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FAMILY LIFE IN ARTHUR MILLER'S MAJOR PLAYS

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Arthur Miller is a world famous American playwright. He has written several full length plays as well as small plays or one-acters. Some of his major plays are All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, The Crucible and A View from the Bridge. The theme of family life in these plays is analyzed below.

(i) All my Sons

Arthur Miller wrote his first successful play *All My Sons* in 1947 and the play was an immediate success. *All My Sons* is very much a family drama as much as it relates to a social issue. The play is based on an event that took place four years early (1943) on an event of the Truman Committee's investigation into allegedly faulty airplane parts manufactured in Ohio and that was particularly responsive to the question of World War II time's responsibility. Interestingly, Miller refers to a Midwestern woman's study of a daughter whose father produced faulty equipment for the military. Still Miller sets *All My Sons* in Ohio, suggesting at least an awareness of the scandal. The incident is reported in Samuel Bledsoe's "Plane Defects Laid to a Wright plant; Government sues," *New York Times*, July 11, 1943 p. 25. The play was in immediate success, running for 328 performances and winning the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.

June Schlueter and James Flanagan think "The play established the young (32 years old) Miller as a national playwright."
*All My Sons* takes place in late August, three and one-half years after the loss of the twenty-one pilots and the report that Larry was missing in action. It can be said, "Within twenty four hours of play time (according to Aristotle). The Kellers lives move from tranquility to calamity, from ignorance or denial of the truth to discovery or admission." The action takes place in the Keller’s backyard, a typically American setting with trees and lawn and a sheltered cove in which Keller relaxes with the Sunday paper. Neighbours on both sides Jim and Sue Bayliss and Frank and Lydia Lubey - feel free to stop by to share the paper or to chat, lending assurance of the perfectly normal routine of this family’s comfortable life. A fine family atmosphere prevails.

Santosh Bhatia observes: "*All My Sons* serves as an important chapter in its author’s life and it records a significant landmark in the progress of his dramatic career on the Broadway, particularly after the failure of *The Man Who Had All the Luck*. What is still more important is that it paves the way for *Death of a Salesman* and anticipates in many ways the thematic concerns of Miller’s successive plays. The emphasis of the play, no doubt, falls on social realism, but it has the potential of a great tragedy."

In one of his early plays *Grandpa and the Statue*, Miller touches upon the same question in a rudimentary way and shows the same theme that man needs society. Grandpa Monaghan refuses to contribute money for the pedestal of the stature of liberty. The play shows how he comes to realize that he must be an integral part of the society in which he lives. Miller resorts to Ibsenesque things. In such a structure he will have the past continually intrude upon the present. He found such a structure hospitable for *All My Sons*. 
Critics as well as the audience think that *All My Sons* has a conflict. The central conflict is between familial and social obligations. Benjamin Nelson observes, "The thematic image of *All My Sons* is a circle within a circle, the inner depicting the family unit and the outer representing society, and the movement of the drama is concentric with the two circles revolving in parallel orbits until they ultimately coalesce" To put it differently, the family and the society are like two pulley, one smaller than the other but both joined together by a common axle so that the movement of one has a corresponding reaction on the other. The play depicts that man cannot disown society for his family.

The scene is that of Joe Keller's home in the outskirts of an American town. The time is an August day. The house is two storeys high and has seven rooms. Poplars are grown before the house. There is an apple tree. Garden has chaps. It is early Sunday morning Joe Keller is sitting in the sun reading the want ads of the Sunday papers, the other sections of which lie neatly on the ground beside him. Behind his back, inside the arbour, Doctor Jim Bayliss is reading part of the paper at the table. Keller is nearing sixty. He is a heavy man, a business man. He has a machine shop. It seems he is illiterate or less concerned about society or the larger issues of the world. Dr. Bayliss is forty. He is a bit sad. Frank Lubey, a 32 years old man enters. The three speak of news and Keller evinces interest only in advertisements. Frank reminds him of the stunted tree, may be the apple tree, also reminding Keller's son Larry's birth day. Frank is preparing a horoscope of Larry for Kate. His talk about horoscope provokes laughter. Suddenly they think of Annie who is taking rest. Shortly Susie (Sue) asks her husband Jim to attend a phone from a patient called Mrs Adams. Then Lydia Lubey enters and speaks to Frank.
The women speak of Annie and about her remaining unmarried. Keller alludes to it saying she is worrying about her son Larry. Chris overlooks there. He is 32, and he is well built. Miller says he is capable of immense affection and loyalty. The servant Bert arrives there. Chris tells Keller that his mother had already seen the falling of the tree at 4 early mornings. This detail has a significant clue to understand Kate's waiting for Larry. So Chris suggests Keller that they must convince her of Larry's death. The point is that Chris wants to marry Annie, and pronounce Larry's death. Kate comes there. She is in her fifties. She is a woman uncontrolled inspirations and an overwhelming capacity for love. The couple chats about Keller's ignorance when he threw away the bag of potato (once onions) thinking it was of garbage. They speak about Annie too. The fall of tree and Annie's arrival indicate Larry's 27 years birthday and its associations.

Kate speaks as though a monologue remembering Larry's pilotship. Chris asks her what significance that fall of the tree (which, in fact, Larry planted) bear to Larry's life. He adds "maybe we ought to put our minds to forgetting him" Mother admits it as having been said for the third time that week. They are desirous of knowing why Annie comes here (after three and half years) so suddenly. Kate tells Keller and Chris to pretend that Larry is coming back so that Larry and Annie can marry.

Annie appears on the porch now. Annie meets all the people. She recalls her parents' home in the neighborhood (now sold to Doctor Jim) and Larry's fine memory. Mother Kate asks Annie whether she is really waiting for Larry. Interestingly enough Annie says "No, Kate" (p. 113). Annie asks why Larry has to be alive. Kate bursts forth: Because certain things have to be" (p. 113).
Now all think of Annie's father Mr Deever and Larry. They think Annie's father shipped out parts that would crash an airplane. Keller explains the problem -- the hairline crack in cylinders. Deever made the mistake and shipped them as he was forced by the authorities' urge.

The scene shifts to love between Chris and Annie. They confess their love to each other and enjoy kisses. In fact, Annie fell in love with him two years ago. Finally Annie's brother George calls her on phone. He is speaking as a lawyer from Columbus. Once Chris and Annie go a riding, the Kellers smell some evil design in George's meeting his father Deever in jail.

So far the play is projected with family atmosphere. The Kellar parents, their son Chris and his lover Annie, and the lovely and chatting neighbours - Jim and Frank and their women create a family atmosphere.

Act two opens with George. He has met his father in jail and heard the true story of Keller's cheating. Now he is a lawyer. He has come all the way from Columbia. Once, he permitted Annie to marry Chris as Larry died and now he explains why she should not marry him. He explains all the past and asks Annie not to marry Chris, whose father led their father to jail. In a way his argument seems right. George tells Annie: "Because his father destroyed your family" (p. 140). George tells, he knows that truth, he is a God that way, and he is a 'big boy now.' He explains that truth: "The night foreman came to him and showed him the cylinder heads they were coming out of the process with defects. There was something wrong with the process. So dad went directly to the phone and called here and told Joe to come down right away. But the morning passed. No sign of Joe. So Dad called again. By this time he had over a hundred defectives. The Army was screaming for stuff and Dad didn't have anything to ship. So Joe told..."
him...on the phone he told him to weld, cover up the cracks in any way he could, and ship them out..... He suddenly gets the flue! Suddenly! But he promised to take responsibility. Do you understand what I’m saying? On the telephone you can’t have responsibility! In a court you can always deny a phone call and that’s exactly what he did ....Now what’re you going to do? Eat his food, sleep in his bed? Answer me; what’re you going to do?” (p. 141).

As we understand the court could not understand Deever’s stand and imprisoned him. George tells “From his (father’s) mouth it’s altogether different than the record” (p. 143).

Shortly Joe Keller appears there. Keller and George have sharp arguments. George mocks Kellers’ new product, pressure-cookers and washing-machines. He says his father’s soul is in trouble. Frank’s horoscope of Larry is a comic relief in between. Now George asks Annie to go with him. But Annie is unwilling. The irony is that Kate packs her bag, for she does not want her Marry Chris. She hopes Larry will come back one day and he will marry Annie. Act two ends with a revelation. The final argument is over what is good and what man’s duty to his society is. Chris asks his father why he asked Deever to ship cracked cylinders and why he did not own responsibility for that.

The dialogue is seminal in our understanding of familial and social conflicts.

CHRIS: Dad... Dad, you killed twenty-one men!

KELLER: What, killed?

CHRIS: You killed them, you murdered them.
CHRIS [as an ultimatum]: Mother, I'm going ahead with it.

MOTHER: Chris, I've never said no to you in my life, now I say no!

CHRIS: You'll never let him go till I do it.

MOTHER: I'll never let him go and you'll: never let him go!

CHRIS: I've let him go. I've let him go a long –

MOTHER [with no less force, but turning from him]: Then let your father go. [Pause, CHRIS stands transfixed.]

KELLER: She's out of her mind.

MOTHER: Altogether! [To CHRIS, but not facing them] Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead, your father killed him. Do you understand me now? As long as you live, that boy is alive. God does not let a son be killed by his father. Now you see, don't you? Now you see. [Beyond control, she hurries up and into house.]

KELLER [CHRIS has not moved. He speaks insinuatingly; questioningly she's out of her mind.]

CHRIS [in a broken whisper]: Then ... you did it?

KELLER [with the beginning of plea in his voice]: He never flew a P-40-

CHRIS [struck; deadly]: But the others.

KELLER [insistently]: She's out of her mind. [He takes a step towards CHRIS, pleadingly.]

CHRIS [unyielding]: Dad... you did it?
KELLER: He never flew a P-40, what's the matter with you? CHRIS [still asking, and saying]: Then you did it. To the others [Both hold their voices down.]

KELLER [afraid of him, his deadly insistence]: What's the matter with you? What the hell is the matter with you?

CHRIS [quietly, incredibly]: How could you do that? How?

KELLER: What's the matter with you!

CHRIS: Dad ... Dad, you killed twenty-one men!

KELLER: What, killed?

CHRIS: You killed them, you murdered them.

KELLER [as though throwing his whole nature open before CHRIS]:

How could I kill anybody?

CHRIS: Dad! Dad!

KELLER [trying to hush him]: I didn't kill anybody!

CHRIS: Then explain it to me. What did you do? Explain it to me or I'll tear you to pieces!)  

KELLER [horrified at his overwhelming fury]: Don't. Chris, don't-

CHRIS: I want to know what you did, now what did you do? You had a hundred and twenty cracked engine-heads, now what did you do?

KELLER: If you're going to hang me then!
CHRIS: I'm listening. God Almighty, I'm listening!

KELLER [their movements now are those of subtle pursuit and escape. KELLER keeps a step out of CHRIS'S range as he talks.]: You're a boy, what could I do! I'm in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you're out of business; you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell's it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them, take my life away? [His voice cracking] I never thought they'd install them.. I swear to God. I thought they'd stop 'em before anybody took off.

CHRIS: Then why'd you ship them out.

KELLER: By the time they could spot them I thought I'd have the process going again and I could show them they needed me and they'd let it go by. But weeks passed and I got no kick-back, so I was going to tell them.

CHRIS: Then why didn't you tell them?

KELLER: It was too late. The paper, it was all over the front page, twenty-one went down it was too late. They came with handcuffs into the shop, what could I do? [He sits on bench.] Chris ... Chris, I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you. I'm sixty-one years old, when would I have another chance to make something for you? Sixty-one years old you don't get another chance, do ya?

CHRIS: You even knew they wouldn't hold up in the air.

KELLER: I didn't say that.
CHRIS: But you were going to warn them not to use them

KE.LLER: But that don't mean –

CHRIS: It means you knew they'd crash.

KE.LLER: It doesn’t mean that.

CHRIS: Then you thought they'd crash.

KE.LLER: I was afraid maybe

CHRIS: You were afraid maybe! God in heaven, what kind of a man are you? Kids were hanging in the air by those heads. You knew that!

KE.LLER: For you, a business for you!

CHRIS [with burning fury]: For me! 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 is that, the world - 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? [With his fist he pounds down upon his father's shoulder. He stumbles away, covering his face as he weeps.] What must I do, Jesus God, what must I do?

KE.LLER: Chris ... My Chris ... (pp. 157-158).

It is said, "Miller's second act offers an effective balance of bitterness and sweetness. Of anxiety and relief, prolonging its two dramatic questions;
how will Annie, react to George’s belief in his father's innocence and how will Keller react?"6

Critics call it the father-son conflict. Santosh Bhatia comments: “The tragedy builds itself slowly in the play along the lines of this central conflict between the familial and the social.”7 Robert Martin in “The Family in Modern Drama” writes: “The preoccupation of the entire play is the society, and not primarily this particular family-and every stylistic means used is to the end that the family foreground be kept in its place, merely as a foreground for the larger context behind or around it”8

The father and son conflict in the play is another variation of the same conflict between the familial and the social. This confrontation stems from Chris’s awareness of responsibility to others and his father’s lack of it. In a way Chris serves as a foil to Joe. If Keller’s is myopic vision, Chris’s is egalitarian. Critics say Chris in his idealism reminds us of prince Hamlet. “He too, like Hamlet, confronts a world which is full of evil and betrayal. In his speech, there is some note of questioning that we find in Hamlet’s solilogues.”9

Act III begins with a conversation between Kate and her neighbor Jim. Kate is waiting for Larry at night and Jim comes back from attending a patient. He asks her to take rest. Keller comes there. The two worry about Chris’s missing. Kate tells Joe to surrender for his crime. She asks him to speak Chris’s pardon. Keller bursts helplessly: “He would forgive me! For what?.... you wanted money. So I made money. What must I be forgiven? You wanted money, didn’t you?” (P. 162). She says “I didn’t want it that way” (p. 162) she says there is something that is bigger than the family. Keller says “I lived for both of you” (p. 164). Annie interferes asking the
two to free Chris from Larry's ghost (that Larry is still living). The young lady says "Larry is dead. He crashed off the coast of China Nov 25! It is engine didn't fail him. But he died. I know..." (p. 165) Annie shows Larry's letter and the mother is shocked to read it. Shortly Chris comes there asking for his dad. He shouts about his father's crime. He says "I could jail him! But you made me practical and I spit on myself. I'm going away now" (p. 167). Annie wants to join him. Keller justifies his crime when he says "Chris, a man can't be Jesus in this world!" (p. 169). He too wants to go away. The last scene is really a misfortune in the family. It is breathtaking:

[Two o'clock the following morning. MOTHER is discovered on the rise, rocking ceaselessly in a chair, staring at her thoughts. It is an intense, slight sort of rocking. A light shows from upstairs bedroom, lower floor windows being dark. The moon is strong and casts its bluish light.

Presently JIM dressed in jacket and hat, appears, and seeing her, goes up beside her.]

JIM: Any news?

MOTHER: No news.

JIM [gently]: You can't sit up all night, dear, why don't you go to bed?

MOTHER: I'm waiting for Chris. Don't worry about me, Jim,

I'm perfectly all right.

JIM: But it's almost two o'clock.

MOTHER: I can't sleep; [Slight pause.] You had an emergency?
JIM [tiredly]: Somebody had a headache and thought he was dying. [Slight pause.] Half of my patients are quite mad. Nobody realizes how many people are walking around loose, and they're cracked as coconuts. Money. Money-money-money-money. You say it long enough it doesn't mean anything. [She smiles, makes a silent laugh.] Oh, how I'd love to be around when that happens!

MOTHER [shaking her head]: You're so childish, Jim! Some-times you are.

JIM [looks at her a moment]: Kate. [Pause.] What happened?

MOTHER: I told you. He had an argument with Joe. Then he got in the car and drove away.

JIM: What kind of an argument?

Ann, if I had him there now I could kill him -' [KELLER grabs letter from CHRIS'S hand and reads it. After a long pause]

Now blame the world. Do you understand that letter?

KELLER [speaking almost inaudibly]: I think I do. Get the car. I'll put on my jacket. [He turns and starts slowly for the house. MOTHER rushes to intercept him.]

MOTHER: Why are you going? You'll sleep, why are you going?

KELLER: I can't sleep here. I'll feed better if I go.

MOTHER: You're so foolish. Larry was your son too, wasn't he? You know he'd never tell you to do this.
KELLER [looking at letter in his hand]: Then what is this if it isn't telling me? Sure, he was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were. I'll be right down. [Exits into house.]

MOTHER [to CHRIS, with determination]: You're not going to take him!

CHRIS: I'm taking him.

MOTHER: It's up to you, if you tell him to stay he'll stay. Go and tell him!

CHRIS: Nobody could stop him now.

MOTHER: You'll stop him! How long will he live in prison? Are you trying to kill him?

CHRIS [holding out letter]: I thought you read this!

MOTHER [of Larry, the letter]: The war is over! Didn't you hear? It's over

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

MOTHER: 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.

[A shot is heard in the house. They stand frozen for a brief second. CHRIS starts for porch, pauses a step, turns to ANN.]

CHRIS: Find Jim! [He goes on into the house and ANN runs up driveway. MOTHER stands alone, transfixed.]
MOTHER [softly, almost moaning]: Joe ... Joe ... Joe ... Joe...

[CHRIS comes out of house, down to MOTHER'S arms.]

CHRIS [almost crying]: Mother, I didn't mean to -.

MOTHER: Don't dear. Don't take it on yours. Forget now. Live.
[CHRIS stirs as if to answer] Shhh... [She puts his arms down gently and moves towards porch.] Shhh ... [As she reaches porch steps she begins sobbing.] (p. 169-171).

Miller's *All My Sons* is well written. Miller has maintained the tight structure of the play. Its three acts depict action which is roughly limited to eighteen hours, from Sunday morning to the early hours of Monday. The scene of action throughout is the backyard of the Keller home. The dismal shades of the impending disaster are felt from the very opening scene. The play may not depict too much and prolonged tragedy as in *Death of a Salesman* but its depiction of loss and grief is intense and enduring. 'Not too much' sense is there. Keller's concern for his son is as that of Loman's concern for his sons. The following is a simple yet fine comparison of these two plays: "Joe is committed to the welfare of his children but the moment his humanity asserts itself over his selfish money interests he shoots himself. There is same single minded pursuit of an illusion in his case as in the case of Willy Loman. He too has the same vehemence of a tragic hero and holds firmly an absolute commitment to the welfare of his sons. Like Loman again, there is the same compulsive drive towards death. The moment he discovers the grossness and magnitude of his crime he takes a plunge and dies."
The play abounds in tragic irony which is characteristic of any tragedy. The wide gap between Joe’s dream of a happy and wealthy future for his family and the reality as it is underscores the ironic nature of the situation. Larry as a result of the ignominy kills himself. Chris reacts to his father violently. Joe kills himself from the weapons he has manufactured. His sons, whom he has loved, as Willy’s sons, turn instruments of his punishment. In fact, Joe achieves tragic realization, however crudely and admits they “they were all my sons”. This realization is too strong to keep him alive. He goes inside and shoots himself. His ultimate suicide is an act of self-purification as depicted in Greek tragedies. Neill Carson observes, "All My Sons is greatly indebted to the work of Greek tragedy to realistic drama." In the words of Santosh Bhatia: All My Sons in its last analysis is not simply a domestic play. Within the structure of a family drama, Miller raises larger social issues and significant questions of choice and responsibility, justice and morality. The play leaps out of the family structure and deals with man’s place and role in society. The theme of the play assumes great social significance and can be summed up in Miller’s own words: “how men ought to live” the treatment of this theme provides magnitude to the plot of the play and makes it worthy of recognition as a tragedy.

In conclusion, Keller has based his life on the conviction that nothing is bigger than the relationship between a father and son. When he comes to realize that his responsibility is not restricted to his family, but extends to a universe of people beyond the property line, he cannot face his own past. His suicide is partly an act of penance for his previous deeds, but it is also the act of a man who cannot live himself. Neil Carson offers us some interesting remarks about this family tragedy as being operated it three
levels: the cosmic, the social and the psychological. He says, "The Kellers epitomize the capitalistic system of competition. George and Annie speak for a world of justice and Chris and Larry articulate a still higher ideal, a New Testament law of love and co-operation rather than the Mosaic 'eye for an eye'". Steven Centola concludes his essay on the play thus: In *All My Sons*, Miller shows how the impulse to betray and to deny responsibility for others, when left ungoverned, can run rampant and wreak havoc on the individual, his family, and his society even, perhaps, civilization as a whole."
(ii) Death of a Salesman

America is a new nation, a continental nation. Right from the beginning, it is known for its freedom, equality and prosperity. Hence, the Europeans migrated to America en-masse. They built a new civilization and such a new civilization is known for its prosperity. We understand all this when we hear about “American dream.”

However, America does not mean a land of prosperity for all. It has its own limitations. Whether imposed by place or time when we think of the 20th century America, America had to interfere in two World Wars — first in 1914-1918 and then in 1939-1944. The interwar years are a matter of concern for us. The drama critic Christopher Bigsby writes. “The Depression of the 1930s seemed to break the promises America had made to its citizens. The stock market crash of 1929, it was assumed, ended particular version of history: optimistic, confident. The American dream faded.”15 Arthur Miller’s first important tragedy Death of a Salesman (1948) is based on a salesman’s existential crisis in this historical background. As Frederick Morgan, the then reviewer said, “The play is a tragedy of a common man, in a self-pitying mood.”16 Death of a Salesman is not set during the 1930’s depression (economic crisis) but it bears its marks as does its hero Willy Loman. The play is a tragedy and it is a family tragedy. The hero is Willy Lowman (Low-man) and he is confused by the American values. As we know, the 1920s is known for its prosperity in American history and the very next decade is known for its fall. This fall is seen in the major character in the play. It is economic depression. It leads to depression in the economy of middle class families as Willy Loman’s. Critics rightly
call *Death of a Salesman* as 'the little man's tragedy.' Willy Loman suffers because of his false assumptions.

*Death of a Salesman* had its origins in a short story Miller wrote at the age of seventeen (the age of Biff Loman), when he worked for his father's business. In fact, Miller had written a play about the fall of a salesman ten years before. Much of the play is autobiographical. Arthur Miller's father had, soon after his emigration to America, started his family's business. When there was an economic slump down, his business did not run smooth, and his two sons. Kermit and Arthur worked there unsuccessfullty. Willy Loman is a kin to Miller's salesman uncle Manny Newman, a man who was a competitor, at all times, in all things, and at every moment. "My brother and I," Miller explains in his autobiography *Timebends*, "he saw running neck and neck with his two sons in some race that never stopped in his mind"\(^{17}\)

Manny's son Buddy, like Biff in Miller's play, was a sports hero and, like Happy Loman, a success with the girls, but, failing to study, he never made it to college. Manny's wife, meanwhile, "bore the cross of reality for them all," supporting her husband, "keeping up her calm, enthusiastic smile lest he feel he was not being appreciated." Christopher Bigsby thinks, "It is not hard to see this woman honored in the person of Linda Loman, Willy's loyal but sometimes bewildered wife, who is no less a victim than the husband she supports in his struggle for meaning and absolution"\(^{18}\) The life of Miller's friend, even from these glances, appears to be absurd. Miller himself writes, "Like any traveling man he had to my mind a kind of intrepid valor that withstood the inevitable putdowns, the scoreless attempts to sell. In a sense, these men lived like artists, like actors whose product is first of all themselves, forever imagining triumphs in a world that either
ignores them or denies their presence altogether. But just often enough to keep the same going one of them makes it and swings to the moon on a thread of dreams unwinding out of himself."19 After reading the play, or watching it staged, a discernible reader thinks that Willy Loman lives his own life to gain its joys which he believes is to be his due. He wants his pie.

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is written in two acts and the play ends with a Requiem. The action in the first act takes place in Willy Loman's house and yard and in various places he visits in the New York and Boston of today. The play starts with background music. Flute is played on. One must notice the fact that Arthur Miller's father was a traveling flute artist. Before us is the salesman Willy Loman's house. "As more light appears we see a solid vault of small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality"20. The house has a kitchen with a dining table and refrigerator. There is a draped entrance at the back, leading to the living room. The bed room is the other side with two beds. The entire setting is transparent. There is some space as backyard which serves Willy Loman's locale for the outside world. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken.

When the curtain raises the major character Willy Loman, the salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases. Miller sketches the character thus: "He is past sixty years of age dressed quietly. He looks tired. He opens the door, goes to kitchen, feeling tired, he sighs "Oh, boy, oh, boy." Linda, his wife gets awake. She is a suffered lady. She faces her husband calmly. The author says, "She admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties......." (p. 2).
Death of a Salesman begins with Willy Loman's telling his wife about his return. This assertion "It's all right I come back" (p. 2) indicates helplessness. So she asks him: "Why? What happened? Did something happen, Willy?" (p. 2). He says nothing happened and he is simply tired to the death. He looks terrible. He explains her of his rash driving at Yonkers. She feels he needs rest after his trip to Florida. The wife asks Willy Loman for a transfer to New York. Linda's reason is that Loman is sixty years old and he cannot travel. If we believe Willy Loman, he began building business for the Wagners, and he is not respected by its owner the young Howard. Still Loman decides to request Howard for a transfer.

The couple changes the topic. Now a kind of family atmosphere prevails. He asks her for cheese and she likes to prepare sandwiches. He asks her about boys. Linda speaks of the sons Happy and Biff staying together that day. Willy says "Some people accomplish something" and enquires about Biff. He is keen about Biff's earning income. Biff has just 35 dollars a week though he has been working for the last ten years. One understands Biff is 34 years old. He is lazy. Willy Loman then wants to know why Biff is back home. He thinks Biff cannot be lost (as Linda thinks). He is hard-working too. He thinks he will get Biff a job-selling. He could be big in no time" (p. 6). Willy Loman speaks much. He loses himself in reminiscences. Richard Watts in an interview with Arthur Miller in a symposium on the play says Loman's is a tragedy of "extroverts." Willy Loman speaks continuously as if mental.

There is a small contradiction in his taking of food. He even cannot notice the windows which are open. Their attention is directed to the neighborhood. Willy Loman thinks of the street, lined with cars, depriving
fresh air. He speaks of city problems -- encroachment, pollution and population explosion.

Now we see Biff and Happy get up. They confront their mother, and Willy Loman's thoughts about the elder son surface. Linda proposes a family outing. Willy Loman thinks of buying a car of the brand Chevy. Happy (Harold) thinks Willy Loman might have had a car accident. Now Willy Loman goes to an upstairs room, probably to eat cheese. What matters is his botheration. He speaks to himself "eighty thousand miles" (p. 8). Biff, two years older than Happy, less successful in life, looks worried about this. Happy is tall, powerfully made. He is also confused about life.

The two brothers --Biff and Happy -- seem to worry about their father's mental condition. As Happy notices Loman is colour blind and drives rashly. They hear their father's talk. They smoke and they talk of affairs. Biff wonders as to why Willy Loman mocks him. Happy remembers "Something is happening to him. He talks to himself" (p. 10). Biff is in confusion about his future. He adds: "I spent six or seven years after high school, clerk, salesman, and business of one kind or another. And it's a measly manner of existence" (p. 11). He says he has had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs and all jobs provide a same kind of experience. He has served in Dakota, Arizona and Texas. His experience in the present farm is never inspiring. He feels as if lost in spring. He gets just 28 dollars a week and he is 34 now. Happy thinks Biff is mixed up.

On the other hand, Happy is more settled and more successful. He too is unhappy. Because, just like his father he wants many things. Miller exposes Happy's wants thus: "But then, it's what I always wanted. My own
apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I’m lonely” (p.12). Happy is an assistant merchandize manager.

Biff asks him better to go to the West and raise cattle. So the brothers’ ideals, as their father’s, rise and collapse. Miller himself said once: “The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendously powerful ideals. The fact is he has values. The fact that they cannot be realized is what is driving him mad, just as, unfortunately, it’s driving a lot of other people mad.”

What is true of Willy Loman is also true of his two sons. If Biff as his father's favorite, follows erratic path, Happy is his shadow.

Both brothers will have affairs just like their father at Ebbets Field. In fact, Happy is a womanizer. He has an affair with Charlotte. And he feels “He cannot get rid of her. He is also known for his contradiction. When he says: “Because I don’t want the girl, and, still, I take it and I love it!” (p. 14).

Biff wants to borrow a big loan from a childhood friend Bill Oliver. Probably he wants to take his brother to the West and raise cattle. He wants to buy a ranch. The two brothers count upon false hopes. As Philip Gelb observes “Miller looks upon the salesman's ideal of success with an angry but discerning eye, and he sees its hollowness and treachery”

The father Loman is seen in the kitchen as the brothers are in their bed room. Willy Loman speaks alone, and he advises Biff: “Just wanna be careful with those girls, Biff” (p. 16). Soon he faces them and announces some surprises. He says he will buy a beautiful hammock to be hung between elms in his garden. He has, in fact, bought them a punching bag’ with Gene Tunney’s signature on it. Biff has on his part brought a foot ball.
One must know that he is a good sportsman and it is a thief. The sons feel they are lonesome. Willy Loman speaks of his idealized mind now:

"Don't say? Tell you a secret; boys don't breathe it to a soul. Some day I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more" (p. 18). He thinks he will be richer than his neighbour Charley. He speaks of his business trips to Providence, Waterbury, Boston, Portland and Bangor. The sons are excited of father's trip and they like to accompany him once. Willy Loman bursts forth: "You and Hap and I, and I'll show you all the towns. America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people and when I bring you fell as up, there'll be open sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing, boys: I have friends. I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own" (p. 19).

This is an evidence of Willy Loman's "hollowness" as Richard Watts said. The salesman has the virtue of being striking and provocative. Watts observes: "Poor Willy Loman, Who thought that for a successful salesman popularity and good fellowship were all and tried to teach his sons what he believed was his wisdom, is a completely credible victim of a prevailing code as the encroachment of old age destroys its shabby plausibility"24 Matthew Roundane rightly observes: "Death of a Salesman presents a rich matrix of enabling tables that define the myth of the American dream."25

The Lomans have good social relations. Charley is one of them. Charley's son Bernard and Biff are classmates. Bernard reports Biff's backwardness in Maths and the teacher Birnbaum's scolding about it. It seems Biff was good at studies once and even had the chances of securing fellowship in three universities somehow. Critics think that Charley and his
son Barnard are brought in the play to throw light on the Lomans. Willy Loman does not grasp certain things about school codes. When Bernard warms of Biff's maths, Willy Loman scolds Bernard unnecessarily. This is colored by his preoccupation: "Bernard can get the best marks in school, understand, but when he gets out in the business world, you're going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I think Almighty God you're both built like Adonises" (p. 21). His overconfidence continues. "Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead." Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. "Willy Loman is here!" That's all they have to know, and I go right through" (p. 21). Thomas Porter thinks that way "Willy is inadequate. His lack of stature, his narrow view of reality, his obvious character-defects diminish the scope of action and the possibilities of universal application." He refers the play to 'Horatio Alger-ideal,' the rags-to-riches romances of the American dream.

Linda, the lady turns up. She enquires about Loman's income, which is 200 dollars. She presents her needs: 16 dollars for the repair of fridge, 96 dollars for washing machine. 3.5 dollars for vacuum cleaner and 21 dollars for roof repair. She adds 150 dollars for the odds and ends. Willy Loman is afraid of all this expenses. Linda asks him to earn more when he goes to Hartford, while Loman confesses clients' neglect of him there. His problem as critic Richard Watts says is talkativeness. Loman admits that "I talk too much" (p. 24). He is foolish. He does not dress well. Still Linda consoles him saying he is handsome. Miller creates a comic relief when he creates a flashback scene where Loman has an affair with a woman. He kisses her and promises her a visit in Boston. The couple reappear together. Bernard
visits them for Biff. Loman is afraid of Biff’s exam, and Linda, his indulging in football and with women.

Bernard also hints at Biff’s driving without license. As usual, Loman scolds Bernard as if he is envious of him. Worse still! His thoughts about Biff’s stealing recur here. Later, Charley reports of Biff’s stealing lumber.

These days Willy’s whole life unrolls before him. Today’s reality intermingles with yesterday’s half forgotten episodes. Perhaps the first mistake is in not following his brother Ben to Alaska or Africa. Ben had wanted Willy to join him, but Willy was a salesman, and earned well. He had the overconfidence of earning a grade. Critics think it is a false value.

Then his neighbor and friend Charley meets Loman. All of them chat for a while. It is a fine family atmosphere. Charley thinks he may offer Willy a job if he wants one. But Willy’s personal ego is at clash. This is unnecessary too. Willy as well as that, objects to Charley’s visiting him. This shows his arrogance. Willy slips into the past and seems to talk to his brother Ben. The thoughts about his parents crop up. Then he has a scene between his brother and his sons. Willy’s contradictions surface again. He tells Ben that his business is sound. Soon he contradicts himself when he speaks: “My boys go into the jaws of hell for me, see, but I” (p. 36). He is guilty of not teaching his sons proper things. Ben then disappears. It darkens.

Arthur Miller continues the conflict between Willy and his sons. Linda says the conflict is sharp when Willy meets Biff. Linda still warns Biff: “A man is not a bird, to come and go with the springtime” Biff, dear, if you don’t have any feeling for him, then you can’t have any feeling for me....Either he’s your father and you pay him that respect, or else you’re
not to come here" (p. 39). Linda's fears are expressed again: "Willy Loman
never made a lot of money, his name was never in the paper. He's not the
finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing
is happening to him. So attention must be paid" (p. 40).

The tragedy is that Biff demeans his father. Linda thinks Willy who
has worked for 36 years for his company is exhausted. He could not earn
any more now. He borrows money from Charley and tells that it is his pay.
He does it for his family's survival. Already father-son's crisis reaches a
peak. Biff even bursts angrily: "Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't
like anybody around who knows" (p. 42). The situation worsens. The father
even doubts of Biff's respect.

Lowman's son Biff, as well as Happy, is like Lowman himself when
it comes to values. He too builds a castle in the air. Now he has a plan to
meet businessman Bill Oliver for loan. Biff's plan to start a business under
the name "Loman Brothers" appears a 'million dollar idea' to his father. The
father advises his son as to how he should visit the millionaire (for example,
Biff must wear a business suit). He is to be "quiet, fine and serious" (p. 47).
Willy is overconfident of great help. So that "they can start big and end big.
Willy seems to think appearance rather than reality. One can see his word of
advice to Biff that "personality always wins the day" (p. 48). So the father
and son make it up finally. Linda suggests Willy to approach Howard for a
transfer to New York.

The first act ends with Willy's dream. Biff would go back to that
sporting goods store and get a loan from the owner to set himself and Happy
up in business. That man Big Oliver had always loved Biff. And Willy
would go to young Howard Wagner, his boss's son, and demand to be given
a place in the New York office. They would celebrate that night with a dinner. Biff and Happy would give Willy a dinner to celebrate their mutual success.

Accordingly, Willy sleeps soundly that night. His two sons depart for meeting Bill Oliver. Linda asks Willy to visit his boss for a change of job, and also for some advance as the family has several ‘wants.’ They need to settle down their house mortgage.

As critics think "The play presents a rich matrix of enabling tables that define the myth of the American dream. Most theatergoers assume, on a priori level, that the principles Willy Loman values -- initiative, hard work, family, freedom, consumerism, economic salvation, competition, the frontier, self-sufficiency, public recognition, personal fulfillment, and so on -- animate American cultural poetics"\(^{27}\)

Now the action starts swiftly. Soon Linda finishes her telephone talk to Biff, alluding to the gas pipe which Willy has carried with him, maybe to use it for committing suicide. The scene shifts to Howard's office. First Frank Howard is happy to listen to his tape recorder (a wireless machine). After that Willy tells him he was the first few men to build Wagner Company's sales for the last 34 years. He asks him for a transfer from Boston (New England) to New York as he is old and he has to support his family. Howard speaks of lack of vacancy and insists that 'business is business.' Then Willy requests for the transfer though he may be paid less salary (from 65 to 50 dollars at least). He quotes of Dave Singleman’s legendary service at age 84. Willy inspired by Dave Singleman gave up going with his brother Ben to Alaska, and endorses such values"", and it is an endorsement foisted upon him less by personal choice than by a malevolent
universe whose hostility nocks his every pursuit.” He bursts philosophically. “You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away—man is not a piece of fruit. I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can’t pay my insurance!” (p. 61). Finally Howard dismisses Willy from service. We notice two things here—-one he does not even allow Willy to serve in Boston, and two he wanted to dismiss him for a long time. Willy has a mental shock and daydream, of his emigration with Ben to Alaska. The scene is cinematic now. Here too we notice Willy’s false pride and contradictions. For example,

When the two speak;

Howard: Where are your sons? Why don’t your sons give you hand?

Willy: They’re working on a very big deal.

Howard: This is no time for false pride” (p.63).

Then Willy is shown to have returned home. Charley and Bernard visit the Lomans. Lately Biff and Happy return home. Bernard lets know the Lomans that he has got a job in Washington. He also informs that Biff failed in maths. Willy regrets about Biff’s erratic life and he says “was it may fault?” (p. 71). In a way he is not at fault. The two --Charley and his son-- criticize Willy’s muddle-headedness. Willy takes a loan of 120 dollars from Charley, yet refusing his offer of job. This reiterates his false pride. Even he thinks of rapping him. Charley says "The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell and the funny thing is that you’re a salesman, and you don’t know that” (p. 75). Charley exposes Willy's false idea of ‘liking.’ Then Willy is again guilty of his envy for Charley and his anger for his son.
In a side scene of a hotel Happy talks to supplier Stanley and talks of familiar things. He alludes to Biff as a big businessman. Both appreciate family business. He befriends a call girl Forsythe. Soon Biff enters the hotel. Happy says Biff is “one of the greatest football players (New York Giants) in the country” (p. 80). Happy seems to be after women.

The two brothers speak of Biff’s futile visit to Bill Oliver. Finally Biff met him and Oliver did not recognize him though he served him as a shipping clerk for some years. Biff felt sad as if he was in dream for fifteen years. In despair, Biff stole Bill Oliver’s fountain pen and ran off. Shortly Willy meets the sons in the hotel. He is shocked of Biff’s misfortune. He says,” The woods are burning” meaning he is fired. He is afraid of his wife: “Because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered” (p. 83). Now Willy listens to Biff. “He is completely broken”29 The father and son quarrel too. Willy strikes at Biff and bursts forth: “You rotten little louse! Are you spiting me?’ (p. 88). While Biff accuses of Willy that he is a “liar, take, phony little take” (p. 95). The two calling women Forsythe and Letta are aghast at Willy’s condition. Happy mocks when he says Willy is not his father, but just a guy. Unfortunately, Willy also has a woman who meets him now and says “Willy, you ruined me” (p. 91). The woman disappears with Linda’s stockings. Willy and Biff regret for Biff’s maths problem. Willy, at the same time, feels lonely (p. 95).

Back home Linda scolds Biff for not having invited Willy for dinner in spite of her best efforts. Miller again brings in cinematic effect. Ben re-appears and speaks of Miller’s foolishness. Biff is also sad. He says. “I’m saying good-bye to you. I’m not coming back any more” (p. 101). Willy warns him for spoiled life. Biff repents for his father’s false idea. He bursts forth: "And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air. I
could never stand taking orders from anybody." Willy reacts, "That's whose fault it is!" (p. 105). The statement: "I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you" (p. 106) indicates the father and sons' self-ruinage. Biff wants to burn "That phony dream" (p. 106). Finally Willy expresses his desire to settle. This desire to settle is to die. He escapes Linda's attention. He starts his car and moves away at full speed. Willy dies making an accident. Linda notices this and lays down flowers to Willy's body at funeral. The second act ends with the words "All stare down at the grave" (p. 109).

"Requiem" appears like an elegy to Death of a Salesman. At the funeral attended by Linda and the boys and Charley, Happy says, "there was no necessity for it" (p. 110). Biff accuses his father "He had the wrong dreams" (p. 111). Charley says, "Nobody hast blame this man" and Linda weeps. Thus ends the requiem.

Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman is a wonderful play. It is a big play. Miller present no fever than twenty five scenes in which Willy's body language and dialogue create images of the fall. He is 'beaten down' rather. Steven Centola observes, "Miller sought nothing less than a new poetics. The notion of creating a sense of simultaneity, a dramatic process by which he could bend time, became increasingly important."30 This is how Miller uses new techniques for expressing his 'logic of the imagination.' Miller has in this play used a unique grammar of expression. This is due to Ibsen's influence on Miller. This is called "plastic theatre"31 Miller's repartee is quite interesting and vigorous. Death allusions permeate the play right from the beginning to the end.
(iii) The Crucible

Arthur Miller's next major play *The Crucible* is both a social drama and a high tragedy. This play is more about the political event of McCarthyism or McCarthy's implication of communists in America. Yet the social element in the play is not limited to the political parallel of McCarthyism with witch-hunting, but extends much beyond it to be the question of individual's integrity in the face of organized challenges by socio-political forces. Miller speaks about this theme:

"I believe *The Crucible* could be alive for us because its central theme is, in my opinion, the central theme of our social life today. Simply, it is the question of whether the democraticss guarantee protecting political minorities ought to be set aside in times of crisis. More personally it is the question of whether one's vision of truth ought to be a source of guilt at a time when the mass of men condemn it as a dangerous theme...because there never was nor will there ever be, an organized society able to countenance calmly the individual who insists that he is right while the vast majority is absolutely wrong."32

The play written at the height of Senator McCarthy's campaign at the Communist and their associates, draws a clear analogy between McCarthyism and the witch-trials in Salem in 1692. Abigail, the niece of Reverent Parris and a mischief-maker, has led some of the girls of Salem in a naked frolic. To protect herself she claims to be the victim of witchcraft and frightens the other girls into making the claim. When the witch-finders are brought to Salem, Abigail and the girls denounce any member of the community who resists them. One by one the weak and the virtuous are brought to trial, condemned and hanged. The strongest resistance comes
from John Proctor, a good hearted man whom Abigail had seduced when
she was working for his wife. His confession of adultery promises to end
Abigail's reign of terror, but his wife lovingly denies it, and Proctor goes to
his death knowing that society has lost its ability and its right to distinguish
between good and evil.

If in his play, *Death of a Salesman*, Miller has focused on the wider
implications of social aridity and distortions, in his play *The Crucible* based
on court records and historical personages involved in the Salem witch trials
of 1692 he has brought to the fore, the subtle ways of the vested interests. In
this play on the sinister working of the witchcraft in the seventeenth
century Salem linked to the full-fledged court trial on witch-hunting Miller
has tried to show the widespread ramifications of the vested interest in
encouraging witchcraft; and then using the witch-hunting activities to its
advantage.... In general, it is the bad social environment which is responsible
for degeneration and distortion in human behavior in any society. The clever
role of a courtesan-like woman, Abigail Williams in the play determines the
dramatic events which very well show how a few people at the top in the
sphere of religion and politics can manipulate the public opinion in the
Christian community of Salem in New England. The play also makes it
clear that a woman given to a distorted view of life is taken advantage of by
the calculating individuals at the top of social ladder. In passing, it may be
mentioned here that in India of today a politico-cultural camaraderie,
like the Salem scenario revealed at the court trial in 1692, exists between
the courtesan-like females whether they may be from the ranks of the film-
world or from the high-style boudoirs of upper class, wealthy people; and
the powerful vested interest constitutive of bureaucrats, politicians and
other class of people. It is destructive of the inner fabric of society; and
harm the common human interest. The nucleus of the dramatic plot is pivoted around a beautiful, sensuous looking male, Abigail Williams, a farmer of near-perfect integrity—barring a single moral lapse, John Proctor and his wife Elizabeth Proctor. For one reason or the other, Abigail Williams who works as a maidservant at the house of John Proctor seduces this farmer, otherwise a man of probity. Elizabeth Proctor suspecting Abigail's liaison with her husband John Proctor relieves her from household service. Abigail becomes vindictive towards Elizabeth Proctor even as she remains sensuously attached to. Elizabeth's husband, John Proctor.

The temper of 'witch-hunting' in the Salem community arose out of the failure of the well-entrenched people in finding out legitimate reasons for their specific problems. For example, Rev. Parris found it convenient to explain his daughter's indecent behavior owing to sorcery and witchcraft rather than to his own failings. In the same way, the town's richest man, Mr. Putnam taking advantages of the mass hysteria about Salem's witch-hunting found it convenient to associate his rival landowners with the practice of witchcraft. As the witch-hunting hysteria spread, a climate of fear and suspicion came to be created among people. Miller's assessment that the common men under stress of a crisis lose track of reasoning for understanding the various problems realistically is apparently justified. Abigail Williams, being a clever and ruthlessly ambitious woman also took advantage of the mass hysteria and the constitution of a trial court for settling old scores with Elizabeth Proctor. A shrewd opportunist, she turns her own violation of Salem Law into an occasion for naming those for whom she has little liking and, in doing so, transforms herself into a local heroine. As a participant in Tituba's forest ceremony, Abigail drank blood, believing the ritual would curse Elizabeth Proctor, who, seven
months earlier, suspecting her husband and Abigail, released the girl from their service. If Abigail Williams bore in herself strong elements of cupidity, she was equally calculative.

It is equally interesting to find Miller arguing that there are socio-cultural factors responsible for mass hysteria and witch-hunting. Both are inter-related and are a part of a social order governed by religious and political orthodoxy. Man's sense of personal judgment is not allowed to grow by the vested interest. Evidently the time came in New England by the repression of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom.

The very title, *The Crucible*, in its literal meaning connotes an earthen vessel in which metallic ores are melted. In an extended sense, it also means the purifying of the ores; in the same way, the periodical upthrust of mass hysteria and witch-hunting in any community is a historical process for bringing about a freshening impact on community life having gone despotic and orthodox. This is the inference one gets from the proceedings of the court trial at Salem. Witch-hunting is a terrifying experience, as the 1950s America underwent in the McCarthy era. Witch-hunting is a form of public accusation, which becomes strikingly depressive and suffocative in modern world owing to the leverage of mass media, television, radio, newspapers and other modes of printed and spoken word.

Now, coming back to the Salem scenario, it may be stated that the witch-hunting or the public accusation had a direct effect on various
individuals differently. The effect differed from individual to individual depending upon the personality makeup of person so affected. Essentially, it is a psychological response; and hence, it has to be different from one person to another. As the fever (witch-hunting hysteria) grows, one comes to realise that its sources lie more and more in the irrationality of the human psyche as both individual and mass hysteria take over the town. Paranoia surfaces: Mrs. Putnam's unfocussed despair over the loss of her infants in childbirth turns to a more comforting hatred of Rebecca Nurse. Both Mrs. Putnam and Rev. Parris see a kind of inverse election in being tormented by the devil. Miller very convincingly describes the 'positive' effects of paranoia. The 'victims' of the witches begin to value themselves more highly than those who have been left alone, since it comforts them to know that someone, even Satan, is constantly watching out for them. The culmination of the mass hysteria occurs when the girls of Salem, egged on by the calculated deceptions of Abigail, truly believe that they see the devil in the form of a gigantic bird.

Thus, one finds that the cleverly good-looking, Abigail Williams playing a key role not only generates an atmosphere of witchy temper in the Salem community but also succeeds in enrobing girls like Marry Warren otherwise good in intent for devilish practices during the night. Such female characters play a pivotal role in increasing the strangle-hold of unscrupulous moneyed people and their henchmen, as it has been highlighted in the play by the presence of Thomas Putnam and his aids, destructive in intent. He is imbued with materialistic craving for power and money. Thomas Putnam, son of the richest man in Salem, sought restitution for the village's rejection of his candidate for minister and contested his father's will when it favored his younger brother; Putnam's name appeared on a number of historical
documents, characterizing him as an embittered, vindictive man. Francis Nurse was a frequent arbitrator in Salem, a man apparently capable of impartial judgment; he was, however, involved in a land dispute with his neighbours, including Putnam, and in the campaign for the ministerial candidate in opposition to Putnam's. It was Putnam who initiated the documents accusing the highly respected Rebecca Nurse, Francis's wife, of witchcraft, and Putnam's younger daughter who pointed hysterically and accusingly at the old woman at the hearing.

Several innocent people were forced to die even as the high dignitaries of the court maintained that they were trying to endorse Salem community's heritage of 'self-denial,' purposefulness, suspicion of all vain pursuits' and 'hard handed justice.' It is true that the evil-minded vested interest, helped by the cleverly orchestrated witchcraft activities of the unscrupulous Abigail Williams succeeded in shaping the court opinion; as a consequence of which nineteen women and men and two dogs were hanged; one man was pressed to death for refusing to plead, and 150 were imprisoned. As they were awaiting trial, a Boston court finally declared the evidence insufficient to warrant the death sentence. In the topsy-turvy world created by the witch-hunts, it was very difficult to differentiate between lies and truth. For a while, all-round confusion prevailed. Even the presiding dignitary, Deputy Governor Danforth got warped in his judgment in the surrounding confusion. During the court proceedings, he was able to show consideration to an ultra-vindicitive and ambitious character, Abigail Williams who wanted to create fissure between John Proctor, an upright farmer, and his wife, Elizabeth Proctor; rather, in her manipulating manner, she had tried to influence the court to consider Elizabeth Proctor as a witch so that she would be able to marry John Proctor to whom she was sensuously attached.
She would have succeeded in her design, but for the presence of mind of John Proctor who could see through the game of Abigail Williams. Along with his convulsive disenchantment with Abigail, he was equally moved by the pull and sincerity of his wife's love, that is, of Elizabeth Proctor. Ultimately, out of the courage of his conviction that one's conscience should be the arbiter, he penned his confession in regard to his sinful connection with Abigail Williams; but on the issue of naming others for witch-like act, he tore down his confession and refused to implicate others on the strength of his conviction that man's conscience is the final judge not any other authority including the Salem court. Then, John Proctor's enemies found it easy to condemn him to death. Still, in the midst of devil charged atmosphere, there were still men of sanity at Salem. One of them was Rev. Hale who was considered an expert on witch-hunting and the associated personal and institutional lapses in not adhering to the true spirit of Christianity. In disagreeing with the chief judge; Deputy Governor, Danforth, Rev. Hale observed: 'Life is God's most precious gift, no principle however glorious, may justify the taking of it.' While regarding John Proctor's conduct, Rev. Hale told the Deputy Governor: "I believe him; (Pointing at Abigail) This girl has always struck me false. She has...." This difference in perception between the two high-placed man proves the old adage that an evil-minded person would be at home with the evil character, as it was so with Danforth and Abigail Williams whom a purified thinker did not like.

In terms of St Luke 8, (32-34) in The New Testament, there is an explicit mention of devilish tendencies percolating into the mind of human beings in general. Such periodical eruptions in different societies are to be found at different periods of history. What happened at Salem was an
expression of a deep-seated malaise in New England society. All such periodical eruptions take place in different societies as and when the forces of unreason weaken the cultural values in terms of reason, equity, fair play and individual liberty associated with people who are essentially humane and good, not evil-minded. History avouches in general that the evil forces raise their head with the connivance of the propertied classes, which encourage only those people, who out of their willful evil sustain the exploiting interests. In his plays, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller has trenchantly shown that those individuals who are conscious of their worth and dignity-like Willy Loman (*Death of a Salesman*) and John Proctor and other innocent characters in *The Crucible* suffer just because the evil forces spearheaded by the deeply entrenched vested interest do not tolerate any dissent from their established social ideology. To defeat this dreadful menace, one should know the immense worth of one's personal dignity, as it is so in *Death of a Salesman*; and Miller's mind travels from his earlier play to *The Crucible* in which John Proctor stands by his conscience. In this respect he (Proctor) affirms his destiny. After all, man's integrity at its best is realized only when he acts according to his conscience. Miller himself has acknowledged that he wrote *The Crucible* in order to find a new kind of theatre in which there is a due play of a higher degree of consciousness which was not so in the earlier plays: "*The Crucible* was written... in order to bring me, and the audience, closer to that theatre and what I imagine can be an art more ample than any of us has dared to strive for, the art of Man among men, Man amid his works. This visualization is equally valid for *Death of a Salesman* because *The Crucible* is, internally, Salesman's blood brother."34 This is how Miller assessed these two plays which show in sharp relief the personal triumph of
man in the midst of social atmosphere given to lies, deception and large-scale perversity.

As for the dramatic technique of the play, Miller is afresh with a mixture of tradition and novelty. The main characters are far from flat. John Proctor is described as a 'farmer in his middle thirties and powerful of body. In his first scene he reveals himself as a man with a strong personality. Edward Murray writes, "Abigail has stood as though on tiptoe, absorbing his presence, wide-eyed,' while the other girl is 'strongly titillated.' that Abigail is willing to murder in order to possess John invests this farmer with a sense of importance. That John lusted with the girl in the past—against the law of God and Salem—reveals a certain daring in the man. That John has the will power to resist Abigail now, even while part of him still desires her, shows determination. Repeatedly, John displays his dislike of authoritarianism."
(iv.) A View from the Bridge

Arthur Miller's next play *A View from the Bridge* is equally important and interesting. Miller first wrote it as one acter in 1915. The play is set in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn of his times. In fact, *A View from the Bridge* bears certain resemblance with *A Memory of Two Mondays*, written in 1915. This is actually a thematic grouping of two one-act plays. These plays are actually successors to *Death of a Salesman* in that they are also family and social plays -- lays about the forces shaping ordinary people in ordinary places. The first play *A Memory of Two Mondays* is a frustratingly exact portrait of a group of frustrated people in a dusty warehouse in Lower Manhattan. Within the framework of a single act the group is presented on a Monday morning when young Bert decides to go off to college and, with fadeouts, on a later Monday when he actually leaves the loft. Except for Bert, nothing changes except for the worse. Only Bert wonders why the others fail to rebel at the monotony of their daily lives.

*A View from the Bridge* is laid in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, where many long shore man live. This play is based on a story Arthur Miller heard in his own Brooklyn neighborhood. At the time it struck him as a modern example of classical tragedy, and he has written it as sparingly as possible to keep the shape of the tale intact. Miller based the play on an anecdote told by Longhi, a longshoreman. He writes, "In the course of time Longhi mentioned a story he'd recently heard of a longshoreman who had ratted to the Immigration Bureau on two brothers, his own relatives, who were living illegally in his home, in order to break an engagement between one of them and his niece. The squealer was disgraced and no one knew where he had gone off to, and some whispered that he had been murdered
by one of the brothers. But the story went past me; I was still searching for a handle on Pete Panto."36 Miller's initial curiosity about the Brooklyn waterfront came from seeing graffiti that asked, "Dove Pete Panto?" (Where is Pete Panto?) The brave young dock worker who had dared to challenge the corrupt ILA leadership and had died for his daring.

It is the story of an ordinary longshoreman, unconsciously in love with a niece he has reared, who uses every bribe and threat he can think of to keep her from marrying. In the end he brings death to himself and tragedy to all around him. The major characters of the play include Eddie (Eduardo Carbone), his wife Beatrice or B; her niece Catherine, her two cousins Marco and Rodolfo. Alfieri serves as a modern day chorus. The play was first performed in 1956.

The play opens with the lawyer Alfieri. He tells jovially: "My wife has warned me. So have my friends; they tell me the people in this neighborhood lack elegance, glamour. After all, who have I dealt with in my life? Longshoremen and their wives, and fathers, and grandfathers, compensation cases, evictions, family squabbles -- the petty troubles of the poor"(p.12)37 These details of the lawyer -- an Italian by origin, shows us how he has to deal with the dwellers of the locality who are commoners. Eddie appears. He is forty- a husky, slightly overweight longshoreman. Alfieri as the chorus of the play introduces us Eddie as a longshoreman at Brooklyn Bridge. He is a passionate man right from the start and he seems to love women more than anything.

The following conversation between Eddie and his beautiful niece Catherine proves it amply:

CATHERINE. Hi, Eddie!
EDDIE. Where you goin' all dressed up?

CATHERINE. I just got it. You like it?

EDDIE. Yeah, it's time. And what happened to your hair?

CATHERINE. You like it? I fixed it different. He's here, B.!

EDDIE. Beautiful. Turn around, lemme see in the back. Oh, if your mother was alive to see you now! She wouldn't believe it.

CATHERINE. You like it, huh?

EDDIE. You look like one of them girls that went to college. Where you goin'?

CATHERINE. Wait'll B. Comes in, I'll tell you something. Here, sit down. Hurry up, will you, B.?

EDDIE. What's goin' on?

CATHERINE. I'll get you a beer, all right?

EDDIE. Well, tell me what happened. Come over here, talk to me (p. 13).

Eddie says Catherine’s ‘wavy’ walk my tempt men. He detests her flirting with others. There is news that two of her cousins -- Marco and Rodolpho of are arriving from Sicily. They want jobs so that they can manage their families. Eddie is worried about the guests as he has to provide them for their stay. They are to be given beds. Still Eddie is happy to support the poor Sicilians. Now Eddie and his wife Beatrice’s attention turn to Catherine. She says she is about to complete her basic education and is
about to get a good job. Eddie, as a family man, worries about Catherine’s a Navy Yard job though it may fetch her 50 dollars a month.

He agrees to his wife’s argument about Catherine’s existence. The young lady called Madonna serves him food and announces that “she will buy all new dishes with my first pay” (p.21). Eddie senses her marriage and going away. Catherine consoles him. He advises her “Don’t trust people....... Because most people ain’t people” (p.21). The whole scene is charged with emotion.

Alfieri comments: “Eddie was as good a man as he had to be in a life that was hard and even. He worked on the piew when there was work, he brought home his pay, and he lived” (p.21).

The cousins come. Marco is square built, 32 years old, suspicious, tender and quiet-voiced. Rodolpho, as Catherine too believes, is fair of complexion. They think of work. Marco says he has wife and three children to be supported. So the two needs enough work to earn and send it back for the family’s survival.

The hosts and guests talk of familial matters. Rodolpho wants to live in America for long. He wants to become rich; he can buy a motorcycle and work it back in Sicily. Catherine likes him. Beatrice encourages her to marry him. He is a bit singer too. Catherine asks him to sing Paper Doll (a Jazz tune): "I’ll tell you boys it’s tough to be alone. And it’s tough to love a doll that’s not your own" (p. 32). What we notice as discernible readers is Eddie’s sure envious for Rodolpho. He notices Catherine’s love for him and he starts behaving wrongs with his guests.
Albert Wertheim observes, "When Beatrice's cousins arrive from Italy, Eddie's ambivalences intensify." 38

The cousins start working. Rodolpho is particularly jolly with his music with workers. Eddie complains it to Beatrice. The couple notices that Catherine and Rodolpho are courting each other. Louis and Mike, Eddie's friends, also longshoremen report to Eddie that Marco and Rodolpho are working quite hard.

Now Eddie is pretty unhappy about Catherine's attitude. He fears she is out of his custody now. So he tells:

EDDIE. Katie, he's only bowin' to his passport.

CATHERINE. His passport!

EDDIE. That's right. He marries you he's got the right to be an American citizen. That's what's goin' on here. You understand what I'm tellin' you? The guy is lookin' for his break, that's all he's lookin' for.

CATHERINE. Oh, no, Eddie, I don't think so (p. 41).

Catherine is in tears rather. She does not think Rodolphe is of that sort. She consults Beatrice and the latter more in Catherine's favour warns her;

BEATRICE. I'm tellin' you, I'm not main' a joke. I tried to tell you a couple of times in the last year or so. That's why I was so happy you were going to go out and get work, you wouldn't be here so much, and you'd be a little more independent. I mean it. It's wonderful for a whole family to love each other, but you're a grown woman and you're in the same house with a grown man. So you'll act different now, heh?
CATHERINE. Yeah, I will. I'll remember.

BEATRICE. Because it ain't only up to him, Katie, you understand? I told him the same thing already (p. 44).

The family has this conflict now. Arthur Miller, the playwright intervenes in the form of the lawyer Alfieri. The lawyer asks Eddie to be fair in the deal. Eddie instead beats the bush when he says, “When I think that guy laying his hands on her I could - I mean it's eatin' me out, Mr Alfieri, because I struggled for that girl. And now he comes in my house and” (p. 47). The dialogue continues.

ALFIERI. Eddie, I want you to listen to me. You know, sometimes God mixes up the people. We all love somebody, the wife, the kids--e'ery man's got somebody that he loves, heh? But sometimes...there's too much. You know? There's too much, and it goes where it mustn't. A man works hard, he brings up a child, sometimes it's a niece, sometimes even a daughter, and he never realizes it, but through the years -- there is too much love for the daughter, there is too much love for the niece. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?

EDDIE. What do you mean; I shouldn't look out for her good?

ALFIERI. Yes, but those things have to end, Eddie, that's all. The child has to grow up and go away, and the man has to learn to forget. Because after all, Eddie--what other way can it end? Let her go. That's my advice. You did your job, now it's her life: wish her luck, and let her go. Will you do that? Because there's no law, Eddie; make up your mind to it; the law is not interested in this" (p. 48).
Now the scene shifts to Eddie's family. All people rejoice over dinner. Shortly they turn to the matter of Catherine and Rodolpho. Eddie cautions the cousins about immigration problem. Once this is over, the family has light entertainment. Rodolpho and Catherine dance.

Act II begins differently and seriously. Alfieri comments about Catherine and Rodolpho's marriage plan. Catherine desires to marry him and emigrate with him to Italy for good or ill. Yet Rodolpho thinks Italy is a poor country. He bursts: "No; I will not marry you to live in Italy. I want you to be my wife, and I want to be a citizen. Tell him that, or I will. Yes. And tell him also and tell yourself please, that I am not a beggar, and you are not a horse, a gift, a favour for a poor immigrant "(p. 61). Meanwhile Eddie enters. He notices Catherine - Rodolpho affair and gets angry. He asks Rodolpho to vacate the house. Soon Catherine says she too will go with Rodolpho and marry him. A battle ensues between the two men.

Eddie meets the lawyer Alfieri for counsel. Alfieri asks him to allow the marriage as it is right legally and morally. He says law is nature. He says "a river will drown you if you buck it now. Let her go." And bless her" (p.66).

Eddie leaves desperately. He informs the immigration Bureau about the illegal immigrants. Meanwhile, Beatrice sends the outsiders to upstairs (with Mrs. Dondero). Meanwhile two more Italian illegal immigrants have joined Marco.

The action starts briskly. Two immigration officers come and arrest Marco, Rodolpho and others. Catherine and Beatrice plead for their non-arrest. One officer says that is impossible. He suggests a lawyer's advice. Soon Marco spits at Eddie in despair. He vows to kill Eddie. He says: "He
(Eddie) degraded my brother. My blood. He robbed my children, he mocks my work. I work to come here, mister” (p.79). Alfieri takes a promise from Marco and advises Rodolpho to marry Catherine soon. The wedding takes place in the church. But meanwhile, Eddie and Marco confront each other, and Marco kills Eddie in front of all. Alfieri regrets because “Eddie even did not settle for half” (p.85).

Albert Wertheim rightly remarks, "The tragic pity we feel for Eddie, a pity for which Alfieri gives the cues, comes from the realization that Eddie is a man of powerful passions and a man who never quite understands those passions."39 Indeed, an intersection of conscious motives and passions creates a tangled skein that nonetheless relentlessly draws Eddie, Catherine, Rodolpho, and Beatrice into the tragic weave. In the words of June Schluter and James Flanagan, "Eddie tumbles to a position of contempt.”40

Neil Carson observes, "A View from the Bridge is a two-level play in which the psychological and social elements seem sometimes at odds. Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman in the Red Hook district of Brooklyn, and his wife Beatrice have been responsible for the upbringing of their niece Catherine since the death of her parents when she was very young. The social level of the play deals with the strict code of loyalty of the Sicilian-American community in which Eddie lives and with the tragic consequences of Eddie's infraction of that code."(Neil Carson, Arthur Miller, Macmillan, London, 1982, p. 81)
References:


17. Christopher Bigsby, Introduction to Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, p. VIII.


19. All the textual references are from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, ed with Introduction by Christopher Bigsby, Penguin, New York, 1998.


29. Steven Centola, "All My Sons, Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller, p. 73.

30. Steven Centola, "All My Sons, Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller, p. 73.


35. Timebends, p. 151.

