Chapter V

Conclusion

Man always identifies himself in relation with his family, friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbours, environment, and society in large. He cannot exist as a unique individual without these associations. These bonds provide him the very essence of his ‘being’/‘self’. Whenever these bonds lose their hold, crisis and conflicts emerge in their lives. They struggle to hold back, but they miserably fail in their attempts due to both internal and external factors. As a result, the tragic heroes of Miller and O’Neill evoke the classical effect of ‘Catharsis’ in the minds of the readers/audience.

Miller in Sons, Salesman and Crucible has dramatized the individual psychology. His heroes, sometimes, tend to look like pathetic victims of cruel social systems. In each play, Miller tries to bring out that moment of commitment in the hero’s character, when he differentiates himself from every other man. His characters are identified with the significant questions of choice and responsibility, love and survival, and separateness and togetherness. They have a conflict with the society and within themselves. It turns the fate of an individual into an epitome of the fate of mankind. Joe, Loman, Proctor, Eddie are all men of strong passions. They all suffer too. Loman suffers mentally and emotionally. Proctor is viewed as a victim of an evil world. Carbone’s anguish and suffering are unbearable. They are inevitably driven to madness. Their identity is marred and crushed. They are fragmented and pitted against all odds. Their image is tarnished.
Miller is mainly concerned with an image of a man/woman in his plays. Each of his characters has different roles to play and they have to assume an identity of their own. The fear or phobia about their identity in different context drives them to be on the verge of madness as he/she has little chances to establish the identity. Keller, Loman, and Proctor are stripped off their identity to become anchorless souls which drift in an ever roaring and oscillating existence. They turn out to be failures or doomed creatures. Commenting on the identity crisis in Miller’s plays, Weales in “Arthur Miller’s Shifting Image of Man” says:

The implication is that the individual has little choice—that he can conform and be destroyed, as Joe Keller and Willy Loman are, or that he can refuse to conform and be destroyed, as John Proctor and Eddie Carbone are. Despite the blackness of this description, the plays are not pessimistic, because inherent in them is a kind of vague faith in man’s suspicion that the individual may finally be able to retain his integrity. This possibility appears, most conventionally, in the platitudes of crisis, the avenging idealist of All My Sons, and in the kind of death John Proctor dies in The Crucible. In A View from the Bridge, it lies outside the action of the play, in Miller’s attempt, speaking through the narrator Alfieri, to engraft a ritual purity on Eddie: “not purely good, but himself purely”. (135-136)

As a dramatist, Miller is not simply realistic or naturalistic. His best theatrical devices belong to the expressionistic school although his interest in society and social problems makes him a realist-naturalist. He is a social dramatist. However, his chief interest always
lies in persons rather than social problems or ideas. Miller has dramatized the social reality in *Sons* by showing how the obsession with making money in complete disregard of one's responsibility to society and country brings about destruction. Joe, an industrialist, motivated by his obsession with success and greed, sells over a hundred defective cylinders to the U.S. Air Force during the Second World War because of which twenty one pilots of the U.S. Air Force are traitorously killed. He makes money in this bargain but blames Deever, his manager and neighbour, who is tried and sentenced. When censured by his younger son, Chris, he confesses that he did it to make his business a success. When the final revelation is made by Ann Deever - a letter written by Larry, Keller's elder son, supposedly missing in the war - Larry commits suicide because he cannot face the world.

In *Salesman*, Miller has dramatized the tragic predicament of a man in a bourgeois society, who has fallen a victim to the "myth of success". Loman, an American salesman, is motivated by the dream of success and in pursuit of his goal ignores reality. Not only does he waste his life vainly, but he also brings up his two sons, Biff and Happy, with the same illusory ideal. Ultimately, he kills himself to provide economic security for his children through insurance money. He proves himself to be as much a part of the bourgeois racket as his oppressors. Miller's critique of bourgeois exploitation becomes a reaffirmation of the bourgeois system. Though O'Neill's salesman, Hickey, in *Cometh*, like Loman, also practises deception on his own self and on others, the mode of their punishment is somewhat different. While Hickey goes to the electric chair for murder, Loman commits suicide. It is because their identity is blotted and their souls are bruised.
In *Fall*, Miller has exposed the reality of personal betrayal, political repression, racial prejudice, and economic depression. He shows how McCarthyism is used to suppress leftists in the United States of America. Hitler's concentration camps symbolized in a blasted stone tower, reveal the atrocities committed on the citizens, leftists and Jews. In *Incident at Vichy*, the historical event of the execution of the Jewish detainees at Vichy (France) by the Nazis in 1942 has been realistically dramatized. In *The Price*, the playwright has drawn a contrast between the values of base materialism and humanism in the form of a confrontation between two brothers, Walter Franz and Victor Franz. Walter, the elder one, like O'Neill's archetypal character 'the businessman' is shrewd, intelligent, self-assured and a manipulator, whereas Victor, the younger, like O'Neill's archetypal character 'the poet' is modest, unassuming and naive. Walter, motivated by his obsession with success has become a very successful surgeon but is alienated from his family. Victor enjoys the fruits of his labour and is equally rewarded with a loving wife and a promising son. Like O'Neill, Miller exposes the tragedy of success in the American bourgeois environment. But while O'Neill's critique becomes an eloquent linguistic and emotional challenge to ponder more deeply on the socio-economic causes of human alienation, Miller's exposure focuses on the psycho-social consequences of the bourgeois system without carrying the emotional upsurge to the point of revolt and rebellion against the entire degrading social system. Keller’s crime has far wider repercussions in that society of which he is a member. Proctor’s private guilt actually precipitates the whole Salem hysteria and his own fate is not sealed off from that of others. Similarly, Eddie’s act of informing spawns forth a disharmony in the longshoremen community and leads to social fission. However, Keller and Loman are
identical as they become misfits in their society. Comparing Keller and Loman, Weales in “Arthur Miller’s Shifting Image of Man” says:

Joe Keller and Willy Loman are both consenting victims, men who attach themselves to images which their society has created and called good. The hero of Miller’s next play, The Crucible, refuses to accept the label that his society tries to force on him. John Proctor dies at the end—and his society kills him—but his death is a romantic one, a kind of triumph, an affirmation of the individual. It may be that Proctor's decision to hang rather than to confess grew out of Miller's involvement in the immediate political situation from which The Crucible was drawn. It was the McCarthy era, when so many writers and performers—moved by fear or economic necessity or a genuine break with their ideological past-stepped forward to confess their political sins and to name their fellow sinners. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Miller chose a hero who could say no. And yet the playwright was not interested in a simple propaganda play. (134)

Miller’s Fall is a dramatic revelation of a man that man is born after the fall of man. In fact, it is to be accepted that all of Miller’s heroes have a tremendous sense of guilt. They never really acknowledge that the source of guilt is in themselves, because they do not know themselves and therefore do not know their guilt, even though they are destroyed by it. Miller called the play a trial play but Corrigan in “An Introduction” : The Achievement of Arthur Miller calls it a play “about commitment and choice” (11)
Each of the plays written by Miller is a judgement of man’s failure to maintain a viable connection with his surrounding world because he does not know himself. Miller’s protagonists belong to a strange world. His protagonists are unimaginative, inarticulate and physically nondescript. Their roles as father and husband are important to them. They want to love and to be loved but they are incapable of either giving or receiving love. They are haunted by aspirations toward a joy in life that their humdrum spirit is always unable to realize. They have a negative characteristic in deed and word. They may struggle for their name, to be themselves in difficult situations in what may seem to be an inimical world. The world of Miller’s plays is a hermetic one, one in which none of life’s mysteries have been allowed to intrude. One of the most significant discoveries O’Neill makes about reality is of a fundamental irony that makes life tragic. He recognizes the fact that man’s intent is generally at variance with what he does. And the knowledge of this gulf between the ideal and the actual, the dream and the reality forms the very core of tragic experience. In Miller’s plays, the quest for identity becomes a search for identity, which coupled with a sense of guilt results in the recognition that the dream of perfection is hopeless.

**The Misfits**, a short story that later became a screenplay, shows the hopelessness of the dream in the significant metaphor of the misfit. The three cowboys, although they are running from unfortunate pasts, are rootless because of their contempt for steady and settled life. The irony of these outcasts is that whereas open spaces become their ideal of freedom, they trap wild horses from these open spaces to sell them for food. Their exertions to bring about the ‘fall’ of the stallion symbolize the force of society to bring them (the cowboys) to their knees. They do to the horses what society does to them.
Because the horses represent what cowboys seek, their aggressiveness turns back on themselves so that their dream of freedom becomes self-destructive. The last scene of the wild horses leaping in the air and “striking at the sky” in their captivity, underlines the paradox of the cowboys’ lives. That is, their defiance of, and their dependence on society. But the dream of freedom will continue in exploring other regions till the wild horses are taken. Then, perhaps, the dream will die, or be transferred to another hopeless quest.

The strongest emphasis on the pursuit of dreams is in Salesman which is a play about dreams. Even the sets have a dream like quality. The dream as a quest for paradise is embodied in Loman who dreams two versions of the American dream: “the business-urban success dream” in which Loman sees himself as a successful-tycoon, and “the rural-agrarian dream” which brings forth Loman’s romantic-escapist notions of a life of communion with nature. For the success dream, Loman’s models are Singleman (the perfect ex-salesman), Charley (the friendly neighbour), and Ben. Ben following the Horatio Alger formula suddenly becomes rich.

Loman’s rural-agrarian dream is a sort of safety valve to withdraw from the harsh realities of failure in the pursuit of the success dream. This second dream is something to fall back upon in moments of great self-commiseration. It is indicated by the melody of grass and trees and horizon, and by Loman’s vision of a hammock between two elm trees. The end shows that both of Loman’s dreams personify the tension between despair and hope that is inherent in the quest for Eden. Taken individually, the two dreams are equally hopeless as far as Loman is concerned. They provide meaning in his life because he can balance one dream against the other. Miller sees in Loman the struggle to pursue
both the dreams at the same time. And his failure in one (‘success’ dream) leads to his failure in the other. It is difficult to agree with the view that Miller’s play is confused because of his failure to commit himself clearly to one of the two dreams of American culture embodied in Loman. Miller as an artist is dealing with the tragic consequences of failure and guilt, rather than making a statement of sociological import. Further the dreams as dramatic elements do not call for approval or disapproval (although the denunciation of the ‘success’ dream seems quite obvious). They are instruments to show the inner life of an underdog who aspires to be greater than himself.

Conflict, which is the soul of tragedy, is present in each play. It invariably results from a struggle between the individual and the society. Sometimes this conflict is external and directly in the forefront in the manner of a traditional tragedy as in Crucible, but more often it is reflected through the psychological tension in the hero’s mind as in Salesman, Bridge, and Fall. The tragic feeling is aroused when the hero is called upon to face the challenge which he cannot find it in himself to walk away from or turn his back on. The tragic status of the hero is usually determined by how well he meets this challenge.

In each play, Miller tries to bring out that moment of commitment in the hero’s character when he differentiates himself from every other man, that moment when out of a sky full of stars, he fixes on one star. His characters may lack the nobler or heroic qualities of the Greek and Elizabethan heroes and his themes may seem too banal or commonplace, but significant questions of choice and responsibility, love and survival, separateness and togetherness always emerge from the central conflict in each play. It turns the fate of the individual into an epitome of the fate of mankind, which in turn,
raises his social plays into tragedies. In fact, Miller combines some of the elements of traditional tragedy with those of the modern one so well that it gives him a unique place among the twentieth century tragic playwrights. For instance, his heroes, unlike the traditional tragic heroes, are not big or great people, but in matters of passions like love and jealousy, they are not too different from them. Be it Keller or Loman, Proctor or Carbone, Quentin or Victor, they are all men of strong passions.

Suffering, the second important feature of tragedy, is also found in Miller’s plays. As in all good traditional tragedies, this suffering is mostly inward or psychological rather than physical. Willy, like Lear, suffers mentally and emotionally; Proctor, confronting an evil world, reminds one of Prince Hamlet in this suffering; similarly, Carbone’s anguish and suffering bring to mind the suffering of Phaedra. Where there is no open depiction of suffering, one has an overwhelming feeling of some terrible loss or a profound sense of waste as in Fall and in the Price. Sons is an exception where the hero’s suffering is not fully brought out. To that extent, the play is comparatively weaker as a tragedy.

The third important common factor in all these tragedies is irony, which Miller employs with a masterly touch. The most potential source of tragic irony is the divergence between the heroes’ ambitions and their accomplishments to identify themselves in the world. Keller in Sons aspires to amass a lot of wealth and bequeath a rich business to his sons. He cares for his sons but the irony is that his sons prove instrumental in his punishment. In Salesman, the tragic irony in Loman’s case is that he becomes a victim of his own success-dream. In trying to be a successful salesman like Singleman, he even fails to be a successful father like Charley. The irony in Crucible is
that Proctor has the reputation of being the wisest and most intelligent of all the people of Salem and fights heroically against evil, yet he becomes the cause of all the trouble since he has the taint upon him. Similarly, in \textbf{Bridge}, Eddie’s excess love for the niece makes Eddie irrational and blind and he breaks the vital law of corporate living which determines his existence in the society. Miller’s \textbf{Bridge} is about Eddie’s subjective and objective existence. In fact, Miller has provided the psycho-sexual motivation to bring about the desired change. Eddie is placed in a social context. He is to be judged in relation to the standards and social code of the world which he inhabits. He involves himself in an anti-social act, which is horrible and monstrous. In \textbf{Fall} and in \textbf{The Price} too, irony unveils the tragic situation and provides richness to the plays.

The awakening of the identity of tragic hero is yet another vital element in tragedy. Normally, experience leads to awakening. It comes as a culmination of suffering. But in Miller it is not always so. In some of his plays the awakening comes as a prelude to suffering. For instance, in the case of Quentin in \textbf{Fall}, the tragic awakening comes first and what follows is a whole process of intense mental torture and suffering. The same is true of \textbf{The Price} as well. In the case of \textbf{Salesman}, the awakening is brought about in a highly dramatic manner in the form of a discovery by Loman. Sometimes, the awakening is simply suggested by an action of the hero as in the case of Carbone who dies in his wife’s arms and indirectly accepts his error. The most important of them all being the concept of social drama envisaged and practised by him. It is the concept of wholeness and seeks to account for the “total condition of man”. Miller believes that the aim of drama is ‘something far wider than a purely private examination of individuality for its own sake. He attempts to deal with more and more of the “whole man”, not either
his subjective or social life alone. The social matters in his plays are inseparable from the subjective psychological matters. In this, he resembles the Greek playwrights who are unable to conceive of man or anything else except as a whole. The fate of Oedipus, for instance, is interlinked with that of the people of Thebes. His subjective existence cannot be isolated from his social existence. Similarly, Antigone’s personal relationship with her dead brother brings her into one of the most violent conflicts with the State. Her subjective as well as social life is made the subject of treatment in Sophocles’ masterpiece. The same is true of Keller, Proctor and Carbone. Keller’s crime has far wider repercussions in that society of which he is a member. Proctor’s private guilt actually precipitates the whole Salem hysteria and his own fate is not sealed off from that of others. Similarly, Eddie’s act of informing spawns forth a disharmony in the longshoremen community and leads to social fission. Despite some very important differences of subject and technique, the Greek tragedies and those of Miller are vitally similar; their chief character is social.

Besides, in the “family-social complex” of his plays, the family is identified as a prism to reflect the larger social world and its pressures. The blending of the ‘social’ with the ‘familial’ helps in two ways. First, it helps him transcend the living room reality and his characters are seen confronting the non-familial or openly social challenges and forces. Secondly, since the forces which destroy the lives of his tragic protagonists are uncontrollable and lie outside the bounds of reason and justice, it helps raise his social plays into tragedies. The tragic heroes identify themselves to reckon with social forces that can neither be fully understood nor overcome by rational prudence. This is important in view of the fact that where the causes of disaster are temporal or remediable, one may
have serious drama but no tragedy at all. No socio-economic reforms could have altered Loman’s fate, no more pliant laws could have resolved Proctor’s dilemma, no psychiatric therapy could have saved Carbone; a third marriage with Holga would not exonerate Quentin from his past mistakes and responsibility; lastly, a reversal of choices between Victor and Walter will not let them escape their destiny. The ultimate feeling in these plays is thus associated with two things: irrevocable deeds and irreparable loss. Rational explanation might sometimes look probable but it cannot be brought to bear effectively and, things being as they are, the fate of the heroes could not have been otherwise.

Still another factor that provides identity and tragic dignity to these plays is the use of archetypal/mythical patterns and symbolic action. Myth is essential to identity and Miller has successfully exploited its usage in his plays. The success myth, for instance, is used effectively in Sons and Salesman and even in Fall. Similarly, a sustained use of symbols is also made in almost all his plays. It cuts across their narrow realism and lends them a poetic touch.

O’Neill in his early plays, depicts man’s search/quest for reality as a search to find his human identity, the essence that forms the substance of his humanity. The vast cosmos, which forms an ethically neutral force still provides avenues of freedom and fulfilment to man. But man’s own social structure creates agonizing disparities and class society breeds oppression, injustice, inequality, exploitation and corruption. In this way, the interaction between the cosmic and social realities in his early plays forms the dramatic substance of O’Neill’s creative quest for reality.
In the later plays O’Neill explores the hidden layers of man’s psychic make up in order to discover the extent to which the forces of the sub-conscious hold tyrannical sway over his being. O’Neill feels that man is always haunted by his past which reveals itself in the form of memories that cannot be erased from his psychic system. As such, he directs his fight towards making a future that can give him some measure of self-fulfilment. But the man is fettered in the society. O’Neill has highlighted the strife going on in the society as it is reflected in man’s subconscious. It is portrayed in Jones, Ape, Wings, and Brown. The destructive potency of man’s exploitative racial past in revealed in Jones. How human faculties and emotions are perverted by racial conflict is depicted in Wings. How the creative faculties of an artist are destroyed under capitalism is revealed in Brown. The split personality of John in Days Without End characterizes the divisive forces prevalent in the capitalist society. Light’s mania for energy in Dynamo is a satire on technocracy.

The mental tension of the characters engaged in striving against their circumstances in typical situation is focused on by O’Neill. Further, O’Neill reveals how the conflict between character and situation shapes the consciousness of his characters. Jones in Jones is shown moving deeper and deeper into his own psyche. On the contrary, Yank in Ape becomes an exponent of individual aggressiveness and adventurism. Anthony in Brown becomes a masochist. Ella’s and Jim’s phobia of blackness and mania for whiteness in Wings lead them to the verge of insanity.

In Ape, Yank represents the American working class. He is a radical. He does not believe in reform. He is not a communist. He is not a properly educated trade-unionist. He wants changes to be made at the grass-roots. Yank’s crime is that he was born in a
capitalist society which treats all honest workers as under-privileged humans, criminals and even as beasts. O’Neil’s expressionistic plays dramatize his encounters with the psychological dimension of reality where the defense mechanism of the protagonist leads him to psychic depths where he is unable to face the stark realities of life. In the case of Brutus Jones in *Jones*, the protagonist goes deeper and deeper into his psyche. On the other hand, Yank in *Ape*, emerges with American aggressiveness and adventurism. He insists that Yank is not merely an illiterate American stoker, symbolizing the American aggressive individualism, but also the symbol of modern man defining the tragedy of his spiritual alienation in an incomprehensible universe. Although O’Neill is keenly aware of the need for human understanding in social relationships, in order to overcome the virtually hopeless situation of alienation, he is unable to describe the specific conditions and the nature of the social structure that produce it. Obviously, O’Neill’s expressionistic plays lodge a protest of feeling and imagination against a society dominated by mechanical materialism. In his expressionistic plays, the dialectical conflict takes the form of psychic tension in the inner struggle of the protagonists.

The object of O’Neill’s quest is to find the identity of the whole man, the reality of man that makes for positive humanism, but what actually he has identified in American society is a fragmentation of man through the division, mechanization and exploitation of man. It is an anguished experience. In his early plays, O’Neill has dramatized the reality of the shameless exploitation of the helpless sailors. Subsequently, in his early plays, O’Neill has brought to the surface the reality of the anguish of man suffering under the impact of dehumanization, debasement and deprivation in American society.
In his New England plays, O’Neill has dramatized the distortions and perversions in human personality wrought by the rigidities and dogmatic beliefs of Puritanism. Severe austerity, narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy and double standards of morality are some of the evils of religion which have been dramatized by the dissident playwright, who has found that the Puritans of New England have ironically enmeshed themselves in religious dogmas which have outlived their utility and have no relevance to the prevalent conditions of daily life. O’Neill has dramatized the inverted face of religious reality, the noticeable aggrandizement of which has created spiritual emptiness in life. He has questioned the values of a world gone berserk in the name of religion.

The repressive forces of Puritanism project the oppressive nature of the class society of New England. It has denied the fulfilment of human life because of its inherent characteristics of narrowness, orthodoxy and inhibition, to the point of gross violation of man’s fundamental right to freedom. The repressive father, who has denied all chances of fulfilment and healthy growth to his children, is prominently present in O’Neill’s New England plays. Consequently, Eben, Reuben, and Nina vigorously defy their patriarchs Ephraim Cabot, Reverend Hutchins Light and Professor Henry Leeds, respectively. The puritan ideal destroys Emma and Caleb in *Diff’rent*. Similarly in *Electra*, the Mannons who are embodiments of repressive Puritanism are destroyed by their cancerous pride. In fact, O’Neill’s protagonists engage themselves in a restless struggle. Don and Hickey in *Cometh* die, but their death is identified with a cause. In *Night*, Edmund’s heroic fight against tuberculosis with the slimmest of hope, fervently asserts his commitment to existence and the eternal continuity of life. O’Neill has mounted a concerted attack on the
malaise of the Puritan society of New England which has coercively humiliated man by its decadent force of repressiveness.

In these plays, O’Neill has reacted vigorously against the New England conventional standards and dogmas of Puritanism which have negated the fulfilment of human identity. New England has been a vanguard of culture, life-civilization, and liberalism. The New England mind has been dominated by the Puritan doctrine. Obviously, Puritans being the victims of religious intolerance and political tyranny, seek to establish the American dream based on social justice in New England. But instead, Puritanism has become a vehicle of suppression, sectarianism, depravity, hypocrisy, and crass-materialism. O’Neill makes a vitriolic comment on the repressive nature of Puritanism. Winther in *Eugene O’Neill: A Critical Study* says:

> The Puritan ideal like that of the romantic dreamer represents to O’Neill a barrier on the road to good life. Puritanism, as it emphasizes the value of self-abnegation, is distasteful to him. Puritanism, in so far as it stands for a doctrine of suppression, he condemns as a distinct force for evil. Puritanism inhibits, forbids, denies, and inhibition and denial lead to fear, prejudice and narrow hatred, thwarted personality, and a beggar’s attitude at the door of life. (44)

O’Neill like Shaw, Ibsen, Strindberg and Gorky defies the Puritan way of life. He, like Hawthorne, rebels against the prejudicial, narrow, whimsical convention and tradition as New England Puritanism has produced a culture which is narrow, sectarian, and devoid of morality. Consequently, he has dramatized his protest against the repressive nature of
Puritanism in his plays. In *Dynamo*, Light rebels against his Puritan father Reverend Hutchins Light. The perversion of Emma of *Diff'rent* is the outcome of her Puritan ideal, which leads to her tragedy. The oppressive Ephraim of *Elms* projects the hard Puritan God against whom Eben and Abbie revolt. Nina Leeds of *Interlude* rebels against her repressive Puritan father, Leeds, who, conforming to the demands of the Puritan society of New England, denies her all possible opportunities for the fulfilment of the desires. Similarly, the Puritan Mannons of *Electra* are invariably meditated on death while going to their churches on the Sabbath and learn only oppression, hatred, and exploitation from Puritanism.

The theme of *Cometh* is based on social psychology. It identifies man as a doomed creature because of his deeply felt anguish and agony as a result of dehumanization. Man feels forsaken, deserted and contemptible. Man’s anguish is that he cannot face the harshness of reality. So, he takes to escapism by means of intoxication, dreams and illusions. Ultimately, he is identified as an image of sociopathic personality disturbance that is incapable of conforming to prevailing social standards. He feels rootless and despair of loss and alienation develops in him, leading to an inferiority complex.

The dream in O'Neill plays is at once the strength and weakness of the characters. One way of reading his plays is to follow the treatment of the dream and see how it changes from early to the later plays when O'Neill's own outlook of life grows more pessimistic and negative. The early plays reveal that the dream that inflicts the characters, is vague and romantic. It is used as a device to escape from the real world. The protagonists are shown running away from an experience that is too harsh. In the sea-
plays, this dream takes the shape of a wander-lust that is manifest in the sailors' constant tossing around in the seas. **Caribbees** shows the romantic quest embodied in the rare glimpse of the moon's beauty in the calm tropical sea. But there is no fulfilment. The moon's beauty brings back, like a flood, the memories of the past unhappiness. Also, under this 'beauty' occur the animalistic scenes of fighting and drunkenness among the sailors. The dying Yank, at the height of his physical pain and the staggering awareness of death, talks of a new dream because the dream of sea-life has become a nightmare. Yank's case is a typical one among O'Neill dreamers, who invest the dream in the opposite, the unattainable and the distant. Those on a farm crave for the far-away life of the sea, and the sick and tired sailors, like Yank, dream of the stability of a farm. Consequently, it is always a hopeless dream and the realization of its futility brings tragic consequences. In **Home, In the Zone, and Ile**, the image of an idyllic farm is the constant dream of the depressed, the homesick and run-away sailor.

It is, however, in two later plays, **Horizon** and **The Fountain** that the shattering consequences of an impossible dream are given full dramatic display. The most articulated form of this dream is in Robert of **Horizon**. With his dreamy eyes and touch of the poet, Robert lives on the family farm but reads poetry that sings of wind, light, the sea and the most sacred night. Distance and mystery are at the root of his dream. Robert's fatal mistake, however, is to identify that dream with love. When he stays on the farm for Ruth's sake, he creates one of the ideally tragic and ironic situations in O'Neill's plays where only death ends the agonies created by the collapse of a dream. But even in his death Robert remains a dreamer. In his last moments, he crawls from the death-bed to watch the sunrise from the hill. In a pattern, which has become almost classical in
American drama, Robert carries his dream beyond the horizon of life. The quest never ends for a confirmed dreamer.

In *Night*, Tyrone is a latter-day Robert whose dream does not come true when he makes his voyages. Instead, he leads a dog's life in filthy dives, drinks 'rotgut' and always comes back broken. In his last visit, Edmund has finally run out of his gas being physically and spiritually shattered. But the dream is worth dreaming because there are moments of seeing a rare glimpse of the perfect beauty and the ultimate mystery. Like the rare moment of beauty in *Caribees*, Edmund has experienced similar moments in which he feels transported into the dream and the quest seems to come to an end. Edmund refers here to that aspect of the dream with which its rare flashes of revelation keeps the dream alive and worth pursuing. Experiencing a submerging of self into these universal whole in a mystical fashion, Edmund on the moments has transcended the reality of his own life and remains drunk.

O'Neill's other plays continue to show the quest of a perfect condition of physical or spiritual life and the frustrations of failure in man's quest. All the three male characters—Mannon, Brant and Orin in *Electra* have a dream to escape to a peaceful South Sea island where there are only love and beauty. Bill Carmody in *Poet* lives in a make-believe world of aristocratic splendour of life. The death of his dream leaves him crushed and reduced to a life worse than death. And there are the drunken bums in *Cometh* whose 'pipe dreams' consist of a happy yesterday and a golden tomorrow.

Yet it is obvious that each of O'Neill's major characters carries the burden of a dream. O’Neill’s sole purpose seems to play upon the irony and tragedy implicit in the
tension between the dreams, which suggest perfection and beauty and the flawed reality in which one inevitably lives. The struggle for the realization of dream - the quest of a paradise-then becomes the *raison d'etre* for being alive. This aspect of O'Neill's drama-the tragic tension between dream and reality- is the major source of O'Neill's greatness as a dramatist. However, it shall be emphasized that O'Neill has utter contempt for the patent brand of the so-called American dream which has been vulgarized and jargonized in cheap political and cultural rhetoric. In other words, O'Neill concedes the individual's right to dream but rejects the concept of the 'American Dream' in a social or political context.

In his sea-plays, O’Neill has vividly portrayed the dialectical relationship between sea and land. Land is the symbol of all decadent forces such as exploitation, inhumanity, corruption and dehumanization. The sea - a denotation of Nature - dialectically symbolizes purity, cleanness and beauty. Logically, the sea is a projection of all the human aspirations that are conspicuously absent in the actual world. Therefore, the myth of the sea, as created by the playwright, is a protest in artistic terms against the man-made corrupt society where ‘man’ has been forsaken and abandoned as contemptible.

The sailors in O’Neill’s sea-plays are victims of social apathy, dehumanization and exploitation and are made to submit to their miserable fate in despair. The sailors and firemen are identified as haggard men. Being ignorant of the correlation of forces that determine people’s fate, they seldom lodge a protest against the injustice done to them, except to blame the sea for their misfortunes. Their ignorance contributes to the continuance of the economic system which is ruthlessly exploiting them. Having no other outlet to express their pent-up emotions, they are constrained to resort to wine, sex and
violence to relieve their frustration. They may appear to be the embodiments of condemned men in an uncongenial universe but, in reality, they are victims of the invisible economic forces functioning like ‘fate’ over their lives.

O’Neill has sought to depict the socio-cosmic aspect of reality by portraying the lives of sailors who work in the most inhuman living conditions. The portrayal - undoubtedly gloomy in its generalized form -- is the creation of a mind that is attuned to the varied orchestrations of reality. The social aspect of this many-sided reality forms a major concern of O’Neill. The sailors, especially the firemen, are found covered from head to foot in a mixture of sweat, grime, coal-dust and foul-smelling slush, evoking derogatory remarks from the so-called elite. While returning from the stokehole, they appear haggard and ghost-like. It is typical of O’Neill’s radical romantic humanism to have given a touch of immortality to the insignificant lives of these sailors. The dramatization of their dehumanized reality is unique in dramatic literature.

Similarly, in his expressionistic plays, O’Neill has sought to discover the psychic dimension of human reality by dialectically depicting the anguish of suffering man in a capitalist society. Man has been shown as trapped in the socio-economic-political labyrinth. He has been dehumanized by the mechanism of technology and capitalist industrialism. He has become a mere cog in a great impersonal machine. The picture drawn by O’Neill of this aspect of reality seems to be so gloomy that no way out of it appears possible. This suffocating atmosphere has engendered many complexes and obsessions in man.
One of the results of this process is the terrifying extract of alienation, the loss of belongingness in man, as Yank in *Ape* feels, after his harrowing experiences in a world ruled by capitalist industrialism. Yank embodies the feelings of rootlessness universally experienced by the have-nots in the capitalist economy though he reveals his inability to understand the real causes of his alienation. Similarly, the portrayal of the anguish of a sensitive artist in capitalist society has been dramatized in *Brown*, where the sufferings of an artist have been displayed. Anthony and Brown are identified as alienated beings. The alienation of both the exploited and the exploiter in the form of Anthony and Brown has been demonstrated in this play. In the expressionistic plays, O’Neill has accomplished the portrayal of the psyche of suffering man, who has been debased, uprooted and abandoned, in a bid to discover the psychological dimension of human reality.

O’Neill’s *Jones* is identified as a political allegory. It identifies the core of corruption at the heart of reality in an exploitative society. O’Neill identifies state machinery as a means for exploitation of the people in the interest of the ruler and his followers. It also identifies religion as a means of exploitation and as a device for money-making. Jones says: “I’se after de coin, an’ I lays my Jesus on de shelf for de time being” (*PEO* III : 185).

The existential dimension of reality has been dramatized in O’Neill’s autobiographical plays, in which he has genuinely depicted distressing experiences of his early life, passed in frustration and despair. He has intuitively recognized that the very existence of man is in danger because he is becoming spiritually broken by conditions that breed loneliness, despair, illusions, retreat into the innermost shell of being, and an
urge for self-destruction. O’Neill has found that man who has been spiritually created in the image of God, is painfully broken and is engaged in a desperate struggle for existence. Man’s continued struggle for survival tends to create illusions as shock-absorbers, which by themselves reflect the inverted image of reality. Man’s indomitable will to live confirms that though he can be subdued, he cannot be totally crushed. O’Neill’s protagonists engage themselves in a relentless struggle. They like Don and Hickey in Cometh, may die, but even in their death they make an assertion of life because they die for a cause. With his deep-rooted involvement in the existential reality of man, O’Neill identifies the anguish, frustration and despair of men whose ideal of a better world and fulfilment in life has fortunately not yet been shaken. In Night, Tyrone’s heroic fight against tuberculosis with the slimmest of hopes, fervently asserts his commitment to existence and the eternal continuity of life.

In his Cycle-plays O’Neill has portrayed the spiritual vacuity caused by insatiable greed, leading the possessors of material goods to be spiritually self-dispossessed. The ruthless lust for power and possessiveness leads the seekers to alienation. In Misbegotten, the quest for reality finally comes to the logical conclusion that human values cannot be subverted by gross materialism. Josie, who has manipulated the seduction of Tyrone Jr. for her personal gain, finally comes to the realization of her proposed crime and finds real love for Tyrone, and makes a sacrifice to help absolve him of his crimes and sins. It is possible to see that the quest for reality in O’Neill’s plays ends with the return to the self - the most prized possession of a human being. O’Neill has bequeathed a rich heritage in the art of drama to his contemporaries and descendants such as T.S.Eliot, Williams, Miller and Albee. It would be interesting to gauge the
measure of O’Neill’s achievement in terms of his influence on other playwrights, particularly where they share a common concern with the theme of illusion and reality.

O’Neill hints at the spiritual sterility and impoverishment of the Americans who feel alienated in the midst of America’s material plenty. The loss of soul does not imply the weakening of religious instinct but a sense of guilt, frustration and estrangement that comes both to the exploiters and the exploited in a class-ridden society. He also speaks against racism and racial discrimination. He is opposed to the policy of apartheid. In this search for the essence of human reality, O’Neill has repeatedly found that the crass materialism of American society is a barrier to man’s self-realization. Therefore, he bitterly attacks on American human Gods who rule their society by virtue of money, are spiritually empty. Gassner in “Introduction” to *O’Neill: A Collection of Critical Essays* points out that

O’Neill’s outlook on life was no less subject to praise and blame. He was insufficiently spiritual for religious critics and too metaphysical and passive for Marxists; and while both could deplore his pessimism, others had no difficulty in approving his huge despair at salutary defiance of facile American optimism or as existentialist truth. (5)

It is true that O’Neill is interested in human soul. It is as Diggins in *Eugene O’Neill’s America: Desire Under Democracy* proposes that “Eugene O’Neill is the greatest dramatist of American democracy, but unlike the poet Walt Whitman, who sang its praises, the playwright probed its soul and found a betrayal of its own professed values” (7). He has never had an American as a model. He admires Emile Zola and Joseph
Conrad. He has never read Whitman. Bloom further relates:

It is an inevitable oddity that the principal American dramatist to date should have no American precursors. Eugene O’Neill’s art as a playwright owes most to Strindberg’s and something crucial, though rather less, to Ibsen’s. Intellectually, O’Neill’s ancestry also has little to do with American tradition with Emerson or William James or any other of our cultural speculators. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud formed O’Neill’s sense of what little was possible for any of us [...] His novelists were Zola and Conrad; his poets were Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Swinburne. (1)

Egil Tornqvist in “O’Neill’s Philosophical and Literary Paragons” suggests that O’Neill has been influenced by Strindberge, Nietzsche and Carl Jung (18-32). It is also remarked by James A. Robinson in “The Middle Plays”:

O’Neill thus paved the way for the Ibsenesque moral realism of Miller, the Strindbergian sexual battles of Tennessee Williams, the expressionistic allegories of early Edward Albee, even the Absurdist – and mythic – families of later Sam Shepard. (80)

Similarly, Normand Berlin in “The late plays” says that “O’Neill and Beckett share the same metaphysical ground [...] Their dramatic representations of illusion and despair strike deep responsive chords in a modern audience [...]” (83). He has become a model for all dramatists. Michael Manheim in “Introduction” observes that

Not many today question the pre-eminence of Eugene O’Neill as America’s leading playwright. The playwrights who followed him –
Williams, Miller, and Albee, and, more recently, dramatists like Sam Shepherd, David Mamet, and Tony Kushner – all have acknowledged their profound debt to him, as have younger playwrights in countries as remote from one another as Sweden and China. He is internationally recognized as the quintessential American dramatist of the twentieth-century world stage. (1)

It has been suggested that O’Neill’s plays form three groups containing three different treatments of the dream. The first group, consisting of the sea plays, *Horizon* and *Fountain* depicts the impossible, idealistic dreams. O’Neill, in the second group, which contains *Ape*, *Brown* and *Millions* deviates from the dream to emphasize the stark, undesirable reality in the backdrop of American society. The third group deals with the tragic defeat of the romantic dream in actual life. In this group *Laughed*, *Interlude* and *Electra* are to be taken as a trilogy. This scheme, while having the neatness of a comfortable design, leaves out several aspects. It is not too difficult to show, for example, that throughout his plays O’Neill has constantly portrayed the coarseness of reality against the attractiveness of the dream. Further, against the suggested rise and fall of the romantic dream, it is possible to show, as in *Night*, that the dream has yielded results which provide enough compensation against the crude reality. Perhaps the fact is that, like so many playwrights after him, O’Neill portrays the general American tendency of restlessness and dissatisfaction with the given life, whose origin goes back to the search for the archetypal image of the Garden of Eden.

O’Neill assimilates his radical ideas and transmutes them into his works of art. His dramatization of stark reality is a point of departure from traditional American
drama. He realizes that art constitutes a multifaceted reality. For him, being an artist is to discover the truths of life. His prime interest is interpreting the meaning of life in terms of the lives of concrete human individuals. He tries to apprehend life through the vitality of theatre. To him, the theatre is substance and interpretation of life. His artistic vision comprehends reality as an attribute of man’s social existence. His concern is with the spiritual dimension of human reality. Spiritualism for him is that inner vitality of man which sets him apart from the animal world. He is concerned with the inscrutable forces behind life. The forces he refers to are those mysterious workings of nature which affect human destiny in a complex manner. He believes that human life cannot be reduced to a fixed or sterile formula nor it can be understood by means of application of such formula like, mechanical deductions. He endeavours to project the reality of life in its concrete sensuous manifestations. He, in his quest for identity, does not overlook the human component of a wider reality but is greatly concerned with the spirituality of man by which he means the truthfulness of man’s feelings and emotions. His ambivalent understanding of those aspects of the identity, directly bear upon man’s dehumanization, rootlessness, alienation, and his consequent search for a sense of belonging.

From this study it is evident that, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche have greatly influenced both O’Neill and Miller in their characterization, symbols, choice of themes, and treatment. It is necessary to conclude, therefore, that while there are thematic similarities among the plays of O’Neill, and Miller, their treatment and direction of thought differ substantially. Miller has suggested psycho-social solutions in the form of change-of-heart of the bourgeois to set things right, and as far as O’Neill is concerned, he largely operates within the framework of bourgeois humanism, dwelling
on the sufferings of man in an apathetic society and a hostile universe. His critique of bourgeois society is incisive, but his conciliatory and compromising attitude to the bourgeois reality reveals a failure to probe into the hard core of bourgeois ideology.

No one can deny the fact that America is the most powerful economic superpower of the world. It is known for individual freedom, material comforts, luxurious lifestyle, technical advancements, and scientific inventions. But in the recent decades, right after the 9/11 incident and the forced economic shut down in October 2013, the American Dream has shattered. The highly materialistic modern American man has started realising the need to follow cultural, social, religious and moral values in life which provide him with a sense of belonging, identity and add real meaning to his life. India is known for its rich culture and traditional values. But the modern Indian youth has little regard for such values and strongly believes in the myth of ‘American Dream’. They are highly mesmerized by their luxurious life style and unchecked individual freedom. Migrating to US remains their ultimate achievement/goal in life. For all such people, success and happiness in life is measured only on the quantum of material wealth one acquires. There is a gradual degradation of values. This kind of degradation has led to the steep increase in the crime rate in India to an alarming level, mostly with the motives of making easy and quick money. But the irony is, whereas many westerners especially from USA have come to realise the importance of value-embedded Indian life style and the joint family system, Indians crave to follow the American life style. Thus a strong need is felt to make them understand the importance of rich native culture and values. Money and material wealth are ‘very’ important but not ‘the most’ important things to lead a contended life. As Maslow’s in his theory of ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ has suggested, ‘self-actualisation
needs’ define one’s morality, creativity, spontaneity, acceptance, purpose, meaning and inner potentials. Hence, the present study, dealing with the universal theme of quest for identity / identity crisis in Miller and O’Neill’s plays offers retrospective insights about one’s own personality and encourage individuals to lead a contended and meaningful life. Thus the present study gains significance in American, Indian and global contexts.

Likewise, it is proved that Miller and O’Neill are interested in portraying the identity crisis in man. They portray man as an animal caught in the cobweb of tradition, society, politics and religion. They concern themselves with the distorted personality of a man who has been sterilized and ostracized and made to be a loner and an adrift. They similarly prove that man has been constantly searching for his identity, as his own identity is not established due to distortion and fragmentation. The inimitable ways through which Miller and O’Neill have handled the theme of identity crisis in their plays have made them occupy unchallenged positions in modern American drama.

**Suggestions / Scope for further study:**

- A comparative study shall be taken up between Miller and O’Neill.
- The radio plays and one-act plays of both the playwrights shall be taken up for study.
- The study shall be extended to other playwrights and genres also.
- A comparative study shall be carried out between American and Indian playwrights.
- In the context of ELT, the present study also provides scope for using drama as a tool in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).
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Primary Sources


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