’ the baby
died, an’ my husband got sick an’ died too, an’ I was glad sayin’ now
I’m free fur was t’ wuk agen in other fulks’ hums’ doin’ others folks’
wuk till I’d most give up hope o’ever doing my own wuk in my own
hum, an’ them your paw come…(Desire Under the Elms 160).

After passing such an insecure phase, naturally aspires a secure life to which
she can belong. She keeps her eyes on Ephraim’s property which is the real security
for her. Abbie’s greed and possessiveness for the farm motivate all her actions in the
beginning. As soon as she enters the house, she feels that the entire property belongs to her. Her strong determination of possessiveness can be felt from her outward appearance. Both Simeon and Peter have left the house, and therefore the only obstacle in her way is young Eben, she thinks she can easily win him. In her encounter with Eben, she tries to win his sympathy by telling him her story of loneliness and hardship. But it seems too difficult on her part to mould him for her purpose owing to his strict sense of possessiveness. The foremost reason behind Abbie’s desire of possession is her sense of insecurity. She has suffered a lot in her past, and hence the real cause of her possessiveness is her desire for security. She wants to belong. She wants to identify herself with the farm of Cabot. This sense of belongingness leads her to establish an illegal relationship with Eben. Gradually, Eben is trapped by her sensuality. His longing for the lost mother’s urge finds a ray of hope in Abbie. His search for a lost maternity compels him to be a victim of Abbie’s lust and purpose. Eben’s “quest for the source of feminine power in the land sets him apart from his brothers and brings him into fatal opposition with Ephraim and his hard god.” Like Simeon and Peter, at first, he seeks satisfaction in a dream of material possession; but as the play proceeds, it becomes clear that his hatred for his father and his legalistic claims of ownership are only signals of truer desire to rediscover the security through an identification with the land. For Eben, the true, the consummate condition of ‘being’ is to belong to the land as an unborn child belongs to the womb. In reality, Eben is opposite of his father and his brothers.
The Great God Brown deals with the four helpless persons’ futile search for happiness. They are: Dion Anthony, the torn and tortured artist; his wife Margaret, his friend William (Billy) Brown; and Cybel the prostitute. They represent conflicting selves as well as conflicting elements in the society. The play begins with a prologue in which we find Dion and Billy, as boys are in love with Margaret. Their fathers are partners in a construction firm. Billy is a simple boy who wears no mask, and obediently promises his parents to study architecture. But Dion wears a mask of pant to conceal his real poetic nature. He is too sensitive to stand in the misunderstanding of the world. Margaret loves Dion’s mask, which protects his sensitive nature from intrusion, and never comes to know his inner self. She, without ever understanding him, marries him and bears him children. It is here that the play property opens in their ugly home. The domestic life of the alien couple turns to be a miserable one. Dion has spent his money, and the tenderly loving Margaret suggests him to work for his friend, Billy, now the successful businessman William a. brown. Dion hesitatingly sends her to get the job for him. After knowing the reality through Margaret about Dion’s failure as an artist and a father, brown agrees to take him as the chief draftsman in his firm. Instead of painting the nature, Dion becomes a building designer. Being dissatisfied with life, Dion seeks consolation from Cybel who embodies the honest qualities of earthly love. She accepts him without his mask. But here Dion also finds brown to be his competitor as he was in the case of Margaret. Brown is jealous of Dion’s creativity, though the latter has played a significant role to promote his business. After long and bitter circumstances, Dion mockingly wills
brown his mask, and the latter puts it on and tries to fulfil his desire of possessing Margaret in the disguise of Dion. Replacing his own identity with Dion’s mask, he manages for a time to alternate between the two selves, but is unable to continue to play the double role: one as Dion, and the other as brown. He then assumes the character of Dion for good, and is accused of murdering brown. In a confused chase by the police who accuse him of murder, brown is shot. He dies in the arms of Cybel, who affirms the existence of god and love. Disillusioned Margaret finds fulfilment in a state of falsity with her sons and her timeless love for the mask of Dion. Wearing a mask is not a matter of choice. Man is trapped in the mask by circumstances, and by his own fears and inhibitions. When he fails to find some communion with the world beyond his cells, he separates himself from all other human beings. But his solitary journey never ends until his doom. This happens in the life of Dion Anthony, the distinguished character of the play.

The painful revelation of the early childhood possesses him entirely, and he can not rest until the promise is somehow fulfilled. So, cut-off from his friend and father, he desperately wants to communicate his real self. When he tries to show his inner self, she recoils with horror. He realizes that there is no human being whom he can comprehend or whose comprehension enables him to unmask himself, and thus free himself from loneliness. After his marriage and the death of his parents, he becomes more helpless and insecure. Gradually, he loses his interest in life and his family. "his real face has aged greatly, grown more stained and tortured", and his mask becomes “more defiant and mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its pan
quality becoming Mephistophelean” (25). He turns to be a split person, tortured by the conflict between his inner-self and the mask. In search of happiness, he becomes spend-thrift drunkard and visits low women. His relation with prostitute Cybel is the result of his longing for his mother’s love. Perhaps her mother is the only person who understood his artistic sensibility, and no wonder his father considers him identical to his mother. For him, his mother is the symbol of all the warmth of life that he has lost forever.

In search of understanding and love, he marries Margaret. But to his ill-luck, instead of loving him, she loves his mask. He expresses the agony of his tragic alienation when he says to his wife mockingly: “this domestic diplomacy! We communicate in code – when neither has the other’s key!” (28). He becomes a stranger to his wife and loses the feelings of a devoted husband. Pretending his failure as an artist when Margaret approaches brown for a jub to him, he considers it her pride, and not her loyalty. Similarly, when Cybel reminds him about his worried wife, he says: She knows-but-she’ll never admit to herself that her husband ever entered your door. (mocking) aren’t women loyal-to-their vanity and their other things! (51-52). Under the stress of the conflicts between the outer mask and inner self, Dion shatters mentally. His mask acquires a sinister reality and completely overshadows his inner being. He realizes that it is really difficult to live in a world of strangers under the falsity of the mask. His lonely suffering ends in his death. Before the end he decides to bequeath the mask to William Brown.
Nina Leeds is the main character of O’Neill’s *Strange Interlude* whose sense of possessiveness is the striking feature of the play. She lives in a world of unreality, since she does not find anything real to which she can belong. This sense of conflict arises out of her possessiveness, her desire to keep all man she has wanted for herself. An inescapable past becomes her whole life. When she realizes the illusory nature of her quested values, she feels embittered and then moves in another direction in clutch at a new illusion. But she fails to achieve her goal of possession, and remains an alienated person throughout her life. The tragic story of her life begins with the death of Gordon Shaw, her fiancee, who she cannot forget throughout her life. Her longing for him and to be the mother of his baby leave her in a state of isolation. Life becomes meaningless for her: “Gordon is dead! What use is my life to me or anyone?” (298). She accuses her father of preventing their marriage. She wanted to be in the possession for her security. But not she considers herself as a barren woman, who stands lonely in the wasteland of life. She miserably confesses: “and now i am lonely and not pregnant with anything at all but – but loathing!” (229). She considers herself a coward on account of her failure to make love with him. She says: “i must pay for my cowardly treachery to Gordon!” (299). Her payment for her guilt becomes horrible for her. From this point, she is separated from her father and this separation leads her to leave him and the home and accept a promiscuous life.

Nina has lost her mental peace owing to the insecurity which arises after the death of Gordon. Her act of promiscuity does not fill the vacuum created within her. After the death of her father, she says to Marsden: “you know-grief, sorrow, love,
father – those sounds our lips make and our hands write” (315). The sense of security that she has lost never returns to her. Her first attempt as a nurse proves to be a futile search, but her search for belonging never ends. To satisfy her longing, she decides to marry Sam Evans on the advice of Darrell and Marsden. Gordon is not only a man for her, but is the symbol of her security, her identity. However, her aspired security, for which she longs, is shattered to pieces when Sam’s mother reveals the family-curse of insanity. Evan forces her for an abortion and suggests her to get a baby by somebody, instead of Sam. The story of insanity creates a gap between the wife and the husband. She loses her interest in him. She thinks: “i only married him because he needed me – and i needed children!” (334). Both Nina and Sam are separated mentally. This separation and the memory of Gordon increase her agony. She begins to forget her duty as a wife. The reason of her dissatisfaction with Sam after the abortion is nothing but the memory of Gordon. She confesses: “...i loved it; so it seemed at times that Gordon must be its real father, that Gordon must have come to me in a dream while i was lying asleep besides Sam!” (351). But her dream shatters with the operation, and a sense of insecurity. To satisfy her urge for the security, she choose Dr. Darrell for the father of her baby, violating all the code and conducts of a loyal wife. At first Darrell refuses; but owing to his pressing desire for her, he is mesmerized to prescribe himself scientifically for the act. On the other hand, she considers her illicit affair as a sacrifice like her previous attempt as a nurse. For the sake of her happiness, she wants to desolate Sam in favour of Darrell. Sexual relation seems to be the principle reason behind her fiance, she has a conflict with her father and becomes an alien daughter.
Now, for the sake of Darrell, she wants to throw Sam. But when Darrell rejects her proposal of marriage and decides to leave, she wants to avenge him. Instead of breaking down, she thinks to use Sam as an instrument for her revenge. The selfishness and passion for possession keep her apart from her family member and friends. She realizes that no single man can provide her a sense of fulfillment. So, she tries to get all the men she knows into her trap, and to some extent, she gets the taste of success. As she says triumphantly:

My three men i feel their desires converge in me...to from one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb....and am whole....they dissolve in me, their life.. I am pregnant with the three....!(395)

It is an illusion which marred by her cruel and capricious wilfulness and a power to hurt not only herself but all men whom she knows. Disillusion by the men, she places all her hopes in Gorden as the last resort of her belonging. She says:

These men make me sick.. I hate all three of them! They disgust me..
the wife and mistress in me has been killed by them! Thank God, i am only man......! (406).

Nina has always dreamt of love and happiness. But how does her dream shape into reality? The death of her real lover, her betrayal by her father, her horrible experience as a nurse, her tragic with Sam, her physical and emotional involvement with Darrell, and her failure to keep the love for her son Gorden—all her encounters with reality break her till she becomes the ghost of her former self. Finally, she decides to marry Charles Marsden, her silent lover, to end her long journey of
insecurity. She considers life as “merely strange dark interlude in the electrical display of God the father!” (449). Another significant character of the play, who suffers a lot through isolation, is Dr. Edmund Ned Darrell. He seems to be the most wanted person in Nina’s list of men. Professionally, he is a physician; emotionally, an ardent lover; and from human point of view, a weak person. He is a rootless person having no familiar attachment likes Sam Evans or Charles Marsden. He enters the story as a sympathizer to Nina, but turns to be an isolated one due to his deep attachment with her. His hypocritical attitude is the root of his disillusionment because of which he suffers from a deep sense of anguish throughout his life.

In the search of happiness, he returns to Nina after spending a long period of frustration and separation. He confesses before Nina:

I wasn’t all noble, I’ll confess! Thought of myself and my career!

Damn my career! A lot of god that sis it! Study! I didn’t live! I longed for you—and suffered. I paid in full, believe me, Nina! But I know better now! I’ve come back. The time for lying is past! You’ve got to come away with me! (391).

But the destiny has played its part. It has left Darrell in a state where he finds himself alone, and helpless before the force of circumstance. He has lost his beloved and his son. Charles Marsden is another victim of the disease of romantic imagination. He is the only male figure who came in contact with Nina much earlier than others. For a long times, he loves Nina but cannot express his feelings to her. The cause behind his silence is his conception of love and his deep attachment with his
mother. His indifferent attitude towards sex and his hidden love affairs keep him apart from others.

The other two characters who suffer isolation are Mrs. Evans, the mother of Sam, and Gorden Evans, the authorised son from the family curse. In the case of Gorden Jr., the isolation is of a different type. He remains unknown to his real identity. His real paternity acquires a mystery when we realize that “biologically” he is the son of Darrell, “spiritually” he is the son of Gorden Shaw, and “morally” he is the son of Sam Evans. Above all, Sam Evans, who has enjoyed a normal life, does not know the falsity of his life that he is an alien son to his mother, alien husband to his wife, and alien for the to his son.

All the major characters in the play Mourning Becomes Electra suffer from the sense of insecurity, though they belong to a single family. It seems that all of them are living a life without any sense of relatedness with others. Ezra Mannon, the senior member of the family, is haunted by the same sense of isolation. Like all the Mannons, he has a mask-like look which symbolizes split of his life. Outwardly, he is a successful man in every respect, but inwardly he is a helpless personal entirely cut-off from the marital bliss. He is hated by his wife owing to his puritanic attitude: a common characteristic of his wife. In search of belongingness when he returns home after the end of war, he finds himself in the same state of loneliness. He says: “I can’t get used to home yet. It is so lonely.” He admits to his wife that “there’d always been some barrier between us – a wall hiding us from each other i would try to make up my mind exactly what that wall was but i never could discover” (Mourning Becomes Electra 54). It clearly shows that he is an alien husband to his wife.
After his marriage, he is haunted by a sense of nothingness that makes him a different man. He says: “...something keeps me sitting numb in my own heart – like a statue of a dead man in a town square” (*Mourning Becomes Electra* 55). Being dissatisfied with his wife, he turns to his daughter in search of peace which creates another barrier between the mother and the daughter. His joining of Mexican was after his marriage and his engagement in business is the result of his wife’s negation. Mocking at his achievement in life, he admits that the real reason behind his success in business is not this capability but his desire to be free from the isolated atmosphere of his home. To bridge the gap, finally, he wants to surrender himself to the arms of his wife, but, to his ill-luck, he fails to find any thread of belongingness. Realizing the reality of their relation, he says to his wife in a bitter tone:

> Is that your notion of love? Do you think i married a body?... you were lying to me tonight as you’ve always lied you were only pretending love you made me appear a lustful beast in my own eyes as you’ve always done since our first marriage night i would feel cleaner now if i had gone to a brothel! I would feel more hone between myself and life!

(*Mourning Becomes Electra* 60).

But this is not the final realization; to his great amazement and horror, Christine tells him, before giving him the poison, instead of medicine, that she loves Adam Brant. Thus, a brave warrior like him dies a treacherous death plotted by his own wife. The suffering of Christine Mannon is something different from that of her husband. She suffers not for the puritanic attitude but for her sensuality and
possessiveness. Rather, she is a rebel against the Puritanism of Mannons. In search of security, she marries Ezra. But, instead of getting a loving husband, she finds a co-hearted person in him. She feels that her marriage with him quite unfortunate. Her longing for a happy life stops its breath under the puritanic atmosphere of Mannon. Neglected by her husband, she gradually turns towards her son, Orin, to fill the vacuum. But she again finds herself in the same state of loneliness after his joining the army. She has lost her motherly affections towards her daughter and considers her as a competitor in the war of possession. She accuses Lavinia: “you’ve tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You’ve always schemed to steal my place” (33) This hostility reaches the climax when Lavinia discovers her mother’s illicit relation with Adam Brant. Christine’s with Brant is the result of her loneliness that arises due to the absence of Orin. She confesses: “i never would have fallen in love with Adam if i’d had Orin with me” (32). She wants to go away from the house of Mannon through Brant, leaving all the sufferings behind. In search of happiness and ‘belonging’, she kills her husband and betrays her son, but finally fails to attain that. After the murder to Adam by Orin, she loses both her lover and her son. Her dream of a happy life and her desire of possession are shattered by the well-managed plan of Lavinia. She commits suicide to end her lonely life. Orin’s mother-fixation is the root cause of his disillusionment. His strong attachment with his mother symbolises his longing for peace and security. Out of jealousy he shoots Adam Brant on account of which Christine commits suicide. From this point onwards Orin leads a life of suffering and disillusionment. The memory of his dead mother haunts him. He
feels himself guilty of the suicide of his mother. Being trapped by Lavinia’s possessiveness, he tries to fulfill his desire for the mother and is ready to share the burden of guilt. He feels that neither he nor Lavinia have a right to love. He realizes:

The only love i can know now is the love of guilt for guilt which breeds more guilt – until you get so deep at the bottom of hell there is no lower you can sink and you rest there in peace (Mourning Becomes Electra 160).

Gradually, he reaches a state of insanity that arises from his sense of guilt. He accuses Lavinia of being responsible for the mother’s suicide, and suggests that they should confess and atone to the full extent of law: “that’s the only way to wash the guilt of our mother’s blood from our souls” (152). Orin’s deep attachment with Lavinia is nothing but the same quality of love and loathing for oneself that has always dominated Mannon-relationships. Orin hates Lavinia as much as he likes her. He does not like that she should marry peter and threatens her to disclose the crime committed by them. Realizing the reality of Lavinia, he tells her: “there are times now when you don’t seem to be my sister, nor mother, but some stranger” (165). Finally, his guilt compels him to commit suicide like his mother, so that he may be able to regain his ‘lost-island.’ James Tyrone fails to prove himself a worthy husband to his wife. His incapability of providing a real home makes him a stranger. Her sense of isolation and loneliness increase when she finds that she cannot communicate with the outer world. She expresses her belief to her husband: “in a real home one is never lonely. You forget know from my experience what a home is like. I gave up one to
marry you – my father’s home” (*Mourning Becomes Electra* 62). Her longing for a real home is marred by the materialistic attitude of her husband, and has compelled her to lead a solitary life.

Being dissatisfied with the present, she moves towards the past in search of peace and security. She blames herself for causing the death of Edmund due to her sheer negligence and indifference. She realizes that she has been a liar throughout her life, and has been false not only to others but also to herself. Thus, she remains isolated from the present. Mary is constantly haunted by a sense of guilt. She does not consider herself a worthy mother, and for this she blames her husband. Through the character of Mary, O’Neill expresses his firm conviction that we are what life has made us, and that we are able to know its foul game only when it is too late to do anything about it. In her words:

> None of us can help the things life has done to us. They’re done before you realize it, and once they’re done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you’d like to be, and you’ve lost you true self forever (*Mourning Becomes Electra* 53).

Haunted by an utter sense of loneliness and insecurity, she takes more and more of the drugs so that she may live in the past which is the only reality to her. She loves the fog since it hides her from the world of reality; but she hates the foghorn which reminds her of the harsh and nagging realities. At the end of the play, her appearance in the wedding gown is a symbol of her quest for hope and her longing for happiness which are never fulfilled.
Jamie, like the other members of his family, suffers from a sense of isolation and separation. He leads a meaningless life without any goal. He has the potentiality of becoming a mongering and he blots out the possibility of becoming some prominent person in life. He becomes a wastrel and a cynic, sneering at everything but himself. He is a nagging son to his parents. He has a hostile relation with his father, for whom he is no more than a vagabond who does not know the value of money. His father’s stinginess, his mother’s love-hate attitude, his brother’s envious nature and, above all, his poetic nature are the combined forces behind his lonely suffering.

Edmund blames his father, recalling the case of his mother. As he is more attached to his mother, he feels the load of his mother’s dope-addiction, weighing heavy on his heart. Like his mother, he avoids reality and seeks an escape into the fog of unreality:

"The fog was where I wanted to be... everything looked and sounded unreal... I wanted to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself... I even lost the feeling of being on land... as if I was a ghost belonging to the fog, and the fog was the ghost of the sea. It felt damned peaceful to be nothing more than a ghost within a ghost (Mourning Becomes Electra 113)."

Like Mary, he never finds peace in the summer-house and remains a stranger to his family. Actually, the poet within him keeps him apart from others. He does not identify himself with them and loses his sense of belongingness. Therefore, he searches an identity of his own in a world beyond human reach. In this regard Edmund Tyrone can be compared with Robert Mayo of Beyond the Horizon. Both the
men are seekers of beauty; both are dissatisfied with the life provided to them and suffer from a sense of isolation. Unable to find any solution, Edmund hopes to find the lost sense of belonging in a state of unreality like Robert’s quest of hope – what lies beyond the horizon. Edmund hopes to find it in his mystic oneness with the sea:

I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of man, to life itself. To god, if you want to put it that way (Mourning Becomes Electra 134).

Doris v. Falk rightly opines:

All the Tyrones are doomed to destroy and be destroyed, to be victimized not only by each other but by the dead, for the dead have willed them a heritage of disease, alcoholism and drug addiction, and have cursed them with the deeper ills of alienation, conflict, and self-destructiveness. (Eugene O’Neill and the Tragic Tension 182)

All the characters of O’Neill’s The Iceman Cometh are guilt-ridden due to their ruined lives, and all cling to pipe-dreams about their condition and the future. They are waiting for the entertaining and generous Hickey, a salesman, who spends money for them lavishly. When Hickey arrives in time for his friend Harry’s birthday, they are shocked to find him greatly changed. He announces that he has finally had the courage to face himself and to lay his pipe-dreams to rest. Further, he intends
to help others do the same for their own happiness. But to his anticipation, he finds that his gospel of disillusionment does not work. Often he is haunted by his dead wife Evelyn. The idea of Hickey is insane gradually develops as a new pipe-dream, allowing others to resume their old relationships and illusions. The description of Harry Hope’s saloon at the opening scene of the play reveals an alienated life of its occupants. It is the saloon which separates them from society, severes them their deadly past, and forces them to lead a life of alienation. But in a state of illusion, they consider the place as the safest one where they can dream their golden tomorrow. Harry narrates the story of his lonely life. It begins with the death of his wife. He recalls:

Twenty years, and I’ve never set foot out of this house since the day I buried her. Didn’t have the heart. Once she’d gone, I didn’t give a damn for anything. I lost all my ambition, Without her, nothing seemed worth the trouble (The Iceman Cometh 645)

Hickey becomes the victim of isolation due to his fickle nature and his falsity. Since his childhood he has been restless and reckless, desiring change. His home and his school appear to him like jail. The profession chosen by Hickey causes his separation from his wife and is also responsible for his solitary life. The love-hate relationship between husband and wife make Hickey a split personality, an isolated figure. He expresses his tragic suffering in these words:

I loved her so, but I began to hate that pipe dream! I began to be afraid I was going …forgive her for forgiving me… and it made me hate myself all the more.. I’d get so damned lonely…(The Iceman Cometh 716).
Larry Slade is also a victim of isolation. Throughout the drama he pretends complete detachment and disinterestedness, but his unable to forget his past.

Analyzing the play, Rosamond Gilder opines:

*The Iceman Cometh* is made of good theatre substance –meaty material for actors, racy dialogue, variety of character, suspense and passion --- all within the straight jacket of a rigid pattern. It is also primarily an allegory of man’s pitiful estate, a parable of his search for redemption.*(*The Iceman Cometh, O’Neill and His Plays* 203)

There is a similarity between the tragic plays of O’Neill and the plays of Tennessee Williams. Like the plays of O’Neill, Tennessee Williams’ playss are also psychological tragedies – “plays in the tragic tradition”. The playwright has a tragic vision and is faithful to the modern spirit of unrelieved failure of disaster. In his play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams portrays his principal characters Blanche and Stanley who have a sense of sexual and emotional craving, that is, a deep and uncontrollable desire to find belonging in the arms of another person. As Stella defends her sister, Blanche, against Stanley’s harsh accusations, she describes this element of longing in Blanche’s character:

> When she was young, very young, she married a boy who wrote poetry . . . He was extremely good-looking. I think Blanche didn’t just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on! Adored him and thought him almost too fine to be human!” (Williams, Tennessee.*Collected Plays* 2229).
Blanche is characterized by both sensual and romantic fantasies. As her obsession with her husband causes her emotional destruction upon his death, thus ushering her into a life of prostitution and irresponsibility, it is apparent that her fantasies have facilitated her moral and societal decline. In this way, Tennessee Williams depicts how desire is the main influence over her actions, or how the eponymous “streetcar” has carried her into her current conditions. Stanley is defined by a similar sense of desire; although his yearning is more masculine, more brutally unrefined and sexual. As he is about to rape Blanche, and annihilate what is left of her mental stability, he says to her “Come to think of it — maybe you wouldn’t be bad to — interfere with,’ and Williams provides the stage notes ‘He takes a step forward her, biting his tongue which protrudes between his lips’ (Williams, Tennessee. Collected Plays 2242). His characters represent the decadence of southern aristocracy and typify the clash of values between the north and the south. The people of the south were against the materialistic values of the north, they wanted to retain their spiritualism and their traditions. This conflict is one of the themes of Williams. The Lauras, Amandas, Blanches and Kilroys possess the values which Tennessee Williams feels endow life with whatever meaning and definition it has. But they lack vitality, the strength and the force to preserve these values against a hostile universe. Their pathetic defiance is their gallantry; but their ineffectuality will never allow them to triumph. Tennessee Williams has always placed his protagonist, a sensitive and lonely individual of either sex, in an unfriendly world. The poet-itinerant outsider- the male who is often closely identified with his creator – seeks to avoid the
full responsibilities of a job and family life. Among the most prominent and urgent themes of *The Glass Menagerie* is the difficulty the characters have in accepting and relating to reality. Each member of the Wingfield family is unable to overcome this difficulty, and each, as a result, withdraws into a private world of illusion where he or she finds the comfort and meaning that the real world does not seem to offer. Of the three Wingfields, reality has by far the weakest grasp on Laura. The private world in which she lives is populated by glass animals—objects that, like Laura’s inner life, are incredibly fanciful and dangerously delicate. Unlike his sister, Tom is capable of functioning in the real world, as we see in his holding down a job and talking to strangers. But, in the end, he has no more motivation than Laura does to pursue professional success, romantic relationships, or even ordinary friendships, and he prefers to retreat into the fantasies provided by literature and movies and the stupor provided by drunkenness. Amanda’s relationship to reality is the most complicated in the play. Unlike her children, she is partial to real-world values and longs for social and financial success. Yet her attachment to these values is exactly what prevents her from perceiving a number of truths about her life. She cannot accept that she is or should be anything other than the pampered belle she was brought up to be, that Laura is peculiar, that Tom is not a budding businessman, and that she herself might be in some ways responsible for the sorrows and flaws of her children. Amanda’s retreat into illusion is in many ways more pathetic than her children’s, because it is not a willful imaginative construction but a wistful distortion of reality. Although the Wingfields are distinguished and bound together by the weak relationships they
maintain with reality, the illusions to which they succumb are not merely familial quirks. The outside world is just as susceptible to illusion as the Wingfields. The young people at the Paradise Dance Hall waltz under the short-lived illusion created by a glass ball—another version of Laura’s glass animals. Tom opines to Jim that the other viewers at the movies he attends are substituting on-screen adventure for real-life adventure, finding fulfillment in illusion rather than real life. Even Jim, who represents the “world of reality,” is banking his future on public speaking and the television and radio industries—all of which are means for the creation of illusions and the persuasion of others that these illusions are true. *The Glass Menagerie* identifies the conquest of reality by illusion as a huge and growing aspect of the human condition in its time. Tom’s double role in *The Glass Menagerie* underlines the play’s tension between objectively presented dramatic truth and memory’s distortion of truth. If there is a signature character type that marks Tennessee Williams’ dramatic work it is undeniably that of the faded Southern belle. Amanda is a clear representative of this type. In general, a Tennessee Williams faded belle is from a prominent Southern family, has received a traditional upbringing, and has suffered a reversal of economic and social fortune at some point in her life. Like Amanda, these women all have a hard time coming to terms with their new status in society—and indeed, with modern society in general, which disregards the social distinctions that they were taught to value. Their relationships with men and their families are turbulent, and they staunchly defend the values of their past. As with Amanda, their maintenance of genteel manners in very ungenteeel surroundings can
appear tragic, comic, or downright grotesque. Amanda is the play’s most extroverted and theatrical character. The physically and emotionally crippled Laura is the only character in the play who never does anything to hurt anyone else. Despite the weight of her own problems, she displays a pure compassion—as with the tears she sheds over Tom’s unhappiness, described by Amanda in Scene Four—that stands in stark contrast to the selfishness and grudging sacrifices that characterize the Wingfield household. Laura also has the fewest lines in the play, which contributes to her aura of selflessness. Yet she is the axis around which the plot turns, and the most prominent symbols—blue roses, the glass unicorn, the entire glass menagerie—all in some sense represent her. Laura is as rare and peculiar as a blue rose or a unicorn, and she is as delicate as a glass figurine. The idea of characterization and how one character’s actions may enlighten audiences to issues surrounding another character is brilliantly illustrated by Williams in his play. Tennessee Williams writes in his production notes that this is a “memory play” (1041 ). What is interesting about The Glass Menagerie is the point of whose memory the audience is exposed to. Tom acts as the protagonist because it is his memory that audiences must trust, as the narrator in addition to being the man of the house in the absence of his father. Upon further assessment of Amanda’s character audiences may concede to the fact that she is these things while acknowledging a more admirable facet to her character. The Glass Menagerie is reflected through the eyes of the son Tom who himself seems to be dealing with hurt and resentment which would cloud his view of his mother as a genuine person. Perhaps if the story was told from the point of view of Laura a
different image would emerge. This idea is evidenced in the relationship between Laura and her mother. Amanda seems to nag much less when dealing with Laura but tries to help advance her in this world. She does get upset when Laura drops out of business school but is understanding. Amanda is in addition very concerned for Laura and her future. She employs Tom to find Laura a gentleman caller in an effort to secure a comfortable future. She is even more overly concerned because of Laura’s disability. It is interesting how the story is in fact told from Tom’s point of view.

Through the character of Tom, in the play, audiences are also made aware of how Laura is very much so left out of the picture by and large. Whenever Tom and Amanda’s conversations concern Laura she is never present. This represents her character as weak. This is an example of how Williams silences Laura as a way of rejecting her as a character, thus making her unimportant. Jim, it can be argued, is brought in to further exclude Laura as a valid character in an effort to reflect how she views herself in the world around her. He, through his actions, takes her to the brink of love (not in the true sense of the word but those feelings associated with such) only to reveal that he is already spoken for. Conversely, it can be argued that Williams uses Jim’s character as a way of validating Laura, a character who could not validate herself. She had always been so critical of herself and her disability; it is Jim who assures her that the loud clonking she heard all those years was none existent. Even though in the end they are not able to maintain a relationship that one night made Laura feel like a woman, and that is a feeling that neither Tom nor Amanda could offer.
Blanche DuBois is the main character in Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire* who is a fallen woman in society’s eyes. Her family fortune and estate are gone, she lost her young husband to suicide years earlier, and she is a social pariah due to her indiscrete sexual behavior. She also has a bad drinking problem, which she covers up poorly. Behind her veneer of social snobbery and sexual propriety, Blanche is an insecure, dislocated individual. She is an aging Southern belle who lives in a state of perpetual panic about her fading beauty. Her manner is dainty and frail, and she sports a wardrobe of showy but cheap evening clothes. Stanley quickly sees through Blanche’s act and seeks out information about her past. In the Kowalski household, Blanche pretends to be a woman who has never known indignity. Her false propriety is not simply snobbery, however; it constitutes a calculated attempt to make herself appear attractive to new male suitors. Blanche depends on male sexual admiration for her sense of self-esteem, which means that she has often succumbed to passion. By marrying, Blanche hopes to escape poverty and the bad reputation that haunts her. But because the chivalric Southern gentleman savior and caretaker she hopes will rescue her is extinct, Blanche is left with no realistic possibility of future happiness. As Blanche sees it, Mitch is her only chance for contentment, even though he is far from her ideal. Stanley’s relentless persecution of Blanche foils her pursuit of Mitch as well as her attempts to shield herself from the harsh truth of her situation. The play chronicles the subsequent crumbling of Blanche’s self-image and sanity. Stanley himself takes the final stabs at Blanche, destroying the remainder of her sexual and mental esteem by raping her and then committing her to an insane asylum.
In the end, Blanche blindly allows herself to be led away by a kind doctor, ignoring her sister’s cries. This final image is the sad culmination of Blanche’s vanity and total dependence upon men for happiness. Stanley is remembered next to Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He is an egalitarian hero at the play’s start. He is loyal to his friends and passionate to his wife. Stanley possesses an animalistic physical vigor that is evident in his love of work, of fighting, and of sex. His family is from Poland, and several times he expresses his outrage at being called “Polack” and other derogatory names. Stanley represents the new, heterogeneous America to which Blanche doesn’t belong, because she is a relic from a defunct social hierarchy. He sees himself as a social leveler, as he tells Stella in Scene Eight. Stanley’s intense hatred of Blanche is motivated in part by the aristocratic past Blanche represents. He also sees her as untrustworthy and does not appreciate the way she attempts to fool him and his friends into thinking she is better than they are. Stanley’s animosity toward Blanche manifests itself in all of his actions toward her—his investigations of her past, his birthday gift to her, his sabotage of her relationship with Mitch. In the end, Stanley’s down-to-earth character proves harmfully crude and brutish. His chief amusements are gambling, bowling, sex, and drinking, and he lacks ideals and imagination. His disturbing, degenerate nature, first hinted at when he beats his wife, is fully evident after he rapes his sister-in-law. Stanley shows no remorse for his brutal actions. The play ends with an image of Stanley as the ideal family man, comforting his wife as she holds their newborn child. The wrongfulness of this representation, given what we have learned about him in the play, ironically calls into
question society’s decision to ostracize Blanche. Mitch appears to be a kind, decent human being who hopes to marry so that he will have a woman to bring home to his dying mother. Mitch doesn’t fit the bill of the chivalric hero of whom Blanche dreams. He is clumsy, sweaty, and has unrefined interests like muscle building. Though sensitive, he lacks Blanche’s romantic perspective and spirituality, as well as her understanding of poetry and literature. She toys with his lack of intelligence—for example, when she teases him in French because she knows he won’t understand—duping him into playing along with her self-flattering charades. Though they come from completely different worlds, Mitch and Blanche are drawn together by their mutual need of companionship and support, and they therefore believe themselves right for one another. They also discover that they have both experienced the death of a loved one. The snare in their relationship is sexual. As part of her prim-and-proper act, Blanche repeatedly rejects Mitch’s physical affections, refusing to sleep with him. Once he discovers the truth about Blanche’s sordid sexual past, Mitch is both angry and embarrassed about the way Blanche has treated him. When he arrives to chastise her, he states that he feels he deserves to have sex with her, even though he no longer respects her enough to think her fit to be his wife. The difference in Stanley’s and Mitch’s treatment of Blanche at the play’s end underscores Mitch’s fundamental gentlemanliness. Though he desires and makes clear that he wants to sleep with Blanche, Mitch does not rape her and leaves when she cries out. Also, the tears Mitch sheds after Blanche struggles to escape the fate Stanley has arranged for her show that
he genuinely cares for her. In fact, Mitch is the only person other than Stella who
seems to understand the tragedy of Blanche’s madness.

The unreciprocated love in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* centers on the male
characters, especially Brick and Big Daddy. Brick is the object of unrequited love for
his wife Margaret, his friend Skipper, and his parents Big Daddy and Big Mama.
Their energies—sometimes sexual, sometimes protective—propel most of the
confrontations in the play, as they bounce off the cold, distant character of Brick.
There are other instances of unrequited love as well, such as Big Mama’s love for Big
Daddy, and the tension between Mae and Gooper, which hints at possible marital
strife beneath their façade. This is summed up in the repeated line at the end of the
play, the parallel between Big Daddy and Brick when their women—cats on a hot tin
roof, desperate to be understood and to have their love returned—tell Big Daddy and
Brick that they love them. Both men, untouchable, respond under their breath to
themselves, say, “Wouldn’t it be funny if that were true?” (24) Neither of them men
can conceive of their wives loving them.

As a dramatist Tennessee Williams makes use of expressionistic techniques to
depict inner reality. The action moves backward and forward freely in space and time
in harmony with the thought processes of the character concerned. There is a deeper
and deeper probing of the subconscious, action is increasingly internationalized, and
what goes on within the soul becomes more important than the external action.
Tennessee Williams uses expressionistic techniques in a masterly manner. He
recognizes that for the expressionist the everyday appearance of a thing or a person is
a mask to be torn effects, music, telephone, and symbol on the stage are a part of his expressionistic technique. Lighting is used to express the mood of nostalgia, decadence or illusion. It the Glass Menagerie the stage was often dim with shafts of light focused on selected areas or actors. The light upon Laura was supposed to have a pristine clarity similar to that used in religious portraits of female saints. In A Streetcar Named Desire shaded lighting and the use of a peculiarly tender blue color of the sky, helped to invest the scene from the very outset with a kind of lyricism which in Williams’ view would attenuate the atmosphere of decay in which the play developed. Blanche Du Bois in a Streetcar Named Desire has a mania for covering electric bulbs with coloured lampshades. Blanche explains her own attitude in these words:

“I bought this adorable little coloured lantern in a Chinese shop on Bourbon. Put it over the light bulb…I can’t stand a naked bulb any more than I can stand a rude remark or a vulgar action.”(A Streetcar Named Desire 24)

Rose is a symbol in the Tattoo of earthly love: a box of sleeping pills is a symbol of escape in Summer and Smoke. In Orpheus Descending the snake-skin jacket worn by Val represents his wild and independent nature. Then we have insane character. But such characters are not fully insane. They are generally sick. A more genteel word for them is disturbed. Among this category may be placed Blanche (Streetcar), Catharine (Suddenly Last Summer), Lady (Orpheus Descending). Through these characters William creates a world of men who cannot catch their breath in a world that is smothering them. Similarly, there are sexual specialists and foreigners. As a whole Williams characters are life-like and real: they are fully of vitality.
Summer and Smoke illustrates the transformation of the human mind and body through eloquent symbolic subtleties that are present throughout the play. The set is a powerful tool in the hands of its designer. The feel of a set to the audience and the characters is an important facet of making a production successful. The choice of furniture style and décor can help the audience get a feel for the characters that are portrayed as using this furniture. In the production, the choice of furniture styles and décor in Alma's house and John's house indicate that these two characters are on opposite sides of the spectrum. Alma's furnishings consist of velvet cloth furniture, which is a soft, nurturing material that symbolizes her child-like naivete and her family's good heartedness. On the other hand, the doctor's furniture in the first half of the play, is pale yellow wood furniture. This choice seems to scream at me that the characters that are being portrayed with this particular set are inanimate and cold just like the wood. The pale yellow color in the furniture hints at the fact that a particular character is suffering from some form of an illness. In John Jr.'s case, this represents his disbelief in a spiritual side to the human being. This scene changes dramatically in the second half of the play. The doctor's office, which was formerly yellow wood, turns into a white set, which seems to cheer up the scene and portrays John's recovery from his illness. The characters themselves also play a major role in the ongoing symbolic transformations in the production. A character's demeanor, his speech and his mannerisms are all important forms of symbolic subtleties to Tennessee Williams. One of the first noticeable symbolic sayings in the production occurs between John and Alma. In the beginning, Alma is complaining to John that she is feeling weak and
faint at heart. John then quickly retorts and says that she has a doppelganger. Not knowing what a doppelganger is, Alma brushes it off and pays no attention. Later, Alma then finds out that the term doppelganger means that she has a person inside of her. The doppelganger that John refers to symbolizes an alternate behavior, or to be more specific an alternate personality inside of Alma, which she does not yet exhibit. This facet of her personality is her wild side, the person that never says No. This behavior manifests itself later in the production. The second and more inconspicuous symbolism is found in the title of the production. The smoke in *Summer and Smoke* represents two different things. As Alma was talking to John in the second to the last scene of the play, she states, smoke comes, from my burning inside. This statement from Alma points to the fact that she is hurting from her undying love for John, to which he is not willing to reply, and seeks to give to Nellie. The second possible meaning for smoke is also shown in the second to the last scene where John points at the anatomy chart and tries to explain to Alma that he has come around to her way of thinking, that there is a soul in the human body. He states the soul is as thin as smoke, but nevertheless it is there. Adding yet another dimension to the play are the costumes. The costumes can enlighten the audience with regard to the characters. They can aid the audience in deciphering which characters' personalities match and which individuals are truly incompatible. In the production, it was obvious that Dr. John Sr. and Alma dressed in the same light color palates. This gives the audience the impression that these characters complement each other. This is the case because; they both trusted each other enough to share Alma's most intimate secrets. On the
contrary, Rosa Gonzales wore a provocative red dress, which beautifully contrasted Alma's more conservative white dress. During the play, it was obvious that the two of them never saw eye to eye. Both Alma and John change into different style and color of clothes in the ending scene. This change in attire symbolizes to the audience their evolved personalities. In the ending scene Alma's dress becomes a shade of brown, which is a darker more engaging color. The style of this particular dress was much more flamboyant. Her hair, along with her inner wild side was also let loose. All these changes intend to show us that she has lost all hope and gone to a more defiant and less respectable route. John, On the other hand, is now sporting a black, more conservatively cut suite. It is also painstakingly obvious that he has abandoned his renegade ways, and has now become a more responsible and respectable man.

Character transformation is evident in the Guthrie Theater's production of *Summer and Smoke*.

*The Rose Tattoo* tells the story of Serafina, an Italian-American widow in Louisiana who attempts to remain true to the memory of her dead husband by abstaining from further sexual relationships. She worships his memory and preserves his ashes in an urn. To her, married sex is the ultimate experience and she is proud of her adherence to its values: faithfulness and purity. But her husband Rosario is a contrast to her. He is not faithful, and there is no indication that he even loved his wife. After his death, Serafina continues to exalt his memories and maintains her idealization of their relationship. She quits taking care of herself, lives in the past, and talks to the ashes. The moment she comes to know that her dead husband had an illegal affair
with a woman; she breaks the urn and comes out of her illusion. She is freed from her illusion by Alvaro to whom she turns in a relationship so practical that it cannot be idealized.

The main characters of *Orpheus Descending* are Val, Lady, and Carol who are lonely, isolated figures. They do not fit into the environment in which they find themselves, are unable to communicate their deepest feelings and passions to others, or feel cut off. Val sums up this theme when he says to Lady, "Nobody ever gets to know no body! (28) We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life!" Val himself is a free, unconventional, artistic spirit who is bound to be misunderstood and isolated wherever he goes in a narrow, repressive society. Lady is trapped in a loveless marriage, in which her passionate nature has no opportunity to express itself, except through hate and resentment over the past. The protagonist of the play *Sweet Bird of Youth* is a blond gigglo called Chance Wayne. He returns to a small town in the Deep South where as a youth he had had a sweetheart called Heavenly, daughter of the political boss Finley who had chased him out. He hopes he is returning in different circumstances, under the wing of an ageing beauty queen who is approaching middle ages with the help of hashish and other drugs. Chance sees in her merely a hope of gaining a foot hold in the movies- she has just made a film which proves to be the means of her come-back at the end of the play – and possibility of pursing the stage career of a Don Juan. His return is rather different from what he had imagined, for as a result of his infecting her with veneral disease Heavenly has had her sexual organs removed. Chance falls into the hands of Finley’s
henchmen and takes his punishment of castration. The fall of a sensitive creature and
the rise of his tougher counterpart is the action in common between Kingdom of Earth
and In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel, a mid-length play talks of a couple, Miriam and
Mark. The sickly Lot Ravenstock corresponds to the psychotic Mark Conley, a painter
whose inability to control his new technique has driven him into a state of infantile
dependency.

Arthur Miller’s protagonists belong to a strange breed and they fervently
defend egocentric attitudes, and the futility evokes a genuine sense of terror and
pathos that indirectly but powerfully reinforces his thesis on the necessity for
“meaningful” accommodation in society. Arthur Miller finds apt metaphors to signify
the implications of a gap between the private life and the social life. Most of his
symbolic images are drawn along simple lines a carousel that conceals hatred
(Focus); a fruitful tree destroyed in its prime (All My Sons): “green leaves” blotted out
by the hard outlines of apartment buildings, a flute song displaced by childish
nonsense from a wire recorder, a wife’s praise creased by a whore’s laugh (Death of
Salesman); a dingy warehouse, harbouring hopeless inmates(A Memory of two
Mondays); a herd of mustangs moving towards extinction (the misfits); a ruined tower
that memorializes horrors committed memorializes horrors committed by “ordinary”
men (after the fall); feature and a broken pot guarded as if they were life itself
(Incident at Vichy). Miller incorporated the accusation-defence rhythm of a trial into
the structure of his major plays. Despite his wide ranging experiment with form, the
narrative schemes of All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, A view from
the Bridge and after referred to covertly, then bared in a climate revelation—a scheme based upon Ibsen’s exhibitions of the inescapable casual movement from past action to represent reaction.

Each of Arthur Miller’s protagonists in his major plays is involved in struggle which results from his acceptance or his rejection of an image of himself—an image that grows out the values and the prejudices of his society. Arthur Miller’s vision is existential, which takes note of the sense of anguish and alienation which common man is subject to. It probes still deeper into the mystery of life and asks questions about life, love, death and God. But even amidst despair and annihilation it perceives a moral order that exists in spite of all nullity and waste. Arthur Miller, like Tennessee Williams, each one of his plays also embodies his particular individual inimitable vision of reality and his ultimate aim is to mirror the truth as far as he understands it (Singh, Pramila. Arthur Miller and His Plays – A Critical Study53)

Miller’s principal characters are motivated by an obsession to justify themselves: they fix their identities through radical acts of ego-assertion. High rank or noble status does not distinguish them. Miller says in his essay Tragedy and the Common man: “the commonest of men may take on stature to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest.” Tragic antagonism arises because the “unchangeable (social) environment” often “suppresses man, perverts the flowing out of his love and creative instinct”. (25)

Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman and Joe Keller in All My Sons adopt popular standards but become estranged from both family and society because of their
uncompromising self-will. In work after work, from *All My Sons* and *The Crucible* to *Incident at Vichy*, Arthur Miller has presented dilemmas in which a character's sense of personal integrity or self-interest conflicts with his or her responsibility to society or its representatives. Finally, Miller has repeatedly returned to the theme of family relations, particularly interactions between fathers and sons. The families depicted in Miller's plays often serve as vehicles for the author's analyses of the broader relations between individuals and society. (Sharma, Rani. *The Plays of Arthur Miller* 55) The play *Death of a Salesman* represents his most powerful dramatization of the clash between the individual and materialistic American society, chronicles the downfall of Willy Loman, a salesman whose misguided notions of success result in disillusionment and, ultimately, his death. Throughout his life, Willy has not only blindly pursued society's version of success, he has based his own identity and self-worth on social acceptance—on how "well-liked" he is. At the play's end, he commits suicide, convinced that the settlement on his life insurance policy will provide his son Biff the wealth that had eluded Willy himself; however, Biff's ideals have already been tarnished by the same forces that destroyed his father.

The play *The Crucible* is based upon the witch trials held in 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts, addresses the complex moral dilemmas of John Proctor, a man wrongly accused of practicing witchcraft. Through his depiction of the mass frenzy of the witch hunt, Miller examines the social and psychological aspects of group pressure and its effect on individual ethics, dignity, and beliefs. Many of the figures in the play are poorly developed and merely serve as mouthpieces for Miller's social commentary,
they claimed. The relationship between the historical events depicted in the play and the events of the 1950s has continued to be the subject of much debate among subsequent critics of *The Crucible*. Masood Ali Khan in his book *Modern American Drama* remarks thus:

*The message of the play, a timely reminder of the historical facts of the Salem witch trials, carried out with so much bigotry and zealous intolerance and blindness comes across without turning the stage into a pulpit, for the historical facts themselves have dramatic unity.* (200-01)

Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* is a story of an average salesman with a dream of being rich and well-liked. Miller’s character Willy Loman is a reflection of modern tragic hero therefore “Aristotelian concepts weigh heavily on an altered world” (*American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre* 47). But Arthur Miller redefines the classical concepts of tragedy and tragic hero, derived from Aristotle, in his play *Death of a Salesman*, and the product of this redefinition is the protagonist Willy Loman. Willy Loman is not a classical tragic character, but as a pathetic modern tragic hero of 1940s American bourgeois tragedy of an ordinary man. He is not of “noble birth”, quite the contrary he is a common man, though certainly has Hamartia, a tragic flaw or error in judgment, his downfall is that of an ordinary man (a “low man”). Loman’s flaw comes down to a lack of self-knowledge like Sophocles’s Oedipus in *Oedipus the King*. However, Loman’s downfall threatens not a city unlike Oedipus, but only a single family, the Lomans. In the light of this perspective, Loman may not be considered as a tragic hero in terms of classical
definition. Still, Arthur Miller places his protagonist as a tragic hero: not a classical but a modern tragic hero. Linda, Willy Loman’s wife tries to protect her husband from the negative effects of the system of Capitalism that enslaves and exploits him. As Willy is the victim of the system, Linda expresses her humanity protesting its outcome on the lives and psychology of ordinary people. Still, Willy runs after his ideals for reaching his goal as Uncle Ben, who is a representative of his ideals and fantasy, and who realized the American Dream. Willy Loman tries to be like Uncle Ben who is successful in realizing the American Dream. He wants to get rid of his position as a “common man” and be rich. As Beşe emphasizes, Arthur Miller raises issues as the “impacts of environmental forces on the individual and his family and the responsibilities or irresponsibility of family and society in relation to each other” (Beşe 3). He accepted vulgar, debased, and false systems of values”. (Krutch 238) As Lewis observes, “. . . the behavior of an individual in love, sex, or parental relations is evidence of the choices imposed by social necessity”. (American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre 46) Accordingly, Miller placed this personal drama as a tragedy of modern American family of post-WWII era. Although Willy Loman does not fall from a great height, his pride destroys him by placing him as a modern tragic figure.

Willy Loman consistently keeps his American dream without ever bothering himself about the consequences of his illicit affair. Willy dies for the cause of his so-called “American ideal”. In this sense, as Leech argues that Willie’s concern is sociological rather than universal: “he is the victim of the American dream rather than
of the human condition” (Leech 38). Happy, who is not as realistic as his brother Biff, draws attention to Willy’s dreams that never came true: “. . . I’m gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It’s only dream you can have – to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I’m gonna win it for him.” (Miller 111)

Willy Loman is not a tragic hero in classical tragedy, but as a modern day tragic hero and a pathetic tragic hero in 1940’s America who quests for self identity because of the harsh outcome of the commercialized world. Miller creates a hero of modernism with an influence from the social movements in his era. Thus, he revises both the classical tragedy and tragic hero to create his favorite subject of the modern-day tragedy.

Arthur Miller’s A View from the Bridge is significant in that it exhibits many similarities to classical Greek tragedy. Eddie Carbone, the play's central character, unconsciously harbors an incestuous love for his niece, Catherine. Jealous of her attraction to an illegal alien the Carbones are hiding, Eddie exposes the man to immigration authorities and becomes involved in a fatal confrontation with the man's brother. Critics have often noted that, like such Greek dramatic heroes as Oedipus, Eddie brings about his own downfall through his ignorance and inability to see the consequences of his actions. After the Fall is considered Miller's most experimental and, perhaps, most pessimistic piece. This play takes place, as Miller has stated, "in the mind, thought, and memory of Quentin," a guilt-ridden man who tries to come to terms with his past through conversations with an imaginary listener. In the course of
Quentin's examination of the ruins of two failed marriages, the individual, the family, and society are all subjected to harsh criticism. Nearly every character in the play betrays love for the sake of his or her own survival. In *Incident at Vichy*, Miller continued his exploration of the conflicts between individual and societal responsibility. Set in occupied France during World War II, this play features seven men who, awaiting interrogation by their Nazi captors, discuss their fate and the importance of social commitment to maintaining group freedom. The drama suggests that those who fail to resist oppression are as guilty as the Nazis of crimes against humanity.

Arthur Miller’s *The Price* deals with the lives of the two brothers, Victor and Walter Frank, who are brought together after many years by the death of their father. Like the characters in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, these two men recall the past, trying to come to an understanding of their lives and the choices they have made. The play *A Man Who Had All the Luck* tells the story of a young man named David Beeves who has the unlucky fortune of getting everything his heart desires. Everything always goes his way, while the fortunes of his friends and family rise and fall like those of normal people. The pressure of wondering when he too might fall pushes him to the edge of sanity as he struggles with his fate. In *All My Sons*, set during World War II, the truth about Joe Keller's past is gradually revealed. Keller has sold defective parts to the United States Air Force, resulting in the death of several American pilots. When his sons learn of this, one, a pilot himself, commits suicide by crashing his plane; the other demands that Keller take responsibility for his actions.
As the play closes, Keller accepts his obligation to society, recognizing that all the lost pilots were, in effect, his "sons." He then takes his own life to atone for his crime.

Joe Keller is the main character whose sense of guilt and sense of isolation are the major themes of Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons*. The playwright gives a good bit of space to the description of Joe Keller in the opening stage directions:

> A heavy man of stolid mind and build, a business man these many years, but with the imprint of the machine-shop worker and boss still upon him. When he reads, when he speaks, when he listens, it is with the terrible concentration of the uneducated man for whom there is still wonder in many commonly known things, a man whose judgments must be dredged out of experience and a peasant-like common sense, a man among men. (*All My Sons* 1)

The description of Joe Keller as a simpleton comes up again and again in this play. Chris teasingly calls him an "elephant" (35) and Kate calls him a "bull" (36). After George's ominous phone call, Kate warns her husband to "be smart now, Joe. The boy is coming... Be smart" (36) Arthur Miller emphasizes Joe's lack of education as one justification for his criminal actions. A reader does not think Joe approved those cracked cylinder heads because he's stupid. He approved them because, as an uneducated man, he needs all the more desperately to protect his way of making a living. Joe has always been concerned with money. With the Great Depression fresh in his memory – and personal poverty even older than that – economic security is his greatest concern. Joe is outraged when Kate and Chris attack him for saving his
business. "I spoiled both of you," he says. "I should've put him out when I was ten like I was put out, and make him earn his keep. Then he'd know how a buck is made in this world" (63). Joe's narration of his triumph over the criminal justice system concludes with the boast that "fourteen months later I had one of the best shops in the state again, a respected man again; bigger than ever" (46). Until he finally understands the cause of Larry's death, his primary value is the success of his business and his ability to make money. Miller doesn't totally demonize Joe, however. It's not just for his own comfort that Joe makes money; it's for his family. "Nothin' is bigger" than family to Joe (67). Though they don't like to admit it, Kate and Chris reap the benefits of Joe's single-mindedness. Kate has a nice house and garden. She can look forward to steak and champagne by the sea. Chris stands to inherit a lucrative business that will similarly support a cozy family life with Ann. We believe Joe when he tells his son, "I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you […] for you, a business for you" (45). Joe is not evil, just has a tragic lack of vision. Joe in *All My Sons* presents himself as a man who deeply loves his family, but also has great pride in his business. Joe Keller has been running a successful factory for decades. During World War II, his business partner and neighbor, Steve Deever noticed the faulty parts first. Joe decided to send the parts through because he was afraid that admitting the company's mistake would destroy his business and his family's financial stability. By the play's end, the audience discovers the dark secret he has been concealing: Joe allowed the sale of faulty airplane parts to be shipped to the frontline, resulting in the death of twenty-one pilots. After the cause of the deaths was discovered, both Steve and Joe were arrested. Claiming his innocence, Joe was exonerated and released and the entire
blame shifts to Steve who remains in jail. Like many other characters within the play, Joe is capable of living in denial. It is not until the play's conclusion that he ultimately faces his own guilty conscience - and then he chooses to destroy himself rather than deal with the consequences of his actions.

Arthur Miller’s *An Enemy of the People* is an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s modern drama *An Enemy of the People*, in which the audience is presented an array of characters with differing ideals, who in responding to a common truth, enter into conflict. It also addresses the irrational tendencies of the masses, and the hypocritical and corrupt nature of the political system that they support. The play also concerned with the inviolability of objective truth. The battle between self-interest and public good, between painful truths and public lies, is waged unambiguously. Pramila Singh in her book *Arthur Miller and His Plays- A Critical Study* opines:

> An Enemy of the People suggests the answer that when the times are out of joint; the individual must be true to himself. Stockman clings to the truth and suffers the social consequence (42-43).

Dr. Stockmann, the protagonist of the play *An Enemy of the People* holds those ideals that are central to modern democracy; that is, he has a strong belief in the truth, a commitment to free speech, and a sense of individual responsibility. The truth – that “the springs are poisoned” (*An Enemy of the People* 14) – though inconvenient, is propagated by Dr. Stockmann in the hopes of bettering his society. Though he himself profits greatly from the springs, he feels a sense of responsibility towards those who would be poisoned by its waters, which motivates him to spread the truth
to the townspeople. Later, he is surprised to learn that his community wants nothing
to do with this truth. In fact, one of the central ironies in the work is that this doctor,
whose ideals are the pillars on which democracy is founded, is silenced by majority
vote. Uncompromising and having strong convictions, the doctor does not allow his
voice to be silenced via majority tyranny, deciding to attempt to pass his ideals on to
the next generation via education. On the opposite end of the spectrum lies Peter
Stockmann, to whom power and wealth are the ideals. He holds those ideals that are
central to an authoritarian regime: a belief that the individual should subordinate
himself to the powers in charge and a belief that the ideal society is one in which
everyone thinks the same way. As a result of holding these ideals, Peter Stockmann
responds to the truth offered by his brother with hostility. In particular, he sees Dr.
Stockmann’s relentless pursuit of truth as a gesture of defiance, and manifesting as his
belief that the doctor is working behind [his] back. The truth about the springs, if
publicized, would drive away business and Peter Stockmann is unwilling to sacrifice
the springs as a source of revenue. Thus, in accordance with his ideals, he not only
rejects the truth, but manipulates the townspeople and persecutes his brother to do so.
In particular, Dr. Stockmann uses the truth to attempt to make positive changes - those
changes in line with his ideals – in his society, while Peter Stockmann uses his
authority and influence to do the same. The people are then presented with two
options: to accept an inconvenient truth and to lose a source of potential wealth, or to
reject the truth and become wealthy. In the end, these people, whose only solid ideals
are selfish ones, reject not only the doctor’s truth, but even democracy itself, as they
deny the doctor the right to speak. The result is an all-too-convenient victory of power over truth.

In *An Enemy of the People*, Arthur Miller invites his audience to reflect upon their own ideals in the context of the modern democratic society. Miller suggests that “the majority is never right”; rather, that the individual should arrive at a decision based on their own ideals rather than those of the majority. John Proctor is the main character of Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* who is honest, upright, and blunt-spoken. He is a good man, but one with a secret, fatal flaw. His lust for Abigail Williams led to their affair (which occurs before the play begins), and created Abigail’s jealousy of his wife, Elizabeth, which sets the entire witch hysteria in motion. Once the trials begin, Proctor realizes that he can stop Abigail’s rampage through Salem but only if he confesses to his adultery. Such an admission would ruin his good name, and Proctor is, above all, a proud man who places great emphasis on his reputation. He eventually makes an attempt, through Mary Warren’s testimony, to name Abigail as a fraud without revealing the crucial information. When this attempt fails, he finally bursts out with a confession, calling Abigail a “whore” and proclaiming his guilt publicly. Only then does he realize that it is too late, that matters have gone too far, and that not even the truth can break the powerful frenzy that he has allowed Abigail to whip up. Proctor’s confession succeeds only in leading to his arrest and conviction as a witch, and though he lambastes the court and its proceedings, he is also aware of his terrible role in allowing this fervor to grow unchecked. Proctor redeems himself and provides a final denunciation of the witch trials in his final act. Proctor’s refusal
to provide a false confession is a true religious and personal stand. Such a confession would dishonor his fellow prisoners, who are brave enough to die as testimony to the truth. Perhaps more relevantly, a false admission would also dishonor him, staining not just his public reputation, but also his soul. By refusing to give up his personal integrity Proctor implicitly proclaims his conviction that such integrity will bring him to heaven. He goes to the gallows redeemed for his earlier sins. As Elizabeth says to end the play, responding to Hale’s plea that she convince Proctor to publicly confess: “He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!”(35)

Eddie Carbone is the tragic protagonist of The View from the Bridge who is constantly self-interested, wanting to promote and protect his innocence. Eddie creates a fictional fantasy world where his absurd decisions make sense—where calling the Immigration Bureau in the middle of an Italian community that prides itself on protecting illegal immigrants has no repercussions. In Eddie's world, he imagines protecting Catherine from marriage or any male relationship and wants her for himself. While Eddie wavers and switches between communal and state laws and cultures, his motivations do not change. Eddie constantly looks out for himself at the expense of others and is ruled by personal love and guilt. There are several moments in the text where the audience is given clues that Eddie's love for Catherine may not be normal. For example, when Catherine lights Eddie's cigar in the living room, it is an event that gives Eddie unusual pleasure. This possibly warm and affectionate act between niece and uncle has phallic suggestions. Depending on interpretation by the actors, this moment many have more or less sexual undertones. Eddie's great attention
to his attractive niece and impotence in his own marital relationship immediately
makes this meaning clear. Although Eddie seems unable to understand his feelings for
his niece until the end of the play, other characters are aware. Beatrice is the first to
express this possibility in her conversation with Catherine. Alfieri also realizes
Eddie's feelings during his first conversation with Eddie. Eddie does not comprehend
his feelings until Beatrice clearly articulates his desires in the conclusion of the play,
"You want somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her!" (The View from the
Bridge. 43) Eddie does not realize his feeling for Catherine because he has
constructed an imagined world where he can suppress his urges. This suppression is
what devastates Eddie. Because he has no outlet for his feelings—even in his own
conscious mind—Eddie transfers his energy to a hatred of Marco and Rodolpho and
causes him to act completely irrationally. Eddie's final need to secure or retrieve his
good name from Marco is a result of Eddie's failure to protect Catherine from Marco.
Eddie fails in his life, but seeks redemption and victory in death. Alfieri is the
symbolic bridge between American law and tribal laws. Alfieri, an Italian-American,
is true to his ethnic identity. He is a well-educated man who studies and respects
American law, but is still loyal to Italian customs. The play told from the viewpoint of
Alfieri, the view from the bridge between American and Italian cultures who attempts
to objectively give a picture of Eddie Carbone and the 1950s Red Hook, Brooklyn
community. Alfieri represents the difficult stretch, embodied in the Brooklyn Bridge,
from small ethnic communities filled with dock laborers to the disparate cosmopolitan
wealth and intellectualism of Manhattan. The old and new worlds are codified in the
immigrant-son Alfieri. From his vantage point, Alfieri attempts to present an unbiased and reasonable view of the events of the play and make clear the greater social and moral implications in the work.

The character of David becomes quickly obsessed with the idea that his good fortune in life is merely a product of his miraculous long-time luck. He has not only married the woman of his dreams and inherited her father's farmhouse after a strangely fortunate incident; he has also become quite successful in auto repair and mink farming. David watches on and those he loves falter and fail time and time again; his older brother, Amos, battles with the drive to become a profession baseball player but is often rebuked, his father lives vicariously through his burned-out one-track son with no hopes of his own, his business partner faces unfortunate circumstances as his product dies, and his foreign friend struggles to make ends meet despite his expert craft. However, David is unable to enjoy his good fortune; he becomes consumed with the idea that he has not truly earned all that he has, and that others who work harder than he fail time and again. While the other characters flail and rely on only one prospect in life, David accounts for all, and his outcome - while perhaps padded by good fortune - is his to deserve.

In Arthur Miller’s *Incident at Vichy*, he focuses upon the subjects of human nature, guilt, fear, and complicity using Vichy France for the setting. The characters of the play argue and cajole each other to act in the face of the unknown. Each man has been pulled off the street, not sure why he has been targeted. The businessman is convinced of the routine nature of the inspection, certain of the rationality of the law.
The poet is hysterical and afraid his Jewish identity will indict him. The socialist and the psychologist realise their fate and courageously argue for resistance. The aristocrat speaks mournfully of the vulgarity of the Nazis and the possibility of human nobility in the face of self-interest. Each character hopes to convince the others, aware that they can only act to survive together. Arthur Miller makes the choice facing the characters highly absorbing. The characters have something to lose if they attempt an escape and straightforward acquiescence at least offers some hope of release. Monceau, the Jewish actor, refuses to fight the guards and make an escape because he cannot conceive of the Germans' cruelty and the irrationality of their imprisonment. The Nazis also become more terrifying in the play as their own lack of agency is revealed. The Major is nervous, and guilty about the nature of the inspections but when pushed by a prisoner, becomes excessively defensive. The aristocrat observes of the Germans, 'the less you exist, the more you have to make an impression'. (34) It is the insecurity of Nazism that gives rise to violence and vulgarity. Both victims and persecutors are trapped in a system where they find little room for resistance. Being a memory play the main character in Arthur Miller’s After the Fall, Quentin begins speaking to someone offstage. Perhaps he speaks to the audience, perhaps to an invisible friend or therapist. What becomes clear is this: everything that happens onstage is in Quentin's mind; one can see the other characters from his point of view. Something has happened to this man to force him into a reflective state of being. He is a lawyer whose primary client is himself. Quentin investigates how things have turned out the way they have from his own perception of truth. People from his past--
wives, lovers, clients, and friends--appear and fade away as Quentin remembers past encounters. He wanted to do good in life, to love and be loved. But his first two marriages ended in divorce and he betrayed a friend. As the play moves forward and backward in time, Quentin acknowledges his own capacity for cruelty and murder--not the physical taking of another life but the murder of love, his own as well as the love of others. Quentin learns about denial from considering the impact of the Holocaust. This brings him to the realization that he must face the many ways he has justified or ignored his complicity in the failure of his marriage to Louise and the death of Maggie. He does not want to look at the truth and yet once he begins, he sees the layers of denial and is compelled to dig deeper. Stephen Barker remarks that *After the Fall* intimates that the original fall from Eden is recapitulated by each individual through the Fall into consciousness and thus into choice (Cambridge 237).

Arthur Miller’s *The Price* involves two brothers, Victor and Walter, and focuses on the distribution of their dead parents’ belongings, all housed in a ten-room brownstone. The secondhand furniture broker, Solomon, has offered a thousand dollars for these belongings, and Victor has reached a tentative agreement with him, although his wife and brother both urge him to hold out for three times the amount offered. The play involves family secrets and duplicity. The brothers’ father, who had been reasonably prosperous, suffered the fate of many during the Great Depression of the 1930’s and was reduced to living at a bare subsistence level. He made his sons realize that he did not have the wherewithal to send them to college. Victor accepted his fathers’ penury at face value, but Walter, who suspected that his father had
squirreled away some money to increase his own sense of security, struggled to continue his education, eventually becoming a surgeon. Victor, meanwhile, became a police officer and, during the action of the play, has served on the police force for twenty-eight years. As Walter’s fortunes increased, Victor at one point approached his brother, requesting a five-hundred-dollar loan so that he could continue his education. Walter, however, although he was easily able to spare the money, would not make the loan because of his suspicion, which proved to be quite accurate, that their father was hiding money from his sons.

Lyman Felt is a major character in Arthur Miller’s *The Ride down Mount Morgan*. He is an insurance agent and a bigamist who maintains families in New York City and Elmira in upstate New York. When he is hospitalized following a nearly fatal car crash on an icy mountain road, both wives—the Prim and proper Theo, to whom he’s been wed for more than thirty years, and the younger, more assertive Leah, whom he married nine years earlier—show up at his bedside. When confronted with his duplicity, Felt states that the two options in life are to be true to others (and to what he deems a hypocritical society) or to himself, and that he has chosen the latter. He justifies his actions to both shocked women by explaining he has given them good lives, has supported them financially and emotionally, and has been a good father. He goes on to say that the two women have been happier with this arrangement than they would have been if they had been the only wife. As reasons for this he cites domestic boredom, routine, and the angst of being trapped in the same relationship forever. The play uses flashbacks to take us to previous situations both
families have lived. Doubts linger about the crash having been an accident, and some characters start suspecting it was an attempted suicide, maybe motivated by Felt's growing discomfort about his unusual family arrangement. The flip side of the wives' ostensible faultless lifestyle is also presented, when it is suggested that Leah has been involved in another relationship, and Theo admits to having experienced long spells of being cold and sexless. Every character starts having to deal with their own hypocrisy, even Felt's outraged business partners who are later discovered to keep lovers. Through Felt, Miller presents the supposition that monogamy is an unnatural and unattainable state imposed on men by rigid but unnecessary social convention.

The major characters of Miller's *The Broken Glass* are Phillip and Sylvia Gellburg who are a Jewish married couple living in New York. Phillip works at a Wall Street bank, where he works on foreclosing. Sylvia suddenly becomes partially paralysed from the waist down after reading about the events of Kristallnacht in the newspaper. Kristallnacht (translated as *The Night of Broken Glass*) was the coordinated Nazi attack on Jewish people and their property which led to 91 Jews being murdered, 25,000 to 30,000 arrests, 267 synagogues being destroyed, and thousands of homes and businesses being ransacked by the Hitler Youth, the Gestapo and the SS on 9th and 10th November that year. Dr. Harry Hyman is contacted by Phillip to try and help Sylvia recover. Dr. Hyman believes that Sylvia's paralysis is psychosomatic, and though he is not a psychiatrist, he begins to treat her according to his diagnosis. Throughout the play, Dr. Hyman learns more about the problems that Sylvia is having in her personal life, particularly in her marriage. After an argument
with his boss, Philip suffers a heart attack and is dying at his home. Phillip and Sylvia confront each other about their feelings. Before Phillip dies, his final words are "Sylvia, forgive me!" (Broken Glass 45) Upon his death, Sylvia's paralysis is cured.

O’Neill has experimented in expressionistic drama that explores the unconscious life of men through a technique of distorting the elements of the realistic theatre. Brutus Jones, a self-styled emperor of West-Indian Island was killed by a silver bullet. In The Hairy Ape, Yank is insulted by the wealthy Mildred. In Mourning Becomes Electra, he reconstructs the Greek legend of Orestes in the American context of the Mannon family. He has a tragic vision and his drama ranges from the realistic to the symbolic theatre and he expresses, the predicament of the twentieth century man portraying his anguish and tension. John Gassner is of the view that O’Neill’s search for expressive form led him to undertake numerous experiments with symbolic figures, masks, interior monologues, split personalities, choruses, Scenic effects, rhythms and schematization (The Reader’s Encyclopedia of World Drama. 616).

Hailing from the rural South the state of Mississippi, Tennessee Williams explores in his plays mostly the unconscious of the human mind. His characters withdraw themselves into a world of their own, a world of fantasy and illusion. Though they are left in a helpless and pitiable state, they have tragic dignity. Most of his characters are alienated and isolated in the society. Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman presents a criticism of the American dream of success, of how the drama of hard work and millions of Dollars can be frustrating. His play All My Sons deals with the social