Chapter 2

Ideologemes in Williams and Miller

The unresolvable social contradictions demanding formal solutions must logically lead to the unveiling of ideologemes which form the raw material for any aesthetic act, though their structuring into the text may have different manifestations in various texts. Jameson contends that the dominant class ideology will devise strategies to dominate the subjected class and to compel them to acquiesce into the dominant ideology (PU 186).

Ideology is constituted by minimal units which Jameson calls “ideologemes.” The minimal unit can be identified or “reconstructed” by looking at the basic core features of the individual, social, political, and economic formations of the times. “In essence, ideologeme is a conceptual belief system, an abstract value, an opinion, a situation, or a prejudice” (87).

Such ideologemes are the raw material, the inherited narrative paradigms, upon which the text as a process works and which it transforms into texts of a different order. We must therefore learn to distinguish between the texts in which ideologemes have left their various traces, and the free floating narrative objects themselves, which are never given
directly in primary verbal form, but must always be reconstructed after the fact, as working hypothesis and subtext. (PU 185)

Drama works on ideologemes, and transforms them into plots, which apparently have the false claim of independence from the ideologemes. The task of reconstructing the ideologemes from the individual act is another important preoccupation of the political interpretation.

The ideological analysis requires us to demonstrate each text as a complex work of transformation on that ultimate raw material which is the ideologeme in question. The analyst’s work is thus first that of the identification of the ideologeme, and, in many cases, of the initial naming in instances where for whatever reason it had not yet been registered as such. (87-88)

According to Jameson, a literary work’s theme and the characters who seem to dramatize it are themselves simply so many allusions to more basic ideological signs which would have been grasped instinctively by any contemporary reader but from which we are culturally and historically somewhat distanced. These signs vanish with the past. However we have the traces of them in the text as “material signifiers, lexemes, enigmatic words and phrases” (PU 201).
The America of the first half of the twentieth century, like any social milieu at a given time, holds a profusion of semic patterns informing the texts. From among the various facets and contours, four cardinal ideologemes that have overdetermined the lives of the times are identified and are related to the lives within the texts chosen for study. They are refugees of the economic system, high individualism, outcasts of conventional morality, and class struggle.

A. Refugees of the Frenzied Invidiousness of the Economic System

The frenzied invidiousness of the economic system of America in the first half of the 20th century has produced many refugees. This is an ideologeme that has gone into the making of the plays of Williams and Miller as causality to the presence/absence of many complex semic patterns. There are many factors that have contributed to the deplorable human situation in the capitalist economy of the times, viz 1. The free hand given to the industrialists; 2. the absence of legislation and will to improve the unhygienic and unfriendly working conditions; 3. the absence of state interference in business; 4. the unchecked and ruthless methods resorted to by the employers to suppress the rising of workers for justice 5. lack/failure of trade unionism 6. the presence of millions of immigrant workers who are ready to work for alarmingly low wages 7. absence of
legislation for state welfare measures and 8. the dearth of able politicians and social workers.

This social set up informs Tom’s resentment in the warehouse work in The Glass Menagerie. Tom’s mother exhorts him to have the energy and will to continue his life as a worker. But Tom cannot digest the idea.

You think I’m crazy about the warehouse? (He bends fiercely toward her slight figure) You think I’m in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-five years down there in that celotex interior! With fluorescent-tubes! Look! I’d rather somebody picked up a crowbar and battered out my brains than go back mornings! I go! Every time you come in yelling that Goddamn ‘Rise and shine!’ ‘Rise and shine!’ I say to myself, how lucky dead people are! But I get up. I go! For sixty five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever! (251-252)

However, Amanda reminds him of his duty as a responsible brother, and as a son: “we have to do all that we can to build ourselves up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is - each other. . . .”(258). Amanda’s words to Tom show the ferocity of the times:
I know your ambitions do not lie in the warehouse, that like everybody in the wide world – you’ve had to make sacrifices, but - Tom - Life’s not easy, it calls for Spartan endurance. (259)

But Tom is aware of the futility of his work; he is once fired for writing poems on the lid of a shoe-box. His late night wanderings and frequenting the movie houses show that he is a refugee. We see Tom escape from the warehouse with its “Celotex ceiling” and “fluorescent lighting” and retreat to the movies, a world of adventure analogous to the life he dreams of as a merchant sea-man. And whatever else he does, his nightly forays, drinking, cruising for companions, it is the movies which provide his cover. The movies are the nation’s escape mechanism throughout the depression and on into the war years. For Laura, phonograph provides a similar escape from the relentless memorizing of charts to serve business interests. For Tom, movies are analogous to drinking, and for Laura, the phonograph is the machinery that enables her withdrawal from the world. However, whereas Tom and Laura become refugees without any resistance, Amanda puts up a great struggle before she also becomes one. Besides, it is worthy to note that Tom’s father who had left them a long time ago “was a telephone man who fell
in love with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town. . .” (235).

A Streetcar Named Desire deals with this factor in more intense and on more personal planes. Blanche loses everything including Belle Reve more due to the “fornications” of the members of the family than due to the direct insurgence of the economic set up. Yet Belle Reve is lost in mortgage in order to meet the medical and funeral bills. Blanche tells Stella about this:

How in hell do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive, Miss Stella! And old cousin Jessie’s right after Margaret’s hearse! Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our door step! Stella, Belle Reve was his headquarters! Honey, that’s how it slipped through my fingers! Which of them left us a fortune? Which of them left a cent of insurance even? Only poor Jessie - one hundred to pay for her coffin. That was all Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at the school. (127)

Blanche’s desire to be secure and her fear of loneliness have to be read against the grim scene of economy. When she leaves Laurel and reaches Stella’s, she is almost bankrupt. This happens more on account of the poor salary she receives than of
her indulgence. “I want to be near you, got to be with somebody, I can’t be alone” (169). She is not “so good” after Belle Reve has started to breakup.

I never was hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are soft - soft people have got to court the favor of hard ones, Stella. Have got to be seductive - put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and glow, make a little - temporary magic just in order to pay for - one night’s shelter! That’s why I’ve been - not so awfully good, lately. I’ve run for protection, Stella, from under one leaky roof because it was storm - all storm - and I was - caught in the center. . . . People don’t see you - men don’t - even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. And you’ve got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you’re going to have someone’s protection. But I’m scared now - awf’ly scared. I don’t know how much longer I can turn the trick. (169)

Blanche is a refugee who has come to New Orleans in search of protection. She finds it in Mitch though for a short period:

I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle - a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide
in! The poor man’s paradise - is a little peace. . . .

But I guess I was asking, hoping too much. (225)

She remains a refugee till the end. She tells the doctor: “whoever you’re, I’ve always depended on the kindness of strangers” (225).

In Orpheus Descending, Valentine Xavier, who is a folk singer, sings to entertain and lives by it. Val is a refugee who comes to a small rural town in Mississippi seeking asylum. He is ready to do all kinds of jobs for a living and was eager to get employed at the store of Mrs. Torrance.

I can do all kinds of odd jobs. Lady, I’m thirty today and I’m through with the life that I’ve been leading. . . . I lived in corruption but I’m not corrupted. Here is why. (Picks up his guitar) MY life’s companion! It washes me clean like water when anything unclean has touched me. (261)

In these words the relevant details of Val are delineated. Though he is handsome, healthy and enterprising he has not been a successful individual in his life. Though he is an artist, his success in that field ends with the autographs of artists he has accepted on his guitar. With all his endowments, he has achieved nothing but his snake- skin jacket and a guitar.
In *Suddenly Last Summer*, what Catherine does is to accept the role of a travelling companion for money and comfort. But it brings for her untold misery and suffering. Sebastian secures her as his companion, since she is a poor relation of his. Consequent on the cannibalizing of Sebastian, Catherine is persecuted by Sebastian’s mother, the rich and dominating Mrs. Venable. She could have her way by branding Catherine as a mentally deranged person only because neither Catherine nor her mother and brother have the power to foil Mrs. Venable’s intrigues. George expects to make a breakthrough in his life with Mrs. Venable’s gifts, as he has not achieved any success in his life. This dependency of George and his mother further weakens Catherine’s position, which leads to her complete undoing, but for the clinical approach of Dr. Cuckrowicz.

In *Sweet Bird of Youth* also, the young man of calibre gets ruined and frustrated. The theme of the refugee who has been battered cruelly, recurs in this play too. Chance is a handsome, promising, brilliant youth who even at the age of seventeen contests in National level competitions. But soon, he becomes a gigolo for a living. For almost a decade Chance has remained a gigolo in New York, yet has not achieved anything. At the opening of the play Chance is the travelling companion and paid gigolo of a great but now faded movie star Alexandra Del
Logo. Chance’s whole life-time dreams, ambitions and hopes have come down. In a vain attempt to capture everything – to marry his love Heavenly, to come back as a successful artist, and to prove that he is a successful person – he forces Alexandra Del Lago to conduct a competition as a patroness of his.

She hasn’t been seen much lately, but still has influence, power, and money – money that can open all doors – that I’ve knocked at all these years till my knuckles are bloody. (75)

However, this does not materialize. Chance comes to Alexandra and comes back to his native place as a refugee, but in the end, loses himself forever.

Arthur Miller’s plays have two types of refugees – the one as the victim, as widely seen in Williams, and the other as the perpetrator of the frenzied invidiousness of the capitalist system. Joe Keller and Eddie Carbon are characters who belong to the latter category. Joe Keller in All My Sons is a different type of refugee. Through his business and the contract with the armed forces in the supply of cylinder heads for aircrafts during the year, Keller has amassed wealth and gained social status. However, he suffers from a guilt which is precipitated by the ruthlessness with which he supplies faulty cylinder heads to make profit. When he instructs his partner to cover up
patches in the cylinders and ship them out to the Air Force, he is well aware that they will lead to air crashes. But he is gripped with the fear that if he throws the entire batch of cylinder heads to the dust bin, he may lose the war contract, and that would spell disaster to his business.

Keller: . . . I’m in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you’re out of business; you don’t know how to operate, your stuff is not good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell’s it to them? You lay forty years into business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away? (115)

He breaks into a sweat of fear at the very thought of finding himself and his family in the ditches. He, therefore, conveniently underplays the consequences of his action. When the matter comes for trial, he denies the phone call by which he instructs his partner Steve to cover up the patches. Without a pang of conscience he makes Steve the scapegoat. Keller’s later rehabilitation into the society is ironical because what matters in the society is one’s ability to keep appearances.

However, Keller soon reaches a stage where he can no longer stick to his casuistry and the profit-and-success value of the
system. He breaks up: "I never thought they would install them. I swear to God. I thought they’d stop’em before anybody took off" (115). Beneath his apparent success and glory he experiences the pangs of guilt which ultimately lead to his suicide. Keller is thus a refugee from the society with its success symbols.

Chris also is a refugee from the society because he finds that to the post-war society the noble ideas that motivated the heroes in war are nothing but mere dust. He wants to get out of this vulgar society. He is ashamed to touch his father’s money, for he thinks that his father’s business has begun to spread its wings during the war, and that his father is morally responsible for the crime. He, therefore, does not allow his father to add his name on the name plate of the company. He has a plan to leave the place and start life anew:

Chris: Mother, . . . I’m going away. There are a couple of firms in Cleveland, I think I can get a place. I mean, I’m going away for good. To Anne alone: I know what you’re thinking, Annie. It’s true. I’m yellow. I was made yellow in this house because I suspected my father and I did nothing about it. (123)
Though Chris figures out the enormity of his father’s crime, he lacks the guts to march his father to jail. Here, Chris feels guilty of being inert, irresponsible to the society.

Chris: I could jail him! I could jail him, if I were human any more. But I’m like everybody else now. I’m practical now. . . . The cats in that alley are practical, the bums who ran away when we were fighting were practical. Only the dead ones weren’t practical. But now I’m practical, and I spit on myself. I’m going away. I’m going now. (123)

Larry is a similar character who views the dead pilots as his brothers, and regards his father as responsible for their death. On realizing it, he makes up his mind to end his life to expiate his father’s sin.

Willy in Death of a Salesman is surrounded by people who are like little odious vermin struggling in the cities. His life, like those of others, is a long story of drudgery. The idea of success that he shares with his children proves to be false, “because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead” (25). Willy’s life is an indictment against the machine-culture of America which has deprived the individual of his/her content and peace of mind. Willy is forced by the
demands of a mechanized world to run frantically in search of a living. He takes on the rapid, superficial life of the salesman. He is in utter ruin towards the end of the play. "After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth no more dead than alive" (77).

When the play begins, Willy has reached the ebb tide of his life. He is too old and worn out to continue travelling. His back aches when he stops to lift the heavy sample cases that were once his pride. His tired, wandering, mind makes it unsafe for him to drive the car which has carried him for years from one town and sale to the next. His sons see through him and despise him, though his wife defends him, knowing him to be better than most and, at any rate, well intentioned. He lives in a dream world; he cannot face reality; and he has always had excuses for his own failures. Though he has worked for thirty-four years for a firm, when he needs a job most, the boss of the firm finds him useless, and shunts him away. He realizes he is, and has been, a failure. Leaving the society becomes imminent and inevitable. However, Willy ensures that his family gets some money to make the final payment on his home by deliberately smashing up his car, killing himself.

Biff's abject failure in life is a terrible illustration of the tremendous waste of human resources in a world of maddening
competition. There was a time when Biff was an object of everybody’s admiration. But when the play begins, Biff is seen worn out and “lost.” He feels suffocated in the a world of competition. He has spent six years after high school trying to work himself up, doing various jobs – shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. Thus he had twenty or thirty kinds of jobs since he left home before the war. Willy’s words about Biff testify to this:

How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farm hand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought, well, a young man, it’s good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But it’s more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week! (11)

In the “greatest” country in the world, even the smart gets lost in the rat race of commercialism. That Biff is a refugee from the frenzied rat race in the society is not an exaggeration. He loves the escape into the open farms of Texas, even though he does not earn much there. He is enthusiastic when he talks about this to Happy:

This farm I work on, it’s spring there now, see? And they have got about fifteen new colts. There’s nothing more inspiring or - beautiful than the sight
of a mare and a new colt. And it’s cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it’s spring. (16)

However, Biff realizes that he does not make profit nor money as his father/society expects of him. He feels guilty about his farm work as it is not in tune with the profit making ideology of the society. His words to Happy reveal this plight:

Biff: And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my god, I’m not getting anywhere. What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I’m thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin’ my future. That’s when I come hummin’ home. And now, I got here, and I don’t know what to do with myself. [After a pause] I have always made a point of not wasting my life, and every time I come back here I know that all I’ve done is to waste my life. (16-17)

In A Memory of Two Mondays, the reified existence in the shipping room of the auto parts warehouse creates refugees. Young Bert has understood the meaninglessness and waste in his existence in the warehouse. Though he has been there only for a few years he is fed up with the ugliness of the situation. He decides to leave the place in search of a better living. His
soliloquy throws light on the nauseating situation and his predicament.

Gee, it’s peculiar to leave a place for ever!

Still I always hated coming here;

The same dried up jokes, the dust;

Especially in spring, walking in from the sunshine

Or any Monday morning in the hot days. (370-371)

The pain and placidity flow like poetry in the play as the workers enter the shipping room one by one in the morning:

Bert: I don’t understand how they come every morning,

Every morning and every morning,

And no end in sight.

That’s the thing – there’s no end!

Oh, there ought to be a statue in the park –

“To All the Ones that Stay.”

One to Larry, to Agnes, Tom Kelley, Gus. . . . (370-371)
The sixty year old Gus, who has spent as many as twenty two years in the warehouse, has not earned anything except his insurance money. When his wife dies, and having no children, he decides to leave the “goddam place.” On the day of his departure he comes to the warehouse, fully drunk, with the insurance money in his hands and lashes out against the bosses. He drinks even in front of the boss, Mr. Eagle.

Tom, going to Gus: Gimme the bottle, Gus!

Gus: I goin’ go someplace, Tommy. I’m goin’, go cemetery. I wasn’t one time in cemetery. I go see my Lilly.

My Lilly. My Lilly die. . . . Twenty-two year I work here. . . . Come on, Jim, we go someplace. (368-369)

The departure of Gus is relevant here. The other characters in the warehouse, though they do not leave the place, are also being reduced to nothing. It may be that they will also leave sooner or later.

Marco and Rudolpho in A View from the Bridge are refugees from Italy. They have sneaked into America to find work and earn a living. Marco’s pathetic plight is revealed in his words to Ellie and Beatrice:
Marco: What can I do? The older one is sick in his chest. My wife - she feeds them from her own mouth. I tell you the truth, if I stay there, they will never grow up. They eat sunshine. (393)

However, in a short while, Marco understands that he has landed in the wrong place. In America too, he is not welcome. He remains an “illegal” immigrant according to the law, which ironically has been framed by Americans who are all immigrants. More immigrants mean more people to share the riches. This was no more a welcome proposition in the America of Eddie, as he cannot tolerate the idea of refugees taking away his possession, Catherine. This predicament culminates in the betrayal of Marco and Rudolpho by Eddie, which in turn makes Marco a refugee. Rudolpho, however, gets a lease of life with the prospect of marrying Catherine, and thus becoming an American citizen.

B. Resentment and High Individualism

Philip E. Slater in his book The Pursuit of Loneliness is of the opinion that the American culture has frustrated three human desires:

1. The desire for community - the wish to live in trust and fraternal co-operation with one’s fellows in a total and visible collective entity. 2. The desire for
engagement - the wish to come directly to grips with social and interpersonal problems and to confront on equal terms an environment, which is not composed of ego-extensions. The desire for dependence - the wish to share responsibility for the control of one’s impulses, and the direction of one’s life. (67)

Technological change and industrialization, railroads and increased mobility and the withering away of family bonds - all have contributed to the formation of a distinct feature of the American culture - high individualism, a kind of resentment towards the social environment. The young generation’s rejection of the social norms invites hostility from the elder generation, though, sometimes, the latter too feels the dissatisfaction with the “dog-eat-dog world”.

High individualism leads the American to seek more and more privacy, but without being aware of it, he gets more and more alienated. Discontent does not produce any great struggles or movements but rather a desire for evasion and escape, which finds expression in hippyism. Slater analyzes the reason for this. Americans are the later generations of immigrants from many countries. If America gained the energetic and the daring, she also gained the
lion’s share of the rootless . . . [and] a critically undue proportion of persons who, when faced with a difficult situation, tended to check the whole thing and flee to a new environment. (16)

The hunger for confrontation and the avoidance of it co-exist in American Society. This is largely because of high individualism, which is the result of the training to become independent at an early age. This has successfully freed Americans from the necessity of relating to, submitting to and depending upon others. However, the more they succeed in doing this, the more they feel disconnected, bored, lonely, unprotected, unnecessary and unsafe. Thus hippies were communal, utopian, mystical, dropouts, unwashed, and viewed as dangerous, masochistic, ostentatious, and the causes of their own troubles. The dialogue between Amanda and Tom in The Glass Menagerie reveal this resentment and high individualism.

Tom is regularly late coming home, drinking, and going to movies.

Amanda: But why - Tom, - are you always so restless?
Where do you go to, nights?

Tom: I - go to the movies.

Amanda: Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?
Tom: I go to the movies because I like adventure. Adventure is something I don’t have much at work, so I go to the movies.

Amanda: Most young men find adventure in their careers. Tom: Then most young men are not employed in a warehouse.

Amanda: The world is full of young men employed in warehouses and offices and factories.

Tom: Do all of them find adventure in their careers?

Amanda: They do or they do without it! Not everybody has a craze for adventure.

Tom: Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of these instincts are given much play at the warehouse. (259-260)

Amanda fears that Tom takes after his father, who, “fell in love with long distances,” and went away to Mexico for adventure leaving behind his unemployed wife and two little children. And as feared, Tom, in the end, leaves St. Louis for adventure and
pleasure deserting his mother and his disabled, introvert sister to the mercy of the elements.

High individualism, and the resultant discontent and indignation get a different twist in A Streetcar Named Desire. Here, Stanley is both an image of the new thriving American and one led by highly individualistic motives. He creates and deals with everything as if all these exist solely for his service and pleasure – his poker games, his bowling team, his drink parties, his wife, his family, his car and his work. He is the king of his territory. He decides which is to be used and which to be thrown away. In the end he (ab)uses Blanche and throws her away.

Val of Orpheus Descending is a typical hippie. His first entry as if answering the wild call of the Conjure Man is described thus:

*He is a young man, about 30, who has a kind of wild beauty about him that the cry would suggest. He doesn’t wear Levi’s or a T-shirt, he has on a pair of dark serge pants, glazed from long wear and not excessively tight fitting. His remarkable garment is a snake-skin jacket, mottled white, black and gray. He carries a guitar which is covered with inscriptions.* (240)
Val is a wanderer, a good-looking young man, and an artist who has no home of his own. Val shows an attitude different from the other wandering character - Carol Cutrere - who protests violently against injustice. Williams presents her as one “past thirty and lacking prettiness.” She has an odd, fugitive beauty which is stressed, almost to the point of fantasy, by the style of makeup . . . the face and lips powdered white and the eyes outlined and exaggerated with black pencil and the lids tinted blue. (236)

Carol protests violently against injustice and is thrown out of the country.

The presence of these two types can be explicated in Slater’s words regarding the two trends in the protest of the young against the choking, exhausting, and corrupt scenario of America of the times.

The first strand stresses political confrontation, revolutionary action, radical commitment to the process of changing the basic structure of modern industrial society. The second involves a renunciation of that society in favour of the cultivation of inner experiences and pleasing internal feeling states. . . .
There is also much emphasis in aesthetic expression and an overarching belief in the power of love. (Slater 129)

Carol has made a protest march to the Governor’s, disobeyed the authorities, challenged the people of the locality and violated the rules and customs of the country. But Val has not done such things. Val tells the Lady:

I am telling you it’s the truth, we got to face it, we’re under a life-long sentence to solitary confinement inside our own lovely skins for as long as we live on the earth. (Orpheus 271)

This is where Val has reached after a long journey to find sense in life.

What does anyone wait for? For something to happen, for anything to happen, to things more sense. . . . It’s hard to remember what that feelings was like because I’ve lost it now, but I was waiting for something like if you ask a question you wait for someone to answer, but you ask the wrong question or you ask the wrong person and the answer don’t [sic] come. (271)
However, ostensibly the play enacts the story of love and gratification—women vying for the love of a man who can “burn a woman down.”

Chance of *Sweet Bird of Youth* is such a hippie-wanderer figure. Having left his ageing mother at an early age, he has wandered for many years, doing odd jobs, before, like Val, he becomes a gigolo. He too is a promising artist and performer. After years, when he comes back to St. Cloud, his home-town, he hears that his mother has died and that the church has conducted the funeral. He is no more a person whom all love. But all these years he has been cherishing the dream of uniting with his lover and partner in performance, Heavenly. It is for this that he has come back. For the same purpose he tries to influence Alexandra, the great movie actress, and tries to win her patronage. But all the same, he fails in filial duties. Towards the end, when he is threatened with castration and lynching, he does not run away, though he has ample time and opportunity to do so. On the contrary, he stoically accepts the cruel punishment meted out to him. Chance’s struggle cannot be seen as a personal one for success. The struggle as resistance, followed by renunciation of the struggle and interests are, in line with the passive hippie resistance.
In Miller’s *All My Sons*, Joe Keller, who has risen from rags to riches by sheer smartness, is led always by his high individualism. Starting as a factory hand, he builds up his successful business in forty years. Being uneducated, books have no value for him. The profit-and-success values of American society govern all his actions. He considers nothing more important than his family and his personal accomplishment. This accounts for the crime he commits during war. He is unscrupulous in making Steve the scapegoat when they are arrested and prosecuted. Afterwards he goes to sleep with no feeling of unease, though many precious lives are lost in plane crashes, and his partner Steve is languishing in Prison. It is his highly individualistic and egoistic nature that makes him live on, putting appearances of success, playing poker with the neighbors, and playing the game of “jail” with the kids of the locality. Devoid of any sense of morality, and given to the pursuit of riches, he soon becomes a pillar of the society that worships the “Almighty Dollar.” It is ironical that though his neighbors are not convinced of his innocence, they respect him for his smartness. Chris, in the beginning, calls him Joe McGuts. In keeping with the standards of the society, he equates honour with individual accomplishment.
In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy is a victim of both the world of competition and high individualism. Willy’s philosophy of personal attractiveness proves to be hollow. He exhorts his sons to win friends and influence people to exploit human relations for purposes of gain. He finds it choking to be surrounded by many people in his neighborhood. It does not occur to him that these people are human beings struggling to make both ends meet. One reason for his failure is his misplaced faith in the power of personal attractiveness. He displays extraordinary concern for the well-being of his sons. He does not allow his children freedom to find out their own values. On the contrary, he wants to bring them up according to his success theory. When Bernard reminds Biff of his studies, Willy considers Bernard much inferior to Biff.

Bernard: Biff, I heard Mr. Birnbaum say that if you don’t start studying math he’s gonna flunk you, and you won’t graduate. I heard him!

Willy (angrily): what’re you talking about? With scholarships to three universities they’re gonna flunk him?

Bernard: But I heard Mr. Birnbaum say –
Willy: Don’t be a pest, Bernard! To his boys, What an anemic!

Bernard: Okay, I’m waiting for you in my house, Biff. 
Bernard goes off. The Lomans laugh.

Willy: Bernard is not well liked, is he?

Biff: he’s liked, but he’s not well liked.

Happy: That’s right, Pop.

Willy: That’s just what I mean, Bernard can get the best marks in school, y’ understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y’ understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That’s why I thank Almighty God you’re both built like Adonises. 

(25)

Even after losing the job, Willy is too egoistic to accept the job offered by his good friend Charley. His dreams and fantasies are precipitated by his intense desire to be successful according to the society’s value system.

From childhood itself Biff’s head is filled with high individualism and false notions about success inherited from his father. There are complaints about Biff from the neighbours, from school, from the parents, the watchman in the building
site, Bill Oliver and the cops. But Willy continues to instill false values and stories in the minds of his children. However, Biff’s individualism does not take him any further. While Bernard, a “less-liked” anemic boy rises in stature through studies and hard work, Biff, with all his personal endowments cannot reach anywhere. He has dreams to work and live in “the open,” in a ranch, like a hippie.

Happy too is dreamy and full of illusions like his father. Happy, who, like Biff, has been blown “full of hot air” by Willy all through his childhood, knows that he can outbox, outrun, and outwit anyone in the firm. His high individualism makes him resentful about working under men who are physically his inferiors and he takes his revenge on them by seducing their fiancées.

Howard is another character in the play who is led by high individualism. He is the present boss of the firm where Willy has worked for thirty six years. He is a shrewd business man for whom “business is business.” There are no humanistic considerations to be expected in his business. A man is useful in business only till he earns something for the establishment. So Howard dismisses Willy, who is too old to be a Salesman.

The Reverend Samuel Parris in The Crucible is concerned only with himself, his status as minister in a church, and with
his worldly prosperity. He is terrified by Abigail’s and Betty’s pranks in the forest because he fears that they will bring humiliation to his household, and he seizes on Putnam’s idea of a witch-hunt, because it will deflect the blame and increase his own importance. In hunting down the victims, he is utterly ruthless and determined. He is always ready at the trial to discredit adverse witnesses and evidence, and encourage Danforth in his pride.

Abigail, whose character is very important to the plot, is a dissembler, quick witted and ruthless. She seizes every opportunity of power and safety for herself, and of getting revenge on Elizabeth. She is unscrupulously individualistic in her means to achieve her desired goals.

In A Memory of Two Mondays Mr. Eagle is the big boss of the shipping room of the auto-parts warehouse. He is least bothered about the working condition of the employees. When, during one of his visits to the warehouse, he is told about the deleterious influence of the brothel near the warehouse, his response is ironic and cold: “Shouldn’t have washed the windows, I guess” (369).

Raymond, the manager is a figure who is afraid to talk to the workers or to be familiar with them because he fears that it might mar his prospects in the warehouse. He works steadily and
continuously to be in the good books of the boss, whether his words or silences are scrupulous or not. He joins the warehouse as a worker and, though without any educational qualification, becomes the manager. He is a social climber, always led by his priorities to place himself on a safer plane.

There is high individualism in the character of Gus also. He seldom visits his wife who is in death bed. Instead, he leads a bohemian life of extravaganza on weekends, spending lavishly on wine and women. He is enjoying himself in Staten Islands while his wife is losing her struggle with death.

The whole plot of A View from the Bridge is a conflict between the individual’s extreme self-centeredness and social responsibility. Eddie, like Stanley in A Streetcar Named Desire, is a self made new American created by the capitalist-industrialist value system. He controls everything as if all these exist solely for his service and pleasure. He decides which is to be used and which is to be discarded. He is not willing to share his valuable possessions. He tries to keep his niece Catherine to himself, without allowing her to get married. His high individualism makes him blind to the fact that others do have individual dignity and self pride. When Eddie understands that Catherine is to go away with Rudolpho, he kisses her in a desperate attempt to possess her. His treatment
of his wife Beatrice, and his cousins Marco and Rudolpho also shows this aspect in his character.

Rudolpho too has a streak of high individualism in his character. He has come to America because he is enamoured with the glitter and glamour of the land, though his prime objective is work. Though he knows the pathetic condition of Marco and his family, he does not spare a dime for them when he receives his first pay. He spends money on dress, records, and merrymaking.

C. The Outcasts of Conventional Morality

The element of struggle leads to the third ideologeme - the outcasts of conventional morality or old culture. Many of Williams’s characters are such outcasts. Here, the expressions “conventional” and “old culture” carry with them semantic layers such as “authoritarian,” “puritanical,” “punitive,” “fundamental,” “ruthless,” and “patriarchal.” The characters confront the values of old culture, or unknowingly become a prey to their invidious judgment. In both cases the characters, towards the end, understand their predicament and offer themselves as sacrificial lambs. The sacrifice itself is a form of resistance. First they become outcasts, and later they sacrifice themselves.
The demands of conventional morality can be destructive. The conflict between the outcasts and conventional morality opens up tensions. The tension mounts as the non-conformist resists the ethics of material success, cultural domination, and exploitation of the poor. The outcasts suffer at the hands of individuals who represent conventional morality because they pose, as the “moralists” believe, a threat to social orthodoxy. The violent, but ultimately futile struggle by non-conformists to live among people of conventional morality is unavoidable.

A Streetcar Named Desire can be read as a deliberate outrage against conventional morality woven into a society, which is cruel, orthodox, industrial and marked by double-dealing. Blanche is dominated physically and destroyed emotionally by a hypocritical representative of conventional morality. Blanche comes to her sister when she has lost everything else. She brings her guilt of her husband’s death and her promiscuity with her. Allan is a homosexual and Blanche cannot support or understand him. While he is anxious to get her support, she judges him in terms of a conventional morality, which leads to his suicide. Blanche’s words to Mitch express this guilt:

There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn’t
like a man’s, although he wasn’t the least bit effeminate-looking. Still - that thing was there. . . .
He came to me for help. I didn’t know that. I didn’t find out anything till after our marriage when he’d run away and come back and all I knew was I’d failed him in some mysterious way and wasn’t able to give the help he needed but couldn’t speak of! He was in the quick-sands and clutching at me - but wasn’t holding him out, I was slipping in with him. (183)

Allan commits suicide because Blanche expresses disgust at his homosexuality. The recurring background song “Varsouviana” in the play at important stages forces the audience to focus on Allan’s death as the focal point in Blanche’s life. To escape from guilt Blanche indulges in promiscuity and thus becomes an outcast and is thrown away from Laurel. After having lost everything - her husband, her home, her job, and her youth - she comes to Stella. But the morality of the new environment is hostile to this outcast. Stanley represents contemporary social values. He bears the external signs of Williams’s all-American dream - an outgoing, hard working, hard playing family man. Yet he is corrupt and hypocritical. He represents Williams’s interpretation of the all-American hero as the embodiment of a cruel conventional morality. In this role Stanley is a filthy
foil to the ethereal, delicate, aristocratic, childless, and sensitive Blanche. Stella too stands with Stanley. Blanche tries to stick to Stella, then to Mitch, and in both cases she fails miserably. Stanley is the dominant agent who exposes Blanche and destroys her.

Stella is a homemaker, and is “good,” whereas Blanche is not, and hence, “bad.” Mitch too shows his real colour when he says, “you’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother” (207). Stanley is the scourge of the old morality. He punishes Blanche by thrusting into her hands a ticket to Laurel, where she is not welcome. Even then it is not too late for Blanche to escape. She remains at Elysian Fields, though she is scared of the imminent danger. This is the fear experienced by individuals who do not fit neatly into the moulds that society provides. However she is waiting for the last action of the ritual of sacrifice to be enacted. In this context rape is a weapon of the old culture and Stanley uses it for complete physical and psychological destruction. Here, it is pertinent to note that Blanche’s guilt invites punishment, where as Stanley’s guilt remains unpunished. That Blanche is an outcast in Elysian Fields is evident from the beginning. In the opening scene, Blanche who is in symbolic white, delicate in appearance, is contrasted with the societal scourge in the form of Stanley
appearing in vigour and vitality, with a red stained package from the butcher’s. The love of Stanley for Stella describes precisely this rhythm of violence, which alternates with the polka music in contrast to Blanche’s affinity for the romantic Waltz. The conventional morality of the dominant ideology surfaces again at the end of the play. Stella has strong apprehensions regarding Stanley’s pretence of innocence. This puts her in a dilemma - whether to take sides with her husband or support her sister. It is here that Eunice’s words come as a “moral” for Stella and others to be learned, for a successful life: “Don’t ever believe it. Life has to go on. No matter what happens, you’ve to keep on going” (225). The last words in the play, “This game is seven card stud” (226), crisply assert and establish the success and domination of the “new world.”

Orpheus Descending takes as its theme the community’s savage ways of excommunicating or destroying “the outsiders” - those who inherit something of “the wild” that is not yet “sick with neon.” Greed, brutality and “sterility” are rife. Those who love are castrated or burnt alive. When the neoteric characteristics manifest, the effect is painfully disturbing, for they stir feelings and attitudes that are old and deep although harshly stifled for long. They have learned to reject all these, but they have no coherent ideological framework within which such a rejection can be consciously understood and
thoughtfully endorsed. They are deeply attracted and acutely appalled at the same time. They can neither resist their fascination nor control their antipathy. This is exemplified by the extravagant curiosity that hippie communes attract, and by the harassment that so often extinguishes them. As described earlier Val and Carol are two faces of hippies as outcasts. Carol is born and brought up in the same place, yet she is an outsider and the primitive method of ostracizing is vehemently used against her. Everywhere, except at Lady Torrance’s, she is denied service, and nobody talks to her. The ostracization has to be analyzed in relation with the militancy of Carol:

I delivered stump speeches, wrote letters of protest about the gradual massacre of the colored majority in the country. I thought it was wrong for pellagra and slow starvation to cut them down when the cotton crop failed from army-worm or boll weevil or too much rain in summer. I wanted to, tried to put up free clinics. . . . I put on a potato sack and set out for the capital on foot. This was in winter. I walked bare foot in this burlap sack to deliver a personal protest to the governor of the state. . . . Six miles out of town - hooted, jeered at, even spit on! Every step of the way
- and then arrested! Guess what for? Lewd Vagrancy!

(251-252)

Val stands at the other extreme, and what he experiences is spiritual. He does not care for “jooking.” Since fifteen he has been doing odd jobs and working hard. He rejects the activist-hippie life:

Heavy drinking and smoking the weed and shacking with strangers is okay for kids in their twenties, but this is my thirtieth birthday and I’m all through with the route. (246)

Val works sincerely for Lady Torrance. He is, perhaps, the only person who understands the visionary Vee Talbot. Others misunderstand Val’s affinity to Vee. At the same time Val’s relationship with the childless, middle aged Lady Torrance changes from that of employee-employer to one of man-mistress. Towards the end of the play, Val becomes a forsaken saviour. Val offers love and “fertility,” which the conventional morality disapproves. Lady Torrance’s father is burnt alive for violating the moral codes of the society. Her dream of opening the confectionery is about to be realized; she is blessed with love and fertility. The conventional morality of the society disapproves all these. It gloats over lynching, and tearing
apart the bodies of outcasts. This violence is hovering over Val. He says:

But violence ain’t quick always. Sometimes it is slow. Some tornados are slow. Corruption rot men’s hearts and rot is slow. . . . (291)

The old culture is magnified even further. When Val hears chain-gang dogs chasing a run-away convict, his reaction is significant. : “Run boy! Run fast, brother. If they catch you, you never will run again!” (294).

Yet, when such situation of persecution comes up to Val he does not run away. He patiently waits for the sacrifice. This is Val’s way of protest and resistance. He allows himself to be lynched and burnt. Here, these characters, at the time of their ritualistic sacrifice, attain some sort of dignity, which is purposeful in Williams, as obvious in the stage directions:

A curious, almost formal, dignity appears in them both. She turns to him with the sort of smile that people offer in apology for an awkward speech, and he looks back at her gravely, raising one hand to stay her! (339)

In Suddenly Last Summer also, the outcasts come in confrontation with the old-culture and its values. Mrs.
Venable is a powerful old woman, who can push poor relatives around. Her life is hinged on her son Sebastian, still a “virgin” at forty, whose poetic gift she has always protected, whose eccentricities she has humoured, and whose false steps she has corrected. She recalls all these after his death. By promises of support for research, Mrs. Venable tries to bribe a young experimental neurosurgeon to do a lobotomy on Catherine, who is travelling with Sebastian at the time of his death. At the opening of the play, she is on a family visit from a sanatorium, and her mind is filled with her memories of Sebastian’s death. Mrs. Venable, who is murderously jealous of Catherine, wants to suppress Catherine’s “hideous story” of Sebastian’s death. He is killed by a mob of naked, starving Spanish children and is partly eaten.

Sebastian is a different outcast. He is a homosexual, and the society in which he lives does not approve of homosexuality. Steven Bruhm contends that the America till the 1950s considered the homosexuals as a threat (530). This is the context in which Williams’s character appears.

Thus, to satisfy his urge, Sebastian has to leave for other pastures, and in Cazeba de Lobo he buys children’s flesh to whet his appetite. Soon the children turn against him. Here, Sebastian, like Val, places himself in a vulnerable position; he
changes his habits, deliberately choosing the less genteel public beach instead of the fashionable private establishments. That Sebastian sacrifices himself is clear from Catherine’s words: “He had of himself as a sort of - sacrifice to a - terrible sort of a - God” (397).

Catherine is another outcast pitted against conventional morality. She is a witness to Sebastian’s death and she knows about Sebastian’s homosexuality as she is “procuring” for him. But homosexuality is a taboo to the adherents of old-culture and is hushed up in the Garden District. Catherine says, “I knew what I was doing. I came out in the French Quarter years before I came out in the Garden District. . . (413). Mrs. Venable’s threat to have Catherine lobotomized is meant to silence her about Sebastian. She appears to see truth as relative, determined by the privileged and the powerful. She says of her forthcoming confrontation with Catherine. “I won’t collapse! She’ll collapse! I mean . . . her lies will collapse not my truth - not the truth. . .” (400).

Catherine thinks that Mrs. Venable does not know that she is “procuring” for Sebastian. But the anxiety and desperateness she displays show that she knows but cannot believe or accept the homosexuality of her son. Her actions in the play are an attempt to hide, from the outside world, this unacceptable
When these attempts fail, she takes refuge from that truth in death—"I won’t speak again. I’ll keep still, if it kills me" (411).

Like Val, Chance Wayne in *Sweet Bird of Youth* is an outcast. He leaves St. Cloud because of the threat he receives from the family of his lover. He becomes a gigolo to finance his romance with Heavenly, but when he comes back to St. Cloud, he confronts a harsh morality threatening him with dire consequences. Talking about Chance’s mother’s death, Scudder insinuates that nobody will support Chance in St. Cloud. “You can get in touch with Reverend Walker about it, although I’m afraid he won’t be likely to show much cordiality to you” (20). Scudder tries to scare Chance away from St. Cloud saying that everybody is against him. At the same time, Scudder says they are very loving to his deceased mother: “But people were very good to her, especially people who knew her in church, and the Reverend Walker was with her at the end” (20). Scudder is a spokesperson of conventional morality and he tries to warn off Chance. He has already branded Chance: “You’ve turned into a criminal degenerate” (22). Heavenly’s father Boss Finley and her brother Tom Finley, with their gangs are bent on destroying Chance. The atmosphere of lynching and castration looms large in the play. Boss Finley’s words, “A lot of people approve of
taking violent action against corruption” (67), show how the corrupt and hypocritical can charge others of immorality, and punish them. But Chance sees through the societal masks:

Sex-envy is what it is, and the revenge for sex-envy is a widespread disease that I have run into personally too often for me to doubt its existence or any manifestation. (81)

Chance too, like Val, is given an ultimatum to leave the place. But unlike Val he refuses. It is as if he feels himself getting ready for the sacrifice. As Carol tries to save Val, Alexandra tries to rescue Chance, but he refuses to be rescued. Boss Finley, the scourge of conventional morality in the play, sanctifies the action of persecution.

I got a mission that I hold sacred to perform in the Southland . . . to shield from pollution a blood that I think is not only sacred to me, but sacred to Him. (95)

Moreover, Boss perpetuates the image of himself as a great saviour, equating his presence on Easter as resurrection.

I seen a horrible thing on the campus of our great state University, which I built for the state. A hideous straw-stuffed effigy of myself, Tom Finley was
hung and set fire to in the main quadrangle of the college. . . . Today is Easter Sunday, and I’m in St. Cloud. (97)

The sacrificial element is hinted by Williams in the stage direction:

*Note: in this area it is very important that Chance’s attitude should be self-recognition but not self-pity — a sort of deathbed dignity and honesty apparent in it. . . . Both (Chance & Alexandra) are faced with castration, and in her heart she knows it. They sit side by side on the bed like passengers on a train sharing a bench.* (109)

The physical punishment meted out to many outcasts in Williams’s plays is inflicted upon them by the violent and the ignorant. Jabe’s coarse friends burn Val to death. The ladies, eager to ostracize Carol have low morals as evident in Vee’s words:

If some of you older women in the River country would set a better example there’d be more decent young people. . . . I mean that people who give drinkin’ parties an’ get so drunk they don’t know which is their husband and which is somebody else’s and people who
serve on the altar guild and still plays cards on Sundays. (253)

Sebastian is cut to pieces by Sicilian peasant boys. A blue-collar roughneck harasses and rapes Blanche. Chance is castrated by a young man in a Southern town. They immolate others, knowing that the usual operations of law do not apply to their unique crimes. The motives behind the actions of Williams’s outcasts are noble. They embody the principles of freedom that are commonly held as good. After a life of dissipation, Val tries to find a place where he can put down roots. Tom leaves his family in search of spiritual freedom. Catherine fights a losing battle, suffering lobotomy and institutionalization rather than lie about her cousin’s death. Having become addicted to the sweet company, Chance leaves St. Cloud in search of a place where his past will not be held against him. These outcasts are not searching for wealth or power, or for control over others, but they are motivated by a desire to be left alone. As representatives of the American dream they are unsuccessful, as they seek only a relief from the oppression of conventional morality.

Through his outcasts Williams struggles with the issue of fear. There is also a critique of experiences that the society provides, as individuals do not fit neatly into the moulds. The
conflict reveals the more difficult dichotomies of the internal American experience.

In Miller’s works, apart from a passive resistance, there is a powerful polemic against conventional morality. All My Sons enacts this polemic chiefly through the character of Chris, who is an intellectual with high ideals. He is different from the common run of mankind, for he is absolutely indifferent to social success. Kenneth Tynan observes:

Chris is a militant idealist ashamed of having survived the war; material possessions sicken him unless they have been purely and honorably acquired. (36)

His idealism comes into conflict with the social life around him. He expects to find fraternity and co-operation reigning supreme in the post-war world. His realisations that his father is guilty of the issue of cylinder heads and that he has made Steve a scapegoat, push Chris to turmoil for a while because his fervent love for his family and his father goes counter to his concern for his fellowmen. Keller’s words that tell him that he does business for Chris makes him blaze in moral anger.
Chris: where do you live, where have you come from? For me! I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of the goddam business? Is that as far as your mind can see, the business? What the hell do you mean, you did it for me? Don’t you have a country? Don’t you live in the world? What the hell are you? You’re not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do to you? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth, what must I do? (115-116)

For sometime Chris lacks the guts to march his father to jail, even when he figures out the enormity of his father’s crime. When Chris leaves his house for some time, Kate opens her heart to Jim. Jim’s words rightly explain the predicament of outcasts, including himself:

Kate: I didn’t think it would be such a shock.

Jim: Chris would never know how to live with a thing like that. It takes certain talent for lying. You have it, and I do. But not him.

Kate: what do you mean? He’s not coming back?
Jim: Oh, no, he’ll come back. We all come back, Kate. These private little revolutions always die. The compromise is always made in a peculiar way.

Kate: Just as long as he comes back.

Jim: I wish he wouldn’t Kate. One year I simply took off, went to New Orleans; for two months I lived on banana and milk, and studied a certain disease. It was beautiful. And then she came, and she cried. And I went back home with her. And now I live in the usual darkness; I can’t find myself; it’s even hard sometimes to remember the kind of man I wanted to be.

(118)

Chris confesses that he has been made yellow by his love for his family. By sending his father to jail, he cannot redress the harm done to the society.

Chris: What? Do I raise the dead when I put him behind the bars? Then what’ll I do it for? We used to shoot a man who acted like a dog, but honor was real there, you were protecting something. But here? This is the land of the great big dogs, you don’t love a man here, you eat him! That’s the principle; the only one we live by – it just happened to kill a few people this
time, that’s all. The world’s that way, how can I take it on him? What sense does that make? This is a zoo, a zoo! (124)

However, Larry’s last letter informing Ann of the suicidal mission he is going to undertake to make amends for his father’s crime clears Chris’ vision. He is prepared to take his father to jail and asserts his stand when Kate tells him that his father is sorry for the act.

Chris: Then what was Larry to you? A stone fell into the water? It’s not enough for him to be sorry. Larry didn’t kill himself to make you and dad sorry.

Kate: what more can we be!

Chris: You can be better! Once and for all you can know there’s a universe of people outside and you’re responsible to it, and unless you know that, you threw away your son because that’s why he died. (127-128)

The trigger of the polemic against conventional morality, however, is Larry. He views the dead pilots as his brothers, and makes up his mind to end his life to expiate his father’s sin. George, the son of Steve also has a strong voice against the morality around. Like his father, he too would “like to take
everyman who made money in the war and put him up against a wall” (109).

In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy is an outcast of the conventional morality. The original promise of the American dream of success as represented in the boy parables of Horatio Alger is that, enterprise, courage, and hard work are the keys to success. But this has been proved wrong by the social parameters with its stiff and maddening competition. A man is useful and employable only till he earns profits to an establishment. His security and well-being are either ignored or given secondary treatment. Instead of the ideals of hard work and courage, there is salesmanship. Salesmanship implies a certain element of fraud: the ability to put over or sell a commodity regardless of its intrinsic usefulness. The objective of salesmanship is to make a deal and to earn profit. Consequently selling becomes a mechanical act and human beings have to become commodities. Willy has to sell his personality. He has to give up his real face and wear a mask of an attractive, handsome, smiling man. It is only his commercial face with a commercial smile and a commercial aura of the well-liked, smoothly adjusted, “oily cog” in the machine of the sale system that matters. Willy, to his embarrassment, has realized his limitations:
I’m fat. I’m very foolish to look at, Linda. I didn’t tell you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F. H Stewarts, a salesman I know, as I was going to see the buyer, I heard him say something about walrus. And I — cracked him right across the face. I won’t take that. I won’t take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that. (29)

To earn, Willy takes, and has to work for more hours than the others to make a sale.

But I gotta beat it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men — I don’t know — they do it easier. I don’t know why — I can’t stop myself — I talk too much. A man oughta come in with a few words. One thing about Charley. He’s a man of few words, and they respect him. (28)

In his old age, while expecting a desk job and a hike in salary, Willy is fired.

The conventional sexual codes also have contributed to the ruin of Willy. As a teenager, Biff surprises his father in a clandestine affair, and stunned by the shattering revelation of a fallen idol, Biff hysterically brands Willy a fake and a liar.
This creates a sense of guilt in Willy which makes him an outcast.

Willy systematically instills his beliefs into Biff and Happy. So they too confront similar problems like their father. The aimless existence of Biff, despite being a promising lad in the school, shows that he is an outcast, like his father. Happy becomes a frustrated gigolo. He does not even understand why his life has been such a hopeless one.

Both the passive resistance to and the polemic against conventional morality are seen in The Crucible. The character of Proctor undertakes a vehement attack on the social evil which forms the basic plot of the play. The trajectory of witch-hunt manifests the social evil which has grown to an extent, where nothing is possible except a sudden outburst. Proctor leads the polemic against witch-hunt until he himself gets accused. By that time the dominant ideology has acquired power that cannot be checked by counter measures. Therefore, towards the end, there comes up an inevitable mode of sacrifice. Those prosecuted for witchcraft refuse to confess and sacrifice their lives as outcasts.

When the first cry of witchcraft is heard in Salem, Proctor understands that it is naughtiness on the part of the girls. He is not aware of the impending doom. On his visit to Betty, the
daughter of Reverend Parris, he mocks at the idea of witchcraft. Moreover, Proctor attacks the worldliness of Parris. According to Proctor, Parris is concerned with the title deed of the Minister’s house, the salary, the firewood, the insubordination of some people and above all the devil and hell. Piety, good counsel, uprightness and tolerance are unknown to Parris. His sermons deal more with devil and hell than with god and heaven. In hunting down the victims Parris is utterly ruthless and determined, always ready at the trial to discredit adverse witnesses and eager to encourage Danforth in his pride. Proctor, in the first part of the play courageously unleashes tirades against Parris:

    Proctor; Mr. Parris, you are the first minister ever did demand the deed to this house.

    Parris: Man! Don’t a minister deserve a house to live in?

    Proctor: To live in - Yes. But to ask ownership is like you shall own the meeting-house itself; the last meeting I were at, you spoke so long on title deeds and mortgages I thought it were an auction . . . .

    Parris: There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell is burning.
Proctor: Can we speak one minute without we land in Hell is burning... Can we speak one minute without we land in Hell again? I am sick of Hell! (246)

The attack against Parris is in fact against the dominant power structures. During Reverend Hale’s visit to the house, Proctor has no hesitation to counter the arguments of the former and expose the degeneration that has set in Salem:

Proctor: I never knew until tonight that the world is gone daft with this nonsense.

Hale: Nonsense! Mister, I have myself examined Tituba, Sarah Good, and numerous others that have confessed to dealing with the devil. They have confessed it.

Proctor: And why not, if they must hang for denying it? There are them that will swear to anything before they’ll hang; have you never thought of that? (275)

Proctor’s words to Hale as Elizabeth is arrested and taken away, form an integral part of the polemic against injustice in the society.

Proctor: why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? I’ll tell you what’s walking in Salem - vengeance is walking in Salem. We are what we always were in
Salem, but now little crazy children are jangling the keys of kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law!

(281)

Despite proctor's efforts to counter injustice and bigotry of their society in the court of Danforth, the battle is lost. Proctor and others, though dumbfounded by helplessness, do not make false confessions to save their lives. Instead, they uphold their righteousness by clinging to their steadfast belief in god and their conscience. They too are outcasts of conventional morality.

That the witch-hunt of Salem has reference to a similar "witch-hunt" in the American society in the 1950s is apparent. Social and political morality of the 1950s is parodied in the play. In the introduction Miller writes:

It was not only the rise of "McCarthyism" that moved me, but something which seemed more weird and mysterious. It was the fact that a political, objective, knowledgeable campaign from the far right was capable of creating not only terror, but a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming a holy resonance. The wonder of it all struck me that so practical and picayune a cause carried forward by such manifestly ridiculous men,
should be capable of paralyzing thought itself, and worse, causing to billow up such persuasive clouds of “mysterious” feelings within people. It was as though the whole country had been born anew, without a memory even of certain elemental decencies which a year or two no one would have imagined could be altered, let alone forgotten (Miller Plays: One, 39)

There is no denying the fact that the matrix of the polemic against conventional morality seen in The Crucible is the America of the 1950s. Miller’s words allude to this:

I saw forming a kind of interior mechanism of confession and forgiveness of sins which until now had not been rightly categorized as sins. New sins were accepted into a new orthodoxy, quite as though they had been there since the beginning of time. Above all, above all horrors, I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter but one of state administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so. (40)

The horror and ruthlessness of “McCarthyism” get parodied in The Crucible. Miller points to this aspect in his introduction to the play.
I recall, almost as in a dream, how Rebecca Nurse, a pious and universally respected woman of great age, was literally taken by force from her sick bed and ferociously cross examined. No human weakness could be displayed without the prosecution’s stabbing into it with greater fury. The most potent contradictions, almost laughable in that day, were overridden with warnings not to repeat their mention. There was sadism here that was breath-taking. (43)

Rebecca Nurse is presented as a comfortable, calming and peacemaking influence in Act I, and as a rock of confidence and truth in the last scene. Her significance, however, lies in her reputation. She is kept throughout the play as a representative martyr, whom everybody knows to be absolutely good and incorruptible. As such, she knows the extremes to which the witch-hunters will go and their total moral blindness. Even before awakening to the truth, Hale exclaims: “If Rebecca Nurse is tainted, then nothing’s left to stop the whole green world from burning” (Crucible 277), and it is the signing of her death sentence which opens his eyes.

Giles is a good hearted and garrulous old man, who is always involved in litigation. Towards the end of the play, he emerges heroic as the tormentors of the State torture him by
putting weight on his chest to extract false confession. Elizabeth narrates this shocking, immoral scene:

He were not hanged. He would not answer aye or nay to his indictment; for if he denied the charge they’d hang him surely, and auction out his property. So he stand[s] mute, and died Christian under the law . . . great stones they lay upon his chest until he plead aye or nay, with a tender smile for the old man. They say he give[s] them but two words. “More weight,” he says. And died. (322)

Gile Corey shows that a very ordinary and fallible man can have the courage to refuse to be bullied by a dictatorial regime. Proctor, Rebecca and Corey see that they are both the warriors in the polemic against conventional morality, and outcasts of this morality. In his guilt and shame of having once had sexual relation with Abigail also Proctor is an outcast.

Kenneth and Gus in A Memory of Two Mondays at once have a share in the polemic, yet are outcasts. All the other characters are outcasts. Kenneth strikes an ironic note when he exclaims: “Sending these two grimy axles out into the green countryside?” (340). He is irritated at the appallingly dirty conditions of the warehouse: “Larry, don’t you suppose a word
might be passed to Mr. Eagle about the dust? It’s raining dust from the ceiling!” (344). He knows that he has ended up as an outcast destined to be in the warehouse for ever.

Kenneth: The only trouble is there’s no jobs except for the guard in the insane asylum. And that’d be a nervous place to work, I think.

Bert: It might be interesting, though.

Kenneth: I suppose it might. . . . But it’s sixteen hundred a year, Bert, and I have a feeling I’d never dare leave it, y’ know? And I’m not ready for the last job yet, I think. I don’t want nothing to be the last, yet. Still and all. (360)

Though Gus argues against the degeneration around, he also ends up as an outcast. The warehouse keeps the outcasts of the society. They go on living their insufficient, inadequate lives without any promises and hopes. Except for the boss, and Bert who leaves for further study, all the characters in the play are outcasts of the industrial, capitalist morality.

D. Class Struggle

Many a character of Williams finds himself/herself as a square peg in a round hole in life. This aspect gets a greater and more profound dimension when the Southern born Williams’s
anxieties aroused by the existence of an industrial working class and an urban proletariat are analysed. Williams draws on the myth of the Old South, its past glorious times, its fall, and the lamentation and struggle after the fall. He finds that the South fell not because the Confederacy was defeated in the Civil war, but because of the indulgence of the Southerners. He is preoccupied with the character pattern of the one-time Southerner – a delicate, sensitive person – struggling in the “new world,” pitted against its cruel, harsh ways. Hence most of Williams’s struggling characters are Southern born. Roger Boxill identifies features of two archetypal characters in the work of Williams – “the wanderer” and the “faded belle.” Both the archetypes are Southern born, of good, even aristocratic, lineage and of sensitive mental frame (35). The decline of the Williams family from prominence among the early settlers of Tennessee mirrors the fate of the South. This explains why the theme of the humbled Southerner evoking pity recurs in Williams.

Intense, internally extenuating circumstances can be discerned behind the behaviour of Williams’s main characters. The absence of financial support to make them float on the surface of the middle class layer invites much of the pity and regard that Williams’s characters draw from the spectators. Tom’s wander-lust is painful because his family is poor and the
abandoning of his mother and sister will make them destitutes. Amanda creates a fantastic illusion of her family as solidly middle class. Had they truly been middle class, however, Tom’s disappearance would not have created such misery. Chance’s background - he comes from a poor family that encourage him to associate with his wealthier neighbours - drives him to prostitution as a means of financing his affair with Heavenly, whose family is wealthy. Blanche too finds it very difficult to live in dignity. She is bankrupt when she comes to her sister. She can hardly live as a genteel lady.

However, it is the Southern born young man or woman who ultimately suffers in Williams. Amanda, in The Glass Menagerie, clings desperately to her Southern aristocratic lineage. In the Blue Mountains, during her girlhood, she was bubbling with vitality and vigour. She had seventeen gentlemen callers on a single day, had won the cake walk twice at Sunset Hill, and had gone to the Governor’s Ball in Jackson. Her reminiscences of the happy days, evoked again and again in the play function as a foil to her present state of faded glory. Her daughter is a cripple and an introvert, with no gentleman callers, with no dance performances, with nothing of the vigour and vitality of the youth and aristocracy. They have to depend on the sixty-five dollars salary of Tom, who works in a warehouse. They have no
estate and plantation, but have to satisfy themselves in an apartment,

[which] is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as Warty growths in over-crowded urban centers of lower middle class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism. (233)

It is a pity that they are not able to live in “southern,” “superior,” style, but have to satisfy themselves as part of the “interfused mass of automatism.” Tom, a “southern youth,” is a poet destined to work in a shoe company where the co-workers are of “ordinary” stature. This is revealed in Tom’s words:

And while the other boys in the warehouse regarded me with suspicious hostility, Jim took a humorous attitude towards me. Gradually, his attitude affected the others, their hostility wore off and they also began to smile at me as people smile at an oddly fashioned dog who trots across their path at some distance. (274)
Tom is eager to say that he is regarded with “suspicious hostility,” because he is different from them and “superior” to them. He takes secret pleasure when they call him “oddly fashioned.”

Blanche, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, considers herself “superior” to others as she is a Southern-born. When she arrives in the two-room Kowalski apartment, she can hardly believe that her sister lives in such “poor” conditions. Blanche has brought “a trunk full of clothes,” and her actions involve drinking, dimming lights, emerging from hot baths, and seeking compliments about her appearance. But it is mainly through her dialogue that Blanche underlines her manor-born superiority. She introduces cultural references into the French Quarter dwelling. She recognizes that the lines on Mitch’s cigarette case belong to a sonnet by Mrs. Browning; she has taught American literature, and Whitman. She calls the newspaper boy a young prince out of the *Arabian Nights*, and Mitch her Rosenkavalier, Armand and Samson. She, like Amanda, lives in the shade of memory of an aristocratic, chivalrous past. Williams contrasts this with the world of Stanley, in blue clothes, appearing as the scourge of the “new world.” Williams’s stage directions also point to this effect:
Stella comes out on the first floor landing, a gentle young woman, about twenty five, and of a background obviously quite different from her husband’s. (116)

When Blanche reaches Elysian Fields, she is disgusted with the place. “Her expression is one of shocked disbelief.” And again, “Her appearance is incongruous to this setting” (117).

Blanche appears as a dispossessed gentlewoman from the aristocratic and pastoral South, yielding to her final degradation in the progressive and industrial North. The Grim Reaper has made a camp on the steps of their house Belle Reve before she loses it completely. Stanley, according to Blanche, is of “low” birth and nature, which she cannot stand. However she hints that they might need to mix their blood with people like Stanley, so that their next generations can thrive. This is the predicament of all who belong to the “superior” South.

Stella has changed herself without resistance. But Blanche clings to her genteel “superiority” and ultimately she stands exposed. Blanche’s words to Stella expressing how “common” Stanley is, reveal this conflict within her:

You can’t have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just suppose that any part of a
gentleman’s in his nature! Not one particle, no! oh, if he was just ordinary! Just plain – but good and wholesome, but no. There’s something downright bestial-about him. (163)

Williams’s main interest and thrust, in working out Blanche as a pathetic character invoking pity, uncover his position is this class conflict.

Val too has some claim to superiority. He spent his childhood on Witch’s Bayou, where he survived alone by hunting and fishing. Though his family was aristocratic and enjoyed high status, it “scattered like feathers.” At fifteen, he leaves the place and reaches New Orleans. It is there that he gets corrupted. Almost all the characters in Orpheus Descending are Southern. Concentrating exclusively on the Southern scenario again uncovers Williams’s position. However, Williams is concerned with the fate of the “high” and “wild” Val and the aristocratic, lonely Lady Torrance.

Sebastian in Suddenly Last Summer is a Southerner, and an aristocrat, who, in search of satisfaction in his life, comes into contact and conflict with the “low” people. In this conflict Sebastian loses. It is the loss and the fate of Sebastian that is of primary importance to Williams. Williams’s sketch of Catherine and her mother and brother vying for Mrs.
Venable’s riches, even at the cost of losing Catherine, can be seen as an example of class struggle. However, the greater stress is given to the conflict between Sebastian and the starving children. Towards the end of the play, Catherine narrates her “vision” of Sebastian’s death at an alien shore. Catherine sees the conflict in raw form. There are naked children along the beach and they come to the fence near the table, asking for bread. Sebastian responds harshly: “Don’t look at those little monsters. Beggars are a social disease in this city” (415). The waiters try to beat them away. But the children begin to play for them, beating on tin cans strung together, which makes a noise like “Oompa Oompa.” As Sebastian comes out, the children follow him, kill him, and cannibalize him. “They had torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those gobbling fierce little empty black mouth of theirs” (422).

As in Orpheus Descending, in Sweet Bird of Youth also, the majority of characters are of South. Alexandra’s words are meant to heighten the Southern superiority of Chance.

You were well born, weren’t you? Born of good Southern stock, in genteel traditions, with just one disadvantage, a laurel wreath on your forehead, given too early, without enough effort to earn it. . . . (40)
Chance’s struggle, it is to be understood, becomes greater and more profound as he is born of “good” southern stock. The conflict between the classes comes to the forefront where Chance tells Tom Finley about the latter’s father:

Give your father that message. This is my town. I was born in St. Cloud, not him. He was just called here. He was just called down from the hills to preach hate. I was born here to make love. Tell him about that difference between him and me, and ask him which he thinks has more right to stay here. (90)

In the plays of Miller, class struggle is not as apparent as in the plays of Williams. Yet this ideologeme is not strictly absent either. Keller of All My Sons is a man who rose from rags to riches. His crime stems from his ambition to climb up the social ladder. He accepts the ruthless American value system as his guiding principle as he aspires to go up in the social hierarchy. Nothing else pulls the chords of his conscience. Even after many years since the conviction of Steve in the crime, Keller is least bothered to enquire about the social implications of his crime. Instead he lives a life of the upper strata of the society, celebrating inwardly his success and will power.
In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy’s dreams and visions come up from a lack - his inability to rise in social position. He has always been guided by his aspirations which are beyond his grasp. His conversation with his little sons at the beginning of the play reveals this:

Willy: Tell you a secret, boys. Don’t breathe to a soul. Someday I’ll have my own business, and I’ll never have to leave home anymore.

Happy: Like Uncle Charley, heh?

Willy: Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not liked. He’s liked, but he’s not well liked.

Biff: Where’d you go this time, Dad?

Willy: Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the mayor.

Biff: The Mayor of Providence!

Willy: He was sitting in the hotel lobby.

Biff: what’d he say?

Willy: He said, “Morning”! And I said, “you get a fine city here, Mayor,” and then he had coffee with me. (23)
Willy’s situation makes him intolerant to people who belong to a class lower than that of his. He does not tolerate the large number of poor workers living in apartments in his neighborhood:

Willy: The way they breed us here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks.

Linda: We should have bought the land next door.

Willy: The street is lined with cars. There’s not a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. The grass don’t grow any more, you can’t raise a carrot in the backyard. They should have a law against apartment houses. . . . There is more people! That’s what’s ruining this country! Population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening! Smell and stink from that apartment house! And another one on the other side. How can they whip cheese? (17)

Willy’s superior air leads him to grave errors in assessing people. Willy finds Charley and his son ludicrous. They are not “game players.” When Linda says that Bernard is right about Biff’s lapses, Willy explodes and calls Bernard a “worm” and says that he is “anemic.” However towards the end of the play Bernard turns out to be something more than a worm - a
successful lawyer of the Supreme Court, and Charley, a successful business man; whereas Willy and his sons fail miserably.

Willy’s high ambition to climb to the upper class is metaphorically presented through his shadowy fantasy figure, Ben. He is the other self of Willy, although he reportedly is his elder brother. Ben is a symbol of success, and he seems to possess no time for personal relations, nor does he seem to indulge in emotions.

Though there is the presumption of the equity principle among all the land-owning farmers in The Crucible, the theme of the class struggle runs overtly along the development of the plot. Thomas Putnam is an unscrupulous land owner who owns a whole stretch of land in Salem. He is involved in the ruthless enterprise of taking possession, by hook or crook, of the lands of the other farmers. Being the richest man in the area, Putnam holds immense power in the society. He urges Parris into the witch-hunt with the hidden objective of possessing the land of others. The author’s remarks in the notes to the play indicate this:

So it is not surprising to find that so many accusations against people are in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam, or that his name is often found as
witness corroborating the supernatural testimony, or that his daughter led the crying-out at the most opportune junctures of the trial. . . . (234-235)

He has no scruples about using his daughter to cry witchcraft in order to denounce men whose lands he covets. In this regard the conflict in the whole plot of the play owes much to property and class struggle. Some of the girls, including Abigail, Mary, Susanne, and Mercy, who started the cry of witchcraft in Salem are all servant girls, consciously or unconsciously pressing on the land-owning-class.

As Jameson states, the ideologemes are not reproduced and restructured to form plots and character, rather they get in to the unconscious of the aesthetic act, and inform it. A political interpretation seeks to extract the ideologemes that have gone into the composition of the symbolic act and thus tries to go beneath the surface.