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The Failure of the American Dream in Arthur Miller's Plays

MA THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to portray the failure of the American dream as represented in Arthur Miller's plays. The promises of the American dream render it attractive for many people. Throughout history, the United States has been conceived as a country that provides economic, social and political welfare to all her citizens. Accordingly, people living in the United States would reach high economic, social and political standards by working hard and making use of proper opportunities. While the reality of that dream is far more complicated, expectations and hopes have attracted immigrants from all over the world. However, people who chase after this dream mostly witnessed its illusory side. Economically they have perished in the capitalist system; socially they have lost their identity; and politically they have witnessed the lack of freedom of opinion and speech. For that reason, the failure of the American dream has been criticized and discussed by many historians and writers. Arthur Miller is one of the passionate advocates who depicts the failure of the American dream in his plays. This thesis attempts to trace Arthur Miller's engagement with the American dream in his plays, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, and *A View from the Bridge*. Although economic, political and social dimensions of the problem are necessarily intermingled, the thesis will concentrate on the economic dimension in *Death of a Salesman*, political dimension in *The Crucible*, and social dimension in *A View from the Bridge*.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Amerikan rüyasının başarısızlığını, Arthur Miller'ın oyunlarına yansıdığı biçimiyle tasvir etmektir. Bu rüyayı çekici kılan insanlara verdiği vaatlerdir. Tarih boyunca Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, vatandaşlarına ekonomik, toplumsal ve politik refah sağlayan bir ülke olarak kabul edilmiştir. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde yaşayan insanlar çok çalışarak ve elde ettikleri fırsatları değerlendirerek ekonomik, sosyolojik ve politik olarak yüksek hayat standartlarına ulaşabilir. Bu rüyanın gerçekliği her ne kadar daha çetrefelli olsa da beklentiler ve ümitler dünyanın her yerinden insanları bu rüyaya çekmiştir. Ne var ki, bu rüyanın peşinden koşan birçok kişi onun sahte yüzü ile karşılaşmıştır. Ekonomik olarak kapitalist sistemde yok olmuşlar, sosyolojik olarak kimliklerini kaybetmişler ve politik olarak düşünce ve konuşma özgürlüğünün yok oluşuna tanıklık etmişlerdir. Amerikan rüyasının çöküşünü eleştiren ve tasvir eden birçok tarihçi ve yazar vardır. Arthur Miller da Amerikan rüyasının çöküşünü şiddetle savunan ve oyunlarında vurgulayan bir yazardır. Bu tezin temel amacı, Arthur Miller'ın oyunlarında Amerikan rüyasının çöküşünün izini sürmektir. Her ne kadar sorunun ekonomik, toplumsal ve politik boyutları birbirlerinden ayrılamaz olsa da bu tez, *Satıcının Ölümü*'nde Amerikan rüyasının ekonomik çöküşüne, *Cadı Kazanı*'nda Amerikan rüyasının politik çöküşüne, *Köprüden Görünüş* oyununda ise Amerikan rüyasının toplumsal çöküşüne odaklanacaktır.

INTRODUCTION: Evolution of the American Dream

Life in America has long embellished the dreams of multitudes. The fertile plains and valleys of the country as well as the freedom and opportunities that the land offers have sparked the imaginations of people around the world who wish to fulfill their dreams of a better life. Since so many people have perceived America as a country of opportunities, it is more than a destination of a journey. Rather, it is an idea full of expectations and hopes. As this idea is constructed in the minds of people, the nature of the discourse that creates its image as a country of opportunity is important. Phrases and concepts such as “the land of opportunity,” “manifest destiny,” and “the American dream,” which one often encounters in propaganda and advertisements, have apparently created hope within the hearts of immigrants. One can even suggest that hope is the fuel that enabled the establishment of the American nation. Thus some important phases of the history of America provide us with a general framework for understanding the concept of the American Dream.

The concept of the American Dream relates to the belief that people can reach their goals by endeavoring to fulfill their own ambitions, regardless of social class. As Jessica Schweke points out, “If one word can be used to define the American dream, that word would be ‘freedom’” (Scheweke 4). One of the ways in which America has been described – that dream defined through a targeted sense of hope – is through the promotional phrase, “the land of opportunity.” According to James Loewen, “the land of opportunity” is an empowering myth, the intent being that by virtue of believing in that myth, one can make it true (217).

There is, however, a difference between the myth of the American Dream and its reality. The myth of “the land of opportunity” does not imply that anyone coming to the United States can guarantee success. Instead, opportunity means the chance of success. In regard to this sense of chance, Jeremy Rifkin states in his work *The European Dream: How Europe’s Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* that “America was always meant to be a land of ‘equal opportunity’ but not a land of ‘equality of results’” (12). However, when people first started to arrive in order to form colonies and a settlement,

America was a wild place compared to European standards. There was an indigenous population that had to be considered as well as undeveloped land that would take a great deal of energy to prepare in order to create safe places to live. Moreover, during the years of immigration, some unfortunates struggled not only with hard conditions, but also with persecution, causing many of them to leave the New World. Since those paths still exist, coming to the United States guarantees not success, but opportunities towards the ends.

The story starts in the seventeenth century, when religious freedom in Europe was being fought over through internecine struggles during the reconstruction of Christianity. America, was a land in which one has chance to live according to his own faith existed from the outset. In regard to seventeenth-century exploration and migration, historians Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury in their book *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* state that “the original tale was a religious one of travail and wandering, with the Lord’s guidance, in a quest of higher purpose and a millennial history” (9). As Ruland and Bradbury describe it, the history of the Puritans is one of oppression. Both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church reviled the ascetic lifestyle, in which the Puritans had found their sense of God, as blasphemy. They were persecuted for their beliefs and characterized themselves as martyrs. By the time Charles I came to the throne in England in 1625, the need for the Puritans to leave their homes and find a new world became imperative. Archbishop William Laud, during the reign of Charles I, became powerful within the church and he made sure that the laws against non-conformity within the Church were enforced. Stephen Nichols describes this fact in his book *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World*. Under Laud’s authority, those who were considered to be blasphemers and against the religious interests of the state were jailed, tortured, and burned (Nichols 102). Thus, the new world represented a new freedom from this type of oppression and became imperative to survive.

Furthermore, according to Michael Corbett and Julia Mitchell Corbett’s *Politics and Religion in the United States*, “The Puritans saw themselves in a very special light. In the biblical *Exodus*, Jews escaped from Egypt to travel to a new land promised to them by God. The Puritans saw themselves as the new chosen people and the new world was the new Israel”

(33). As Jews accepted territory from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River as a Promised Land, the Puritans accepted the new land in the Western hemisphere as their Promised Land.

It is important to understand here how plight of the Puritans is discussed. Nobility is transferred upon the Puritans with a mix of fortitude and innocence that increases the power of the myth of “the American Dream.” In school, children are taught about the first Thanksgiving. It is the interaction between the indigenous population of Native Americans and the Puritans. It is described as an amicable and loving celebration in which the new immigrants were given agricultural tools to survive. The support was then celebrated with a feast. It is the myth of religious freedom that fuels the power of the myth of the American dream.

On the other hand, while the Puritans were seeking their own freedom from persecution, they composed a brutal group of believers. Their ascetic lifestyle was imposed upon their own antecedents. Severe punishment and retribution for not conforming were authoritative acts. Nichols describes them as “fine purveyors of hypocrisy, rigidity, misogyny, and patriarchal domination” (99). While Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and Arthur Miller’s play, *The Crucible*, are notable literary sources that describe the difficulty of living as a Puritan, both are only a mere snapshot. Nichols equates these two works with the idea of comparing a picture of Hawaii to an actual visit to the islands: the picture is not nearly descriptive enough of the actual experience (99).

Later, during the eighteenth century, the spark of political freedom determined the philosophy of the country. Since the United States is a country built on ideology, the new world became a place where men and women could come to escape their old lives and establish a new existence. Here the pressures of a highly structured governmental system were replaced by the hardships of an untamed world. However, European influence affected the settlers. The British who financially squeezed their colonists until revolution were the only answer. The beginnings of migration that were inspired by the concepts of freedom were then extended toward the formation of a nation. It was based upon ideological principles, a new way of forming a state.

The preamble to the American Constitution states, “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union....” In this way, Thomas Jefferson started constructing a new discourse to define what was meant by freedom, which became the underlying conversation that made the nation (DeKoven 128). While most states had been formed by the growth of power through a leader, the United States was formed through an ideological discourse based on living under a government.

When the dream of a nation that built upon the needs of her people became a reality, migration to the new world increased. The new world was a place where farmers and craftsmen could take up arms and defeat the British crown. America seemed to be a place where possibilities abounded to the people of other nations whose own lives were oppressed and their ability to succeed was impeded by governments. The myth of the “American Dream” became a powerful, living concept that held promise.

Following its War of Independence, America became a new nation through the beliefs of men who had no longer wanted to live under the yoke of colonialism. The nineteenth century marked America as a country of growth and expansion. It was at least until the devastating years of the American Civil War. Although its core ideologies were challenged, it emerged from the ordeal with a new strength. In fact, it is in the nineteenth century that the country was rebuilt around the ideals and philosophies of the American dream.

Conceptually, the nineteenth century in America can be divided into two parts: the first being represented by Westward expansion, and the second being the battle for individual liberty represented by the Civil War. According to Kevin J. Blake, “Speculation about the meaning of the American West, a landscape that occupies center stage in American folklore, makes more sense with an understanding of the evolution of ideas that are attached to the place” (202). The concept of the American West was shaped, not only through stories that were told from one person to the other, but through the tales that were fashioned by newspapers, magazines, and novels. They were all about rugged individuals who were taming a wild land, full of romance and danger. The West became a subject of artistic interest as well. The paintings, novels and

eventually films all participated in the discourse and suggested that the region was a place of mythological adventure. In this concept the cowboy who mettles against the harsh lands and seeks their fame and fortune became a representation of something more than human. His heroism and power to tame his environment filled the spirit of those who would try their luck in those lands. Their hope was to find more meaning and often more profit in their lives.

The nineteenth century was also a time when the new nation was tested in a war of brothers against brothers and fathers against sons. The freedoms that had been extended to all European-born individuals were now being measured against the hypocrisy of slavery. The fatal result was the American Civil War. The country was torn in half, the concept of freedom was tested, and the discourse about the philosophy of a nation was examined through the reality of the people who turned on each other. In the end, the philosophy of freedom won and the history of slavery was put to rest.

On the other hand, in the nineteenth century, the image of the self-made man also achieved further refinement. In America, men were equal, and this made all the difference in how their lives were lived. During late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, texts that circulated the discourse of the self-made man were everywhere. These stories usually featured characters from economically less powerful and uneducated families who had somehow succeeded in becoming rich and powerful. They were walking “success manuals” of the period. “Self-improvement,” both economically and socially, was the main ambition and result of their effort (Tyson 301). The way they obtained economic power was less important than their prosperity. As Tyson indicates, Harriot Alger’s texts and McGuffey Readers presented the biographies of self-made men all over the nation (304). In the late nineteenth century, self-made millionaire dynasties such as Jay Gould, Jim Fisk, Andrew Carnegie, James Hill, and John D. Rockefeller were created, which then ruled the country through the capitalist system.

In the early twentieth century capitalist system came into the picture. The philosophies of the Enlightenment had awakened people’s sense of individuality. It is coupled with the rise in income of the middle classes through industrialized commerce. That provided a framework in which capitalism would dominate economic theory. In fact, the practice of capitalism had

always been the economic foundation of the nation. But with the rise of a corporate world dependent on the working class who in turn met the needs of factories, a new wealthy elite was born. Often these men came into power and wealth through shrewd investing and sometimes-ruthless practices that gave the hope to every man. His hope was to attain the same status and financial positions, with given little luck and opportunity. However, the pursuit of the dream has also led to some ruinous times in which the dream became a nightmare. During the 1920s, the stock market became a powerful economic force that addressed the dreams of many before the crash.

Economical revival was slow, and the road to recovery crashed with the terrors of World War I. It was a conflagration that stretched across the globe. However, the challenge rallied the nation once more toward patriotic duty. The United States citizens sacrificed through rationing in the hope of victory once again over tyranny and oppression. Then, only two decades later World War II broke out. This time, the American people became galvanized by the events of Pearl Harbor toward vengeance and the might of righteousness to support a global community that needed their help. This period of time would lead to the greatest power of the myth. The American Dream was becoming a reality throughout the world due to both the generosity and the fierce military of the American nation.

As far as the post war period is concerned, the United States of America witnessed many notable political, economic, and social changes during the late 1940s and early 1950s, which had a direct impact on the life style of its citizens. While the economic power of the country continued to make a significant impact on American culture, as Franklin points out (1953), many researchers have identified the post-war period as an age of transition, especially the transition to the capitalist system and to new social structures. Duiker and Spielvogel, drawing a vivid picture of the post-war United States in *The Essential World History*, suggest that “the most significant factor after 1945 was the emergence of the United States as the world’s richest and most powerful nation. American prosperity reached new heights in the two decades after World War II...” (1). The authors also identify that it was a period when the country was gripped with a series of economic and social problems like racial divisions and staggering budget deficits. Similarly, the influx of larger multitudes of immigrants after

World War II also caused the creation of a more ethnically diverse population. Furthermore, the Cold War and post-Cold War realities also played crucial roles in shaping the Western outlook toward the American dream of prosperity and development.

For above reasons, any discussion of the failure of the American dream necessitates a thorough understanding of the capitalist system that prevailed in the nation. Post-World War II economic expansion has often been regarded as the “Golden age of Capitalism.” In this respect Marglin and Schor inform us in their work, *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, that there was 2.5 percent growth of output per hour in the United States from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1970s (46). This was instrumental for the U.S. to obtain the technological leadership role, in contrast to the experience of the other major industrial countries. Changes in macroeconomic structures that culminated in “rapid and parallel growth of productivity and capital stock per worker; and parallel growth of real wages and productivity” (Marglin & Schor 49) also accelerated the US transition to capitalism. Sudden flourishing of the capitalist system assisted many lower- and middle-class people to climb the economic ladder.

Transition to new economic structures also had a great effect on the American middle class, who previously could never have expected to reach the income levels they were aspiring toward. Economic growth during the post-war period offered them immediate prospects of wealth and social advancement. It is quite notable, therefore, that many middle class men failed to accomplish the American dream in their pursuit to amass wealth rapidly. Middle class men aspired to build up a new life corresponding to the development of the nation. As it is rightly put by Jennifer Hochschild, “...three quarters of the Americans, compared with only one-third of Britons, West Germans, and Hungarians (and fewer Dutch), agree that they have a good chance of improving their standard of living. Twice as many Americans as Canadians or Japanese think that future generations of their nationality will live better than the present generation” (12). One can infer that it is this confidence and optimism that led Americans to pursue the American dream.

The concept of the American dream was strengthened during the post-war period in America. In his book, *The American Dream*, Hildegard Schnell reveals that it was James Truslow Adams, an American writer and historian, who coined the term “American Dream” in a study called *The Epic of America*. Adams explains the basic fascination and promise of living in an America that offers “opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement” (Schnell 3). Adams considers the American dream as part of the republican conception of a classless society “for the single human being of any and every class” (Schnell 3). From the sixteenth century until today, there was the opportunity for people to obtain something regardless of class, the only criteria being one’s ability. Thus, in American literature some writers and playwrights strongly advocated that the concept of the American Dream is nothing but the dream of an ordinary American to become a successful part of capitalist society.

During the 1940s and 1950s one of the strongest writers to portray the American Dream was Arthur Miller, who “earnestly follows in the footsteps of the moralizing Henrik Ibsen and the reforming Bernard Shaw” (Walker 208). Many regard Arthur Miller as one of the greatest American playwrights. After moving to New York during the World War II, he wrote a number of plays criticizing the notion of the American Dream. As a witness to the changing spheres of American society and the concept of the American Dream during the post-war period, Miller clearly outlined how it adversely affected the American middle class. Miller severely criticized the concept of the American Dream and emphasized the folly of seeking the American Dream since it could discourage one from recognizing real values in life. Dealing with the theme of the American Dream, the dramatist attempted to bring to light the adverse effects of pursuing such a false notion, in addition to portraying the changing social structures through his plays.

Arthur Miller was born in 1915 in New York City. Since his father was a successful businessman who owned a women’s clothing company with 400 employees working for him, Miller did not witness hard economic conditions in his childhood. His family, in other words, had been successful in achieving the American Dream of freedom and prosperity. “Since Miller’s parents had come from Poland, America was a promise and possibility, and the liberation from his past. They had journeyed in hope and hope seemed justified” (Bigsby,

2005: 5). They were living in an eleven-bedroom apartment with a maid and a driver. Unfortunately, the dream ended with the Wall Street crash of 1929. After his father's financial collapse, everything fell apart for the family and a new life began for him. His life continued in a two-bedroom Brooklyn basement. He had to work at several menial jobs to help his family and to pay his college tuition, and this experience forced him to witness the real and hard conditions of living in the United States as a citizen or an immigrant. On many occasions and with many different people he was confronted with the fact that what is promised in life is often very far from the reality. In the blocks of Brooklyn and other side streets of New York City, Miller observed people who wrestled daily life with economic corruption, power conflicts and mundane struggles just to survive. This situation was reflected in his works in later years. Especially his plays staged his deep insight and in-depth observation regarding the social phenomena existing around him. In his first play, *No Villain* (1935), he depicted the drama of his own family by portraying an immigrant family that achieves the American Dream at first but later falls on hard times financially. In the play, the son of the family is also a college student who has converted to Marxism, like Miller. He won the Avery Hopwood Award, a major scholarship program at the University of Michigan, for *No Villain* and changed his major from journalism to English, embarking on a new career as a playwright. In 1937 his second play, *Honors at Dawn*, won the Avery Hopwood Award for the second time. Tennessee Williams was one of the other awarded playwrights.

Considering his Broadway plays, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* was performed in New Jersey in 1940 and then on Broadway 4 years later. Miller won the Theater Guild's National Award with *The Man Who Had All the Luck* when it was first performed in 1940. In this play he portrays a young American who seems to turn everything he touches into gold, but he learns about the harsh realities of life through the other individuals around him. C.W.E. Bigsby in his book *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller* defines this play as "...a strange play for a self-declared Marxist to write and there is at its heart a debate about human agency and the capacity for change" (56). Later, Miller's reputation as a playwright on Broadway was fully established in 1946 with his first hit, *All My Sons*, which earned him a Tony Award for best author, and a New York Drama Critics Circle Award. *All My Sons* was based upon a true story which Miller had heard of. It is about the "betrayal" of a woman

whose father also betrayed the U.S. military during World War II by selling faulty airplane parts, which caused the death of 21 pilots. Miller portrayed the protagonist, Joe Keller, as a self-made uneducated man who founded his factory during the Great Depression and whose only concern was the economic power he gained, regardless of how he obtained his wealth – even if the outcome was disaster or death. Miller depicts Keller’s wartime profiteering success as the accomplishment of someone who has deluded himself into thinking he has achieved the American Dream. With an industrialist’s ill wife and the suicide of one of their sons Miller describes Keller’s achievement as an illusion. In addition, their other children’s dissatisfaction with life is staged, proving the failure of the American Dream in the play.

As previously discussed, Miller’s protagonists mostly cherish the American dream. However, they fail to realize their dreams and invariably end up in further misery. After *All My Sons*, Miller continued to portray the failure of the American Dream through his plays. In his most famous play, *Death of A Salesman* (1949), which was described as a “time bomb under American capitalism” by a woman in the audience on opening night (Bigsby 2005: 106), Miller proves the fallibility of the American dream that promises wealth and economic freedom when Willy Loman commits suicide to provide for the economic future of his family. According to Bigsby, “It was not an attack on American values. It is however an exploration of the betrayal of the values and the cost of this in human terms” (Bigsby, 2005: 106). The characterization of Willy Loman reveals the disillusionment of a protagonist who has tried to grasp the American dream and failed horribly. After failing in his efforts to support his family, Loman decides to put an end to his life, thinking that his death may save his family from its tormented state. Loman’s actions also display the desperation of the American middle class, who struggle with failure in their attempts to achieve the American Dream. Willy Loman yearns for success in his life, and for him “success means earning a lot of money and being highly esteemed in the business world and by others” (Schweke 14). This perspective exposes the complementary relationship between wealth, prestige, and reputation.

In 1953, with *The Crucible* Miller illustrated that one cannot “control his political destiny” (Walker 4) as easily as is promised by the American Dream. The play exposes the struggles

of the central character, John Proctor, a poor farmer. *The Crucible* is set against the backdrop of the mad witch-hunts of the Salem witch trials in the late seventeenth century. Literary critic Harold Bloom, in *Arthur Miller's The Crucible*, makes a clear assessment of the play and its central character, Proctor. For Bloom, the play is very powerful and he rightly quotes Miller on “the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history” (Bloom 46). Proctor was made a scapegoat of the existing social customs where he was left with two options: either to tell the truth and die or to tell a lie and live. The failure of commitments in *The Crucible* is used by Miller to illustrate the subtext of the play, wherein he alludes to the fake side of freedom of opinion and speech in the United States, and the torture of suspected communists who were pressured to confess their crimes during the McCarthy era. This subject is also dominant in his next play, *A View from the Bridge* (1955), when the protagonist, Eddie, informs on his wife’s cousin to the Immigration Office in order to forestall his niece’s marriage with one of the immigrant cousins. A clear reference to Elia Kazan’s betrayal of colleagues by naming names to the House Committee on Un-American Activities Committee, Bigsby emphasizes that “Eddie betrays the human connection by which he has lived to the inhuman and alien society” (Bigsby, 2005: 203).

In *A View from the Bridge*, one can find glimpses of Miller’s personal experiences or familiarity in presenting the theme and background of the play, which depicts the longshoreman Eddie living in an Italian community in Red Hook. “The community is governed by codes, and for the community one’s masculinity is an essential component of life” (Bigsby, 2005: 178). Eddie, the protagonist of the play, plots his life against this masculinity. A conventionally religious and contented man, Eddie allows illegal Italian immigrants – two cousins of his wife – to stay with him while struggling to realize the American Dream himself. He is well aware of their intentions and takes pride in allowing them to stay in his house. Reading through the play, one comes across many parallels with *Death of a Salesman*, as when Willy Loman is a victim of desire. According to Bigsby, “Eddie Carbone is a victim of desire which simultaneously exalts him precisely because it is implacable, because it is pursued with total recklessness, because it takes him outside the moral universe where he stands, Lear-like, abandoned” (2005: 179). The character of Eddie reveals that he, like Willy Loman, is repressed in the name of an ordered social life.

It can be suggested that Miller depicts the failure of the very notion of the American Dream in all his plays. To put it in context with his three plays, *Death of A Salesman*, *The Crucible*, and *A View From the Bridge*, Miller proves the failure of the American Dream from different angles even though they all telescope within each other. The present study calls for in-depth research into the issue to determine how well and from what angles Miller's plays depict the failure of the American Dream with the tragic ends of each protagonist. In *Death of a Salesman* Miller dominantly deals with the economic side of the subject by exposing the materialism and fallibility of American Dream that promises wealth and economic freedom to Willy Loman, who is ultimately forced to commit suicide for the sake of his family. In *The Crucible* Miller sheds a light on the impact of McCarthyism by using the allegory of the Salem Witch Trials in order to show how illusory the rights of free speech and opinion can be in the United States. Finally, in *A View from the Bridge*, Miller stages a social reality that exposes the failure of the American Dream by comparing the lives of immigrants in their homeland with the promised life in America.

CHAPTER I: The Economic Failure of the American Dream in *Death of a Salesman*

Death of a Salesman was first performed in 1949, giving its playwright, Arthur Miller, eventual international attention as a writer (Moran 226). The play opened on Broadway at the Morosco Theater on 10 February 1949, running for more than two years with 742 performances (Yasinski 4). Briefly, *Death of a Salesman* focuses on the domestic crisis the country had been undergoing in the wake of World War II. The play revolves around the protagonist, Willy Loman, who has rendered valuable services to his company as a salesman and has always been traveling for the marketing and advertising of various company products and items in different states and cities. However, since his health no longer allows him long and continuous travelling, he seeks the help of his boss for a desk job assignment at the office. Unfortunately, instead of complying with his request in light of his long service, he is fired. That unexpected response leaves him in a state of confusion, humiliation, and depression. Finally, Loman decides to commit suicide for the future of his sons, who could establish themselves with the money that they will receive from the insurance after his death.

The play won a Tony Award, Broadway's highest honor, in 1999 for a revival of the work. At 84, Miller was thrilled to be at the awards show and to see one of his greatest works receive such a prestigious award fifty years after it was first produced on Broadway (Moran 226). The work has stood the test of time, and the writing is so poignant that the message is clear and understood even fifty years later by modern audience. Miller has managed to touch audiences deeply for decades by portraying the plight of Willy Loman, which is embroidered around consumerism that has taken over the lives of Americans. It is the system imposed on individuals that regardless of the socio-economic status, everyone is equally entitled to the luxuries of life. However, this equality can be provided only through life-long debts. According to Moran, the system "presents credit as the social equalizer, of promoting higher standards of living among the masses and allowing all to enjoy the realization of the consumerist desires" (3).

Miller's play displays his understanding of the American society of his era, and the work is as valid today as it was at the time of its publication in the 1950s. The play was created with

the background theme that the USA turned out to be the most powerful country in the world during and after World War II since it maintained the strongest social, economic, cultural, and technological institutions. Consequently, Americans had to be the most flourishing and thriving people. As Yasinski argues, depending on Miller's comment about the play, *Death of A Salesman* displays 1949 of the United States "...when many people - riding an economy rescued from the Great Depression of the 1930s by the domestic boom of World War II - found a more prosperous life within reach. Additionally, "Many pursued the 'American Dream' of hard work rewarded by middle class success such as a house, a car, a college education and household appliances" (3). However, as Miller skillfully depicts in his work, this was not the situation in reality. The play reveals the sorry state of affairs that the members of the middle stratum of society have to undergo for years. As the system requires, the low-income level compels them to take heavy loans against high interest rates, and thus they remain trapped in a vicious circle of debt and loans. As a result, their life is spent under constant pressure to work hard to pay off these loans. The author points out the fact that success has a direct and intimate relationship with financial stability, independence, and prosperity. However, debts and loans add to the miseries of individuals belonging to the middle class while the private sector gets the utmost enjoyment out of it.

Nineteenth-century philosopher Karl Marx viewed this financial imbalance and unequal distribution of resources and opportunities as the root cause of the conflict between the haves and have-nots. Marx declares capitalism as the root of all evil, since wealth and resources are confined to private ownership. The private sector not only enjoys the lion's share in profit and production, but also keeps the working classes deprived of their right and justified share, even though it is actually the outcome of the efforts made by the workers and laborers. "The Marxist perspective strongly condemns the impact of industrialization in Western societies, which deny allowing the working stratum their share in income and profits" (Porter 277). The same has been stated by Miller in *Death of a Salesman*, where heavy debts create a gloomy and disturbed situation in Willy's house, and he eventually takes his life in the pursuit of escaping the threat from the lenders. As Bigsby points out "Miller had been drawn to Marxism, seeing in that the political embodiment of his moral beliefs" (Bigsby 2005: 3).

In *Death of a Salesman* Miller openly criticizes the U.S. income system in which people are in debt throughout their entire lives: They spend their entire lives just paying off their mortgage, car installments, taxes, college money, insurance, credit cards, etc. The system makes them lifetime consumers. When they retire, they realize that they have spent their whole life just for a house and a car – if they are lucky enough to manage this. After their retirement, they mostly cannot afford the taxes on their houses even if the mortgage is paid off. In short, even though the system promises that you can have everything that a family needs such as a house with a yard where the children can play with their dogs, a car that can take you and your family anywhere you want – like the portrayal of a perfect American family, in fact the reality is that most families fail to understand the elements of this picture. Through this system one becomes a prisoner of the promised life. As Miller shows in *Death of a Salesman*, what is left is a fragmented family union, lack of communication, deep disappointment, and sorrow.

To foreshadow the sorrow caused by the economic vicious circle that traps the members of the family in the play, Miller begins by describing the fragile-seeming house of Willy Loman, who spent his whole life paying the mortgage for which his life is trapped. From the first moment, the characters are trapped in the American system. The quotation below conveys the feeling of aloofness and sadness about the house and its members, since the color blue defines their psychology. Additionally, the angry glow of orange reflects their anger toward the outside world, which is represented by the apartments. The disunity with and insolvency of the outside world is represented by the dicky house with the apartments:

... Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. As more light appears, we see a solid, vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home (*Death of A Salesman 7*).

The protagonist Willy Loman, whose exhaustion is apparent at first sight, is sixty years old and has spent his entire life chasing after the American Dream, which has destroyed his life. When his childhood is taken into consideration, it is obvious that being a victim of the

system is inherited by him and his family, and by giving this message Miller succeeds in showing that being a victim of the American Dream is part of the system. Willy Loman was raised up in the back of the peddler wagon that is the business vehicle for his father's venture into capitalism. Salesmanship is something that Willy was familiar with through his upbringing. He was not part of the American Dream landscape from birth. He lived on the outskirts of society, and his immigrant family was trying to learn how to live within the new culture where they had not found a stable and rooted home life. As a salesman, their father "would start in Boston, and he would toss the whole family into the wagon, and he'd drive the team right across the country...." (38) to provide a life for his family.

One of the strongest issues presented by the play is that of assimilation – the dual nature of Loman and his family identity in relation to the society around them. Willy Loman lived in hopes of a world that he didn't quite know how to construct since he never had such a world during his childhood. He not only followed his father's business to conquer the country, but he also was left alone by him in the wild nature of the country with his mother and brother. However, there is no indication of anger toward his father; rather, there are symbols that reflect his longing for his father. The strongest symbol is the sound of the flute music that he heard when he was in the back of his father's peddler wagon. According to McDonough, "For Willy, then, the father figure is something like the pied piper, never known, but always heard, mysteriously calling Willy to places far away" (27). Insofar as Willy listened to the call of his father's flute, he always seeks the promise of the identity that he could have gained from his father. As a result, he pursued a life in which he never lived in the present but rather always lived in the hope that tomorrow he would attain the life he desired. Willy remembers his father through his brother Ben, who is a manifestation of his own memory. According to Ben, their father "was a very wild-hearted man" (38) who abandoned his family for his own sake.

Since he was left by his father when he was just three, Willy spent his life seeking the substance of his father. He lacks the male guidance that his father should have provided, and this void creates an impact on the way Willy views his life. He looks to the strongest male figure in his family in order to help him formulate his own identity. Apart from his father, his

brother Ben also abandons both Willy and his mother to their fate in order to find his own way. Since Willy lacks a father figure, he always dreams of his father when he cannot cope with life. This issue is obvious when Willy tells his brother that “nothing is working out. He does not know what to do” (66). He feels trapped.

He thinks that Ben can manage everything. However, Willy misses the fact that Ben made his way in the world at the expense of others. He abandons his family, and this does not seem to be Willy’s way. Willy refuses to leave his family and go to Alaska. Therefore, he would never achieve success in the way that his brother does. Ben was a frontiersman, and his exploits in Alaska and in Africa represent colonialism. For Willy, Ben represents the self-made individual because he is interested in taking the world and profiting from what he can find. Nothing more interests him. He does not even know what Willy does. According to McDonough, “We are left with a vague impression of Ben as representative of not merely survival but success of the fittest, a sense that Ben somehow wrested from the jungle the riches he now possesses, riches he can hold in his hand, tangible objects such as diamonds” (28).

Willy has no real memories of his father as a man. He is too young to create a connection to the identity of the man who drives the peddler’s wagon and takes them from place to place, selling his wares. Therefore, this hunger has been transferred to his brother – a man who embodies the success he desires, but who possesses a ruthlessness of spirit that Willy lacks. Miller portrays Ben as a ruthless and insensitive character – a self-made man who walks out of the jungle and becomes rich. His experience underlines that the only way to survive in the system and to gain wealth is to be implacable and self-centered. In contrast to Ben, characters such as Willy Loman, who pays his taxes and debts on time, has no problem with the law courts, and has no friends on the stock exchange, cannot survive. As Ben mentions, being honest and fair can never take one out of the vicious circle. One must trip others and stand over them as he did to Biff. As someone who succeeds and achieves the American Dream, his philosophy is “not to fight fair with a stranger” since one “would never get out of the jungle that way” (38).

Miller's main focus is on the system of consumerism that imprisons people in a vicious circle throughout their lives. He portrays his protagonist as a salesman, a vehicle of the system, and he depicts the physical and psychological situation of ordinary individuals in the system in order to show what the self-made ones who easily made their fortunes are really like.

To be a salesman captured Willy's imagination when he heard the story of a salesman named David Singleman. He was a salesman at the age of 84 who could run his business just by some phone calls and whose funeral was more crowded than anyone's. According to McDonough, Dave Singleman "was connected to a community where he would attain monetary comfort by virtue of his reputation" (28). This concept of being a man at the center of a community that provided for both his monetary needs and his social needs appealed to Willy; thus, he accepted a life in the city rather than on the 'frontier' like his brother. He became a representative of the American dream that he admires much. However, he lost social connections when he was abandoned by his father, and this loss results in a desire to be well liked and highly respected within a large network of people in the business world. Willy has been longing for love and possessions since his childhood. He hopes that his business life will fill these needs. For Willy, nothing "could be more satisfying than to be able to go ... and be remembered and be loved and helped by so many different people" (63).

Moreover, Loman longs for understanding his own place in the world in relation to the place that had been held by his father, who represents to him a great inventor-salesman. However, Willy cannot find the center of his life. He has spent his life always looking toward dreams that he cannot attain. Willy represents both the hope of America and her disappointments: the dream that should have been fulfilled but was out of reach. He represents the average American, drowning in the hope of a dream that was promised after World War II. As an 'average' American he aims to have a house, a car, and all of the luxuries that were available to create a well-run household. The dream of middle class comfort was at the forefront of the expectations of most Americans, a dream that would come through the success of innovation and technological achievement. Willy is all about the dreams of tomorrow; he needs money in order to just see himself through tomorrow. He has spent more than forty years in salesmanship, but he still has to pay for his house. Even though he is exhausted, he has to

continue working. He feels imprisoned in the system of which he is a part. As Willy mentions, “they boxed them in there with bricks and windows, windows and bricks” (12), and trapped them in a system from which they can find no way out.

As a victim of the capitalist system, he has been too accommodating toward his company for years because he is aware that to be submissive is the key factor in being permanent in a firm for years. Knowing this, he has spent his whole life on the road in the U.S.A, marketing the product lines of his company for more than forty years without complaint but with desire for growth. He has brought in new customers and helped the company to grow as a result of his efforts. For instance, “when he went north the first time, the Wagner Company didn’t know where New England was” (62). However, his boss rejects his only request, an office job, after years of service since he “can not take blood from a stone” (64). In this way, Miller depicts his protagonist’s victimization and his culture’s ingratitude, based on a system in which only money is important. His job is the key factor for him in life. He rationalizes his failures. Although he has no physical or psychological power to hold on to his business, he insists on showing himself to be indispensable to the firm he is working for. He believes that “he is vital in New England” (10).

He lives according to a dream, but he can’t achieve the substance of success, so his dream remains empty and unfulfilled. He emulates a number of role models, but can never fully realize the identity that he is striving to attain. In his own construction of reality, he is well-liked and is a successful salesman, with his connections reaching throughout his territories. For instance, he thinks that Willy Loman never waits in line – just his name is enough to see a buyer; he is well-liked and bigger than uncle Charley who “is liked but not well liked”; he knows the Mayor and other important people in many cities; in New England, the cops protect his car as if it were their own; and so forth. However, the truth does not support this constructed fantasy.

Willy Loman constructs a fantasy world for his family members too. However, his family is fragmented and there is a lack of communication among family members. His family is important for Willy Loman, who stresses his responsibility toward his family. He tells his

wife that he feels lonely, and he always stresses what if he cannot sell and make a living for his sons and wife. However, he hides from himself the fact that he has lost his family and destroyed them psychologically while he was chasing after the American Dream; but he cannot realize or accept this fact. There is disunity in his family, and he has worked for a house in which no one lives most of the time. He has worked a lifetime to pay off a house. He finally owns it, but there is nobody to live in it (10).

When his family members are taken into consideration, Willy's sons are reflections of his own inability to succeed. As Abbotson also mentions, his older son Biff's name is ironic. "The name Biff seems to indicate an abrasive nature and someone who will have to fight to get what he wants, but the name Biff is ironic, for Biff's life so far has been marked by his inability to stick to anything and to quit anytime that things seem too tough" (142). As his mother suggests, Biff at the age of 34 has not found himself yet. He has been unable to stick to anything for more than ten years. He has tried different jobs, but he always quit when things didn't go his way. He fails to see the potential opportunities that come his way. Even though later on he changes his mind, his father defines him as a lazy bum. Biff believes he is entitled to success and that his likeability is the core of this right – as his father has demonstrated since his childhood. Willy Loman cannot believe his son can be lost in a country full of opportunities. He sees his son's earlier success in life during high school as a barometer against which he measures his current state in life. He believes that because he was popular, his success should have been automatic. According to him, if Biff is well liked, his popularity is a key factor that will enable him to achieve his dreams in a country full of "opportunities." He cannot see the reason for his son's failures. Willy does not accept that his son, Biff Loman, a young man with such personal attractiveness, is lost in "the greatest country" in the world (11).

Ironically, Biff's failures were caused by his father. To be "well-liked" was imposed on him since his childhood by his father. In class, he imitates his teacher, crosses his eyes, and speaks with a lisp, but suddenly his teacher comes in. As a result he fails math and asks his father to talk with the teacher in his own way since the teacher cannot refuse a man like his father. He travels to another city just to see his father and ask his support. However, he

catches Willy in an act of infidelity while his father is sharing a room with another woman. With this scene Biff's constructed reality is shattered. He is shattered, and the vision he had of his father vanishes. He no longer believes in his father's reality, and he has no reality of his own to fill that space. After he loses his vision of his father, he loses himself. Linda reveals that she thinks her son is lost, but she has no idea why this might have happened. Willy, on the other hand, knows what happened but fails to take responsibility for his part in his son's disillusionment.

As a result, just as Willy sought a real father figure his whole life, Biff is plagued by having lost his father figure through viewing his father's failure in being unfaithful to his wife. This puts him adrift, and his own sense of reality becomes as confused and rootless as Willy's. He loses his belief and subsequently is unable to stick to anything. He took many courses after school, but he never made the slightest mark. It should also be taken into consideration that Willy justifies his affair because he was feeling so lonely. He repeats this frequently. As his mistress mentioned, he is lonely and sad – actually the saddest man she has ever met (92). Being away from home and his wife for days to survive in the system caused his loneliness and sadness and took him into an immoral action – at the cost of his son's future.

On the other hand, Biff displays the system very clearly. He cannot stand the rush of city life. For him it is just a nuthouse. He wants to be on a farm. He once was unsuccessful in a firm since he whistled in the elevator. He believes his years of labor for a company have never been appreciated. He is aware of the fact that like many others, he is used by the system and therefore he does not want to be a victim of it. He does not want to spend 50 weeks in an office and devote his whole life to keeping stock or making phone calls. He does not want to struggle to get ahead of the others. He desires to be outdoors. However he has changed 30 jobs and has been to many states but things everywhere are the same. The only opportunities are for low wages and low jobs. Each time he comes back he knows he has wasted his time. He is worried about his future, like other adult Americans in the country. He does not know what the future is (16).

Another important issue about Biff is he was a thief as a young man. He was stealing items he believed he deserved. Willy gives his son excuses in his desperation to see him succeed. Another factor for this illegal behavior also depends on his father's attitude toward those who succeeded in the American Dream, such as their uncle Ben. To show his dominance over his sons he asks them to steal sand from the construction sites in the neighborhood to rebuild the entire front stoop. He insists that he "got a couple of fearless characters" (39). Moreover, Charlie comments that "If they steal any more from that building the watchman'll put the cops on them" (39), which shows that their theft was not the first time.

His sense of entitlement, however, is based on Biff's belief in what his father says of him. But finally, he sees the reality of his excuses; his behavior took him to a place where he cannot find a way out. Willy's desire for his son to be well-liked encouraged him to strive for popularity and success, which are the main motives of the self-made man, but these motivations only brought him to a dead end. He finally realizes that he never got anywhere because his father blew him so full of hot air that he could never stand taking orders from anybody (104).

He wants to leave since he wants everyone to take away the phony dream. He wants Happy to go with him to settle their lives. He wants to settle a job with his brother since he needs the solidarity of a male figure as a father. He reacts against the capitalist system that depends on consumerism and that takes ages for individuals to settle their lives – in contrast to the American Dream that promises wealth and happiness in a short while. Those who go after it only ruin their lives for nothing. He realizes what a ridiculous lie his life has been. They have been talking about a dream for fifteen years (82) and have gotten nothing out of it.

The irony that is subtly seen in Biff's name is clearly seen in Happy's name. While Happy puts forward a front under which he appears happy, he finds no contentment in his life. Happy, similar to Willy, cannot see beyond his own center – beyond the hope of achieving what he wants or looking for ways to supplant the void in his life. Abbotson states that "Happy is not happy at all but pushes his inner discontentment to one side and lives a bitter

and aggressive life sleeping with his bosses' wives and girlfriends to get petty revenge for their being higher up on the corporate ladder" (143).

He pretends not to see the events that make him sad. He denies seeing Willy's mocking his brother since he does not want to admit the fragmentation in his family. Miller portrays the state of youth and the economic conditions of the country. Happy is also working for a firm, but he waits for the merchandise manager to die even though he is his good friend. To be promoted depends upon death. Miller portrays how cheap human life is in the system. Moreover, Biff rejects being part of the system that puts you in a hurry so that you have no time for others or for love. In the end he questions the joy of sex without love and an apartment without a family. He is like many Americans who are in a hurry to settle their lives economically. He does not know "what the hell he is working for" (17). He has his own apartment, car, and he has been with plenty of women. And he is still, "goddammit, ... still lonely" (17).

Happy is so glad that Biff is back. It is obvious that he misses his brother since he is lonely. He is bored of his degenerate life. Since he feels lonely, he tries to get the attention of his parents. For instance, the moments when their parents are interested in Biff's words, he tries to change the subject. He mentions that he is losing weight or he will marry soon. Because of his loneliness, he wants attention. Moreover, he needs his brother's help about his father.

However, when his father reaches out to him, he steps away and would rather chase women. It is possible that his using women is an attempt to be successful by taking what other men have or by taking from women what they guard. Happy is a reflection of Willy, distorted toward his worse characteristics and without the positive ones that make Willy sympathetic. Happy, however, understands his father in a way that Biff doesn't. Biff sees Willy as a fraud, but Happy sees that he is hopeful and believes that the next big opportunity will fix his life.

Both sons were not brought up to earn money. They do not know how to do it but they should have recognized the reality of life earlier. They have been chasing after a dream for years. Now they face reality after the death of their father. However, what is worse is that

Happy still fails to see reality. In a way, he swears to follow his father's dream. Miller shows how the American Dream is impressed on the minds of individuals over the years and how it becomes a myth that is followed from, like one's forebears.

Miller portrays the mother and wife figure, Linda Loman, to show that it is not only the male figures who spent their lives trying to supply the needs of their family, but also the female figures who support them with patience and tolerance, who are victims of the American Dream. As quoted below, Linda Loman is a supportive wife who ignores her own needs and desires while she supports those of her husband. She is the classic model of the '40s and '50s wife, dutiful to her husband and children and supporting the patriarchal ideology that was tied to the American dream during the mid-twentieth century. She takes care of her husband like a mother. She fills his cup as much as she can, asks if he has taken his handkerchief and saccharine, and mends the lining of his jacket. Moreover, her role is crucial in giving credibility to the dreams Willy holds. Sterling says of Linda Loman that she "emerges as a kind of two-dimensional service station, existing to aid or support the needs of her richer, more complicated dramatic partner and the play's protagonist, her husband" (24):

...his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings with him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end (8).

The play is fed by self-delusion, dreams, and illusions. However, Linda is grounded and the voice of reason has been always dominant while she was trying to settle her family's awareness of her husband's condition. She sees that he is suffering and that something must be done to bring him back to the present, to see his family and to feel the successes that they do have rather than dwelling on a future that is not coming to pass. It is not that she wants to abandon his dreams, it is that she doesn't want to live solely for their fruition.

She realizes that he plans to commit suicide. However since she does not want to insult him she pretends that she is not aware of his intentions. She fixes the gas pipe that Willy takes off. She insists that the family must pay attention to such a person. Linda's words reveal that

he seems to be lost. He is exhausted and needs love and attention. For Linda Willy is “only a little boat looking for a harbor” (59).

She was in love with her husband and wants to be with him. When Ben asks him go to Alaska, she convinces Willy that he is well-liked and his sons love him. She always tries to conciliate her husband and their sons. She tries to unite the family members. She arranges a dinner for her husband with his son and advises Biff to be sweet to him and make a nice impression on him such as putting his arms around him and giving a smile. She always emphasizes how their father spent his whole life to give his sons a good life, and how they should support him instead of ignoring him. According to Linda, Willy puts his whole life into his family, and his sons turned their backs on him (47). However, they should immediately change their behavior toward their father in order to keep him alive.

On the other hand, she also defends his sons against her husband and does not avoid telling him when he is right or wrong. For instance, she always objected when Willy let their sons steal things, and she tried to convince her husband that Biff is not lazy. As Happy mentions, “They broke the mould when they made her” (52). She is very patient and a perfect mother and wife who tries to settle the things throughout the whole play.

Her most important role is to define the fake side of the American Dream for her husband when she affirms that he has worked for a company for forty years, opened up new territories for their trademark, and in his old age is rewarded by taking away his salary. When Willy wants to buy some seeds with the hope of his sons’ founding a new business, she responds implicitly by foreshadowing the invariable truth of failure of the American Dream: it will not work out in the end because it is too late. As Linda states: not enough sun gets there so nothing will grow any more. Ironically, she foreshadows that it is too late in their lives (82).

Miller portrays Willy as a victim of the system who realizes the reality of it later than his son Biff and wife Linda. He has been in a hurry to reach his dream and has been crushed under the pressure of the rush of life so that he responds to it with health problems. His reward for years of traveling on the road and his unappreciated service to his firm is physical collapse

and break down. His optimism depended on his dream of success, which is also a kind of guarantee for his family members. The day Biff planned to see Oliver to found a new business the feeling of hope was so dominant that he planned to get a little place in the country where his sons would come and visit him with their families. He dreams of a typical American family whose grandchildren are playing in the back yard of their country house.

On the contrary, when he feels trapped and imprisoned in the system, he exclaims, “Gotta break your neck to see a star in this yard” (41). He escaped from today and dreamed about a rich dream for tomorrow. He dreamed of the perfect American family, polish the car with his sons, taking care of the garden and the house, and his sons telling him that they miss him a lot and his surprising them with a punching bag – “finest thing for the timing.” Moreover, he remembers his dialogues with his sons about their school and girls and also Biff’s breaking through for a touchdown for his father in the school match. These were times when he meant a lot to his sons. In short, he desires the solidarity, union, and communication that he has longed for during his life, when he loses hope.

Finally, he is a man who promised himself that “he’ll have his own business, and he’ll never have to leave home any more” (23). But he fails to keep his promise and is instead a victim of the system he has struggled within his whole life. He realizes finally that he can only settle the lives of his sons by paying back with his life. At the restaurant where he went with his sons, he gives the waitress all he has in his pocket because he will not need any more. And he realized that he would never have the dream for himself (32). He begins to believe that through his death and the insurance inheritance that it will create, his boys will reach the dream that he could not achieve. The only tangible thing that he can leave his family is nothing but some seeds to give them hope after forty years of effort. As he portrays the system in the United States, he shows that after all the years of highways, trains, and appointments, he ends up worth more dead than alive. Moreover, his death and his funeral will not be as glorious as David Singelman’s.

Additionally, before he dies he is aware of the fact that in this system being competitive is the most important key. Individuals should always be better than the others to survive. Willy

internalizes this idea so completely that he even compares the insurance money that Biff will receive after his own death, with the wealth of Bernard, and so he is confident that when the mail comes Biff “will be ahead of Bernard again” (107)!

Willy Loman had “the wrong dreams” (110) and “never knew who he was” (110). He chased after the American Dream, which is just that – based upon “dreams” and unrealistic promises that exploit the individual’s hopes and labor. It is a fantasy world that dominates the Loman house. They could survive only by ignoring the reality, which is hard for each of them to accept. The whole family built an illusionary life and “never told the truth for ten minutes in this house” (104).

In conclusion, as Biff mentions in this quote, the American dream is an illusion that does not let individuals become aware of reality. It is a system that deludes individuals with promises. Miller’s protagonist Willy Loman and his family illustrate this system throughout the play. They become lost in the dream so that Willy lives by striving for the promised standard of living without having actually ever reaching that standard of income that is a familiar lifestyle for the modern American public. As a result, what is left is a fragmented family whose members are physically and psychologically debilitated. We are left with a father who spent his years trying to fulfill the economic needs of his family, a submissive mother who spent her life trying to fulfill the needs of her sons and husband but is rewarded with betrayal, and finally, unsuccessful and miserable sons who fail to accomplish any purpose in life.

CHAPTER II: The Political Failure of the American Dream in *The Crucible*

On January 22, 1953, *The Crucible* opened in New York, telling the story and drama of the 1692 witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts. The play did not initially get good reviews at first sight. However, despite the reviews, the play won the Best Play Tony Award for 1953. According to Jimmerson (2003), the play was not received well by many critics because they saw through the loosely veiled attempts to criticize McCarthy era politics (37). One of the remarkable comments on the play was that “Salem is one of the few dramas in history with a beginning, a middle, and an end” (Miller ix). The importance of this concept is that the classic form of the three act play could mirror the actual history in which it unfolds.

The play is specifically about the fake hysteria of a few young women that whipped up the frenzy of an entire community and resulted in the executions of many people. The play reflects the McCarthy era scandals which Miller portrays as mirroring the hysteria of the terrible events from the seventeenth century. When Miller himself discussed the connection, he stated, “gradually, over weeks, a living connection between myself and Salem, and between Salem and Washington, was made in my mind” (x). Furthermore, Miller displays the parallel between the coercive styles of the hearings and the procedures in Salem. He stated that “The main point of the hearings, precisely as in the seventeenth century Salem, was that the accused make public confession, damn his confederates as well as his Devil master, and guarantee his sterling new allegiance by breaking disgusting old vows” (x). For a better understanding, the parallelism that Miller indicates between 1690s Salem and the McCarty era should be examined.

In the 1950s it was discovered by the United States government that Russia had enhanced an atom bomb with secret information received by Russian spies who were actually American citizens living in the United States. They could be any one on the street and it was impossible to identify them. “Communist spies were everywhere and one man could do only so much against so many” (Bly 2). From this point of view, the United States government started investigations by the so-called Un-American Activities Committee of which senator Joseph McCarthy was in charge. McCarthy used the successful detonation of a Soviet atomic bomb

and the successful Communist Chinese revolution in order to fuel fears that the “Red Threat” would overtake the world (Suri 96). Red, the color of the Russian flag, was associated with Russian communists; to say “better dead than red” meant that you would kill yourself before you let the communists take over” (Bly 2). It was felt that communism was undermining the American dream by its infiltration deep within government, universities, and the science community. Pure and innocent Americans were in jeopardy. Communism was represented as a subversion of American ideals. To forestall the communist activities that threatened the nation, McCarthy produced a list of names of people who he claimed had communist ties, interests, or who were communists themselves. Anyone believed to have communist ties was called in to be interrogated. Many people were accused of being a communist or having possible connections to communist interests. Blacklisting became one method of holding back the communist threat. An individual who was accused of ties to communism would be put on the list, and consequently they lost their jobs. Additionally, their educational efforts were subverted. Loans would be denied, financial papers would suddenly have no value, and loans would be recalled, leaving people bankrupt or insolvent and without means to survive (Schrecker 89).

Moreover, many of them were called to testify. Confession became the most dominant aim of the House Un-American Activities Committee, whose members intimidated their victims into admitting their guilt. The entertainment industry was also an important target for the anti-communist movement. The high profile of the accused and the publicity would further the cause of anti-communism. To be accused of being a communist or to be known by a communist was dangerous in those days. Those accused of connections with communists and called to testify were often left in social isolation without means of survival. Miller, who was also called to testify, portrayed the mood: “It was as though the whole country was born with a new memory.... Astounded, I watched men pass me by without a nod whom I had known rather well for years...” (Bly 6). The blacklist began to include television and news broadcasters, thus creating an atmosphere of fear in which at any moment one could be left destitute without proof. They could lose everything that they had worked so hard to create.

Miller was called to testify in the hearings in 1956 when he routinely applied for his passport. The House Un-American Activities Committee took this opportunity to use his fame as a playwright, who was also married to Marilyn Monroe. During the testimony he was asked to name others in order to help the Committee build its case against them. Miller responded, “I want you to understand that I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party; I am trying to and I will protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him. ... I take responsibility for everything I have ever done, but I will not take responsibility for another human being” (Griffin 7). Just like his protagonist John Proctor, the authorities were asking him to sacrifice the reputation of others in order to save his own reputation.

Witchcraft is the main symbol that Miller uses to reflect the connection between McCarthyism and Salem, and the monstrous acts by both authorities. He uses this symbol because of the irrational definition of communism as evil by McCarthy. Communism was presented as a form of evil rather than just a different belief system. Therefore, witchcraft was the perfect way to explore the hysteria of McCarthyism. Moreover, Miller emphasized the parallelism of the measures taken by both McCarthy and the Salem authorities: both took away the freedom and the lives or livelihoods of its citizens.

The hysteria that created the witch trials in Salem can be easily summed up: “a crisis began in mid-January 1691 when two little girls living in the household of Reverend Samuel Parris of Salem Village (now Danvers), Massachusetts, began to suffer from fits that they and their elders soon attributed to witchcraft. In the months that followed, growing numbers of accusers claimed to be tortured by the apparitions of witches, and to see the ghosts of dead people charging the witches of killing them” (Norton 3). The events happened from that January until the following May of 1692, leaving a mark on the history of America. The majority of the accusers were girls between the ages of twelve and twenty. An interesting side note is also mentioned by Norton: “Accordingly, as in no other event in American history until the rise of women’s rights movement in the nineteenth century, women took center stage at Salem: they were the major instigators and victims of the public spectacle” (4).

Salem in the 1690s was governed by a theocracy in which the church and the Bible were the dominant powers that regulated the life of individuals. According to these regulations, moral laws were all-powerful, without exception. The puritanical codes forced society to conform to the moral laws that limit the life of most individuals. The people were expected to spend considerable time in church praying to God. They were not permitted to deal with worldly issues or joys that would take their time from worship. Moreover, nothing that could enlighten their vision or everyday practices was permitted. “They had no novelists – and would not permit any one to read a novel if one were handy. Their creed forbade anything resembling a theatre or ‘vain enjoyments.’ They did not celebrate Christmas, and a holiday from work meant only that they must concentrate even more upon prayer” (350). Moreover, in Salem every citizen was under surveillance by the government and their fellow citizens. Those who did not obey the theocratic rules were informed on to the two-man patrols so that the magistrate could proceed against them. Spending much time in church was a means to demonstrate being a good Christian and was one of the most important factors to gain and preserve one’s reputation.

As far as economic conditions are concerned, as a newly established society there was a shortage of food, and there was only work and simple living accommodations. In order to survive each person had to cultivate the land: “the people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain of corn, and no man had much time for fooling around” (350).

Another important fact about the Salem community was the meaning of the west that became associated with “manifest destiny.” “The American continent stretched endlessly west, and it was full of mystery” (350). It also meant darkness and danger for the new settlers in relation to the Indian tribes. However, there was also a desire to conquer the west, since like their forefathers the new settlers saw themselves in the very special light of the Bible and tried to behave accordingly to the rules given by them to establish their lives in the Promised Land. As stated by Bloom, while founding their new life in the Promised Land they were defending themselves against Indian threats while expanding their lands. “The Puritan parents of these settlers had been persecuted in England, and ironically, these descendants now rejected other

religious as well as to keep their ways preserved from “wrong ways and deceitful ideas” (Bloom 19).

On the other hand, although the Puritans tried to assimilate the native land owners in terms of religion, it was also to their benefit to fail in that purpose, in order to gain economic power and to settle the lands of the Native Americans. “There was struggle against Indian tribes who did not accept Christianity. However, it was considered more profitable to conquer their lands instead of converting them to Christianity” (350).

On this point Miller emphasizes that with the change in the balance of power, the concept of “otherness” became dominant throughout the play. This idea is embodied when Reverend Parris’s slave Tituba from Barbados is accused of being the core of the incidents started at the beginning of the play. When Parris saw Tituba and his daughter with other girls dancing naked in the “heathen” wood, his daughter becomes aware of him and faints. Because of the fear of her father she acts unnaturally. Tituba, who has been from an “other” land, becomes the victim. Tituba’s dance and songs are associated with animal acts in addition to her ritual, which is associated with witchcraft. These factors are enough for individuals to be rejected by the society and even to lose their lives. As Marry Warren mentions, “witchery’s a hanging error, a hanging like they done in Boston two years ago...” (*The Crucible* 356).

In order to avoid such a serious accusation, Parris directs attention to Tituba and her dancing with the others in the forest. Hence hysteria occurred because some girls were perceived as “other” apart from the society. In order to preserve his reputation, Paris did not want to confess that he found his niece and daughter dancing with other girls in an “unnatural” way. Although it is declared by others that “unnatural” things may have caused Betty’s illness, he denies it. He insists that nothing contrary to Christianity has occurred. Parris is afraid of being cast out of the society for being associated with witchcraft. He is also afraid of his enemies. Parris thinks that the reality “must come out or his enemies will bring it out” (353), which will cause his death.

He has enemies because he derives certain benefits from his position. Parris used to be a merchant in Barbados before he entered the ministry in Salem. In this way, Miller portrays how religious power is used for own economic and social benefit. Parris is as concerned as much with money as with reputation. Some fair and honest residents such as Proctor criticize his greed and his use of religious power for his own interest. As he lives in the service of God, Parris believes that he deserves more than other Salem residents. He believes he has the right to land given by the residents. However, he is the first minister to demand the deed to his house, and he insists that a minister deserves a house to live in (356).

Additionally, he is accused of asking for golden candlesticks and then replacing them with pewter ones as soon as he came to the church. Proctor refuses to go to church since he sees his money put to such use (373). He even refuses to baptize his youngest son since he does not see the light of God with Parris.

Corruption in religious service is more obvious with the introduction of Putman's story. His wife's brother-in-law had been turned down as minister of Salem even though he has the best qualifications. However, political factions prevent his acceptance. Later, the former minister borrowed some money from him for his wife's funeral but could not pay it back when his salary is denied. Putman took revenge by sending him to jail with additional debts. Moreover, Putnam declares that Proctor's woods actually belong to his family, while Proctor insists that he bought them from Goody Nurse, another Salem resident.

In short, Miller portrays Salem as a place where corruption is dominant at every level. Religion is used for personal benefit, important positions in the ministry are gained by deceit, and even property ownership is uncertain. When the corruption and disorder is declared by someone in the community, it can end in disaster. So fear is one of the main feelings in the community, and members do not to break the rules in order to avoid trouble. This shows that freedom of opinion, which the United States promises to all her citizens, has never a reality from the earliest colonial days. In underlining this point, Miller draws a parallel with the McCarthy period. The first hint of this parallel is shown by the protagonist, John Proctor, when he criticizes the income and expenses of the minister Parris. He mentions the

corruption in the church that makes him speak out against its authority. He speaks what he believes in his heart is true (360).

Rebecca Nurse, who frequently attends the church, panics and insists that she cannot break the peace with her minister and asks Proctor to make peace. As a mature woman who is aware of the rules of the theocratic community they are living in, she wants to avert evil actions from Proctor. Rebecca Nurse's faction in the play is made of realistic and honest members of society, but unfortunately they pay for their honesty with their lives, as did some during the McCarthy era. At the beginning of the hysteria in Salem, Mrs. Putnam acts logically and insists that she is clever enough to defeat the Devil. For instance, she comments that the 'possessed' girls will "run the Devil bowlegged keeping up with their mischief" (59). She believes Betty will wake when she tires of it (59).

However, everybody is not as logical or as realistic as Rebecca in Salem. For instance, Mrs. Putnam had seven miscarriages and now her only child is ill. She also believes that unnatural powers and witchcraft caused her children's deaths and that her only child's illness is because she was with Tituba in the forest, although she is the one who sends her there with Tituba to find out who killed her children during the ritual.

As in the McCarthy era, groundless accusations were made against the group of "others," including Tituba in Salem and communists in the United States. Furthermore, the accusations created hysteria that could not be contained. Mary Warren is afraid about the events going on because "the village is out! The whole country is talkin' witchcraft! They will be callin' witches (356)!"

Since Abigail had an affair with Proctor, Proctor's wife Elizabeth accuses Abigail. She was also discharged from their service, and since then no one wants to take her into service. When the hysteria becomes a frenzy, she also accuses Tituba of drinking her blood and making her laugh during church. Meanwhile, Tituba is afraid and realizes that whatever she says she cannot convince anyone. So she pretends that the devil is in her and leads her, and that she acts according to the devil's commands. She confesses whatever the society and her

master want her to confess. However, she adds that the devil also leads Sarah Good and Osburn to find a companion in this hysteric and fatal journey.

Like the society during the McCarthy era, Salem society is agitated. Betty, Abigail, and Tituba accuse many others to take attention away from themselves. Many accusations were made without proof or evidence. The community is in a situation where “everybody is suing everybody else. [...] It’s a deep thing, as dark as a pit. Residents of Salem have been many times in court this year” (360).

Rebecca Nurse is charged with the murder of the miscarried babies. Walcott accuses Martha Corey of being a witch. His proof is that once he bought a pig from her and it died. When he wants his money back, Martha says it is because he did not feed it properly. After the hysteria he goes to court and claims that she killed his pigs since Martha bewitches them through the books she reads at home (375).

Miller depicts not only the hysteria, but also the limitation of freedom of speech and opinion in the United States, as reading a book becomes the cause of accusations. Elizabeth is also accused of bewitching Abigail through the baby doll that Marry Warren, their slave, gave to Elizabeth. To take revenge, and with the hope of a relation with her husband, as they sat at dinner she started to scream (376). They save her by taking out the needle in her belly. Cheever and Hale find that Elizabeth’s baby also has a needle stuck in it. They accuse her of being a witch and take her to jail. As in the McCarty era, one word is enough to ensure the arrest and destruction of a resident.

Moreover, confession is the most important issue in the play in reference to the McCarthy period. Those who do not confess their guilt are condemned to death. As Elizabeth declares The court has power to hang the detained residences (368). Moreover, “The Deputy of the governor promises hangin’ if they will not confess” (368).

Therefore people such as Sarah Good, confess that her name is written in the black book of Lucifer (370). In this point Miller alludes to the McCarty era’s black list: the black book of

Lucifer in which the names of the witches are written is like the black list of the communists who are refused work. As Proctor says, “it is a black mischief” (368).

Sarah Good is also accused in court of choking people and sending her spirit to them. She is accused of trying to kill Mary Warren many times, when Mary pitied her. Mary remembers that she came to their home begging bread and a cup of cider many times, and whenever she was turned away she mumbled something. After that, her stomach ached for two days. When she couldn't say the Ten Commandments, she is condemned. Mary declares this is sufficient proof to condemn a person (370), which alludes to a lack of freedom of faith in the society of the United States.

Putnam declares that the hysteria in the community is indefinable. It seems there is more than meets the eye: “There are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires” (359). As in the McCarthy era, the society is divided. There are those who help the authorities for the sake of the security of the state, and there are those who do not confess to unnatural acts or name anyone related to this hysteria. Another important point depicted in the play is that the ones who cooperate with the court gain power over the ones who do not:

PROCTOR. Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers? [...] Vengeance is walking in Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom and common vengeance writes the law. (377)

Elizabeth thinks that Proctor should share with the court that Abigail confessed her duplicity when they were alone. However, Elizabeth is accepted as a saint since she helps the court. For the preservation of Salem community, nobody will believe him. Abigail at the service of God brings the other girls to the court. Where she walks the crowd part like the sea for Israel (368). The society is in an unnatural hysteria, so that even though Elizabeth and Proctor know the truth, which is so simple and logical, they have no way to prove it. As Elizabeth states, “Folks are brought before them, and if they scream and howl and fall to the floor – the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' them” (368).

On the other hand, their slave Mary Warren insists that she will go to court everyday since she serves Christianity and society by being part of the court that exposes the truth and punishes the ones who cooperate with the Devil. By declaring that she will not stand whipping any more, she points that he gained power through her masters, who do not cooperate with the court. Since she had dinner with four judges and the King's deputy, they should have to be more civil toward her – despite the fact that her master tells the truth.

Mary declares that Elizabeth's name was also mentioned in the court and she witnessed that she never saw a sign that she sent her spirit out to hurt any one. However, she is arrested and taken to jail by Cheever. The character Cheever represents the ones who come into the service of the court in order to save their own lives. Fear is the dominant feeling that forced individuals to be part of the frenzy in order to avoid losing their jobs, status, and families. "He must do as he is told even how heavy be the law, all its tonnage and he do carry on his back" (376).

As Danforth states, and as it so clearly was in the McCarthy era, "...a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between" (384). He has no other choice. He can choose either to be one of those who serve the court, or one of those who lose everything. The frenzied mood in the society continues, with the result of 400 imprisoned and 72 condemned to death. The decisions are made by the most successful bureaucrat of the government; however, one cannot find valid, reasonable evidence to justify the acts of the period:

Another important point underlined by Miller in the play is the accusation of some citizens who stood to gain property by their accusations through the elimination of those who were in the way of inheritance or purchase. Giles says that Mr. Putnam urged his daughter to accuse George Jacobs of witchcraft, and he is now in jail. If Jacobs hangs for witchcraft, his property will be forfeited and will be bought by Putnam. His proof is that the day Putnam's daughter accused Jacobs, Putnam announced that he had given him a fair gift of land (385). However, Giles is arrested when he refuses to name the person from whom he heard the

story. The theme of naming the names again points to a comparison with the McCarthy era hearings. Giles is arrested by Danforth, deputy governor of Massachusetts, who sees himself doing right in his decisions. To obtain Giles's judgment, Danforth orders that the hearing begin and that the court is in full session (385). As Hale states, "There is a prodigious fear in the country" (385).

Another example that portrays Danforth's authority as similar to the McCarthy hearings is seen when Proctor mentions in court about Abigail and other girls' dancing naked in the forest with Tituba and her laughter during prayers at church. As a defendant, Abigail denies Mary's testimony. To determine whether she is telling the truth, the court interrogates Elizabeth about Abigail's affair with her husband. Unfortunately, to save her husband's life and reputation she rejects the affair and declares that she just lost her temper and fired Abigail. At that moment Danforth arrests Proctor and gives no chance for Proctor to explain his testimony. Hale asks Danforth to stop the accusations before one more person is condemned. He requests Danforth to reconsider, and states that he always had doubts about Abigail. However, Danforth explains the situation rationally. According to him, "witchcraft is ipso facto, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime. Therefore, who may possibly be witness to it? The witch and the victim. None other ... they do testify, the children certainly do testify" (387).

On the contrary, as Mary insists, they all lied, and she never cooperated with the devil. At that moment, Abigail and the girls begin screaming and accuse Mary of sending her spirit against them. Although Mary denies it many times, Danforth gives time for Abigail and the others to convince the court that Mary is practicing witchcraft.

As long as she denies her witchcraft, they all scream together. They pretend that a bird is coming to kill them. They start to repeat the words of Mary. The mood becomes hysterical and Mary Warren, because of her fear of death, changes her testimony since she knows that if she does not confess, she will be hanged, as Danforth declares (393).

Mary confesses that Proctor is the Devil who wants her name to be written in the black book of the Devil or he will murder her. Miller portrays the hysteria as being similar to the hysteria of the McCarthy era, as this scene suggests similar scenes during the McCarthy era when many testified in order not to be sent to jail.

After the arrests and executions, Hale portrays orphans in Salem wandering from house to house, abandoned cattle on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlots' cry will end his life (397). In the jail, where starvation and torture are dominant facts, the situation is even worse. Giles died a Christian under the law, so that his sons inherit his property. He was pressed to death with great stones upon his chest. One must confess or die to preserve one's property.

As far as the protagonist's reaction against the statutory obligations is concerned, at first Proctor thinks he can bear the weight of signing a confession in order to gain his life. However, later on he realizes that the lie would fall on him the rest of his life and take a part of his identity away. In signing the confession, he would lose his reputation, the only thing he can leave to his family. He wants to leave to his family what is most important, his self respect and his sense of identity. So he challenges them with the words, "You will not use me. It is no part of salvation that you should use me" (401).

In confessing to something that was not true, Proctor would have ruined his name. According to Marino, "His name is the only truth that Proctor knows; it is the only item he knows still bears weight, as Parris has indicated.... For Proctor, a man cannot live without the weight of his name, nor teach his sons to be men without it" (179).

Through this play, Miller made a clear declaration of his beliefs and how he saw the actions of the government in regard to combating an ideology within her boundaries since its foundation. The United States is known for offering freedoms that had never fully existed in the history of civilization to the masses: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the freedom to protest against a government that does not serve the people. These have been the freedoms that people from all over the world have come to appreciate about the United

States. The masses have sought out her shores in order to have those freedoms for themselves. However, some of the rhetoric about that freedom is propaganda. As seen in Miller's depiction, there are periods in the history of America in which that freedom was subverted, from early to late.

CHAPTER III: The Social Failure of the American Dream in *A View from the Bridge*

Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, which was first performed on September 29, 1955 in New York, portrays the fallibility of the American Dream from a different point of view. Its basic theme revolves around the hopes and disappointments of Italian immigrants living in the neighborhood of Brooklyn.

The play draws on Miller's own experiences. He initially planned to write a play entitled *The Hook* about the corruption of the New York City docks. The source of *The Hook*, which Miller developed with Elia Kazan, was a graffiti that "Where is Pete Panto?" is written in crude chalk on several sidewalks of Red Hook (Herzberg 251). According to the story that Miller learned from one of his friends, Pete had been a brave dock worker, who had been investigating corruption within the International Longshoremen Association. Moreover, he had revolted against the unionship. Unfortunately, Pete's punishment for his defection was execution. The story led Miller to look into the rules of the Longshoremen's world. That incidentally acquainted him with the world of Italian working class immigrant society in the borough of Brooklyn, New York. The new but dark and dangerous world of the Brooklyn dockyards was very different from anything Miller had experienced until that time. He decided to universalize Panto's execution for attempting to expose the corruption of the ILA by dedicating *The Hook* to Panto and portraying the raw and brutal side of the established system.

In order to reach mass audience, Miller shared his idea with Elia Kazan, who had directed Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and was willing to move his career from Brooklyn to Hollywood. *The Hook* was to be a tribute to Panto and a touch to waterfront gangsterism. As Bigsy points out, movies, unlike a Broadway play, were perhaps the best means of transmitting a message to millions of Americans like Panto's co-workers, to corrupt unions, and to members of Congress and crime commissions (106). However, even after the script was sold to Columbia Pictures, "it had to be vetted by a labor relations man" (Bigsy 106), and it was postponed. Furthermore, it was reported that an anti-communist angle was needed for the script to be confirmed. In short, it was deemed dangerous, and

in the end it could not be filmed. As Miller relates the story of censorship, “The FBI, moreover, regarded it as a very dangerous story that might cause big trouble on the nation’s waterfront (Timebands 308). Nevertheless, changing the focus of its theme, Kazan went on to direct the highly critically acclaimed *On the Waterfront*. Miller, in the meantime, had decided to focus instead on another interesting story about a different Longshoreman who had informed upon his illegal immigrant relatives to the Immigration Bureau in order to prevent the marriage of his niece to one of the new arrival immigrants. After being ostracized by his community for his act of betrayal, the longshoreman disappeared. Later on it was rumoured that he was eventually killed by the brother of one of the the illegals whom he had informed upon. After a trip which he had taken to Sicily and also discussed this subject with some communist friends, Miller desired to explore it more fully in a new play, titled *A View from the Bridge* (Herzberg 258).

In 1955 Miller produced his new one-act play, *A View from the Bridge*, together with another one-act play based upon his own experience called *A Memory of Two Mondays*. In this play he depicted the desperate mood and despondency of industry workers living in Brooklyn during the Great Depression. The critics, however, were unimpressed, and the plays were derided as being “completely different in tone and theme” (Helterman 98). *A Memory of Two Mondays* was criticized mostly as just reminiscences of Miller’s own teenage experience. The second play was mocked for seeming “like some reenactment of a Greek myth which was ringing a long-buried bell in (his) own subconscious mind” (Helterman 98). Moreover, the form of the plays with one act and a linear plot had also been one of the main targets of criticism.

The play was first performed in its one-act verse version on September 29, 1955, and despite its form, it ran for 149 performances. In his play, Miller proclaimed his belief that to tell names to the government was to exhibit unethical behavior. In addition to these, due to its torpid reception, Miller eventually had to rewrite and extend the play into a more traditional two-act prose play in 1956 (Miller ix).

Since the failure of the American Dream in regard to the plight of Italian immigrants is the main theme of *A View from the Bridge*, first of all the causes of immigration from Italy at the turn of the twentieth century should be examined. Under what conditions and with which hopes were the immigrants compelled to move to the United States to chase the American Dream? Moreover, is it worth it or not?

Between 1870 and 1930 Italy was in a state of unrest. Near the end of this period, Mussolini had risen to power and created an authoritarian government under the National Fascist Party. Meanwhile, despite the growth of industrialization work was scarce in Italy. However, the rate of growth and the development of technology in the United States was outpacing nations everywhere. Immigrants also from Italy were flocking to the shores of the United States to create better lives for themselves. According to Salvatore John LaGumina's: *The Italian-American Experience: An Encyclopedia* between 1890 and 1930 Italian immigrants dominated the entry rolls into the United States. According to existing records, 23.26 % of the immigrants during that time were from Italy, with the most of the people arriving from Sicily (321). Unfortunately, the situation in New York did not offer an easy life for the immigrants who left everything behind and came only with their hopes. Due to the use of contract labor in construction, the situations of many workers were untenable. The practice of contract labor created a form of indentured servitude. *Padroni*, a kind of employment agent, would advance the worker money for expenses, then charge an interest rate that was beyond the wages that were paid to the worker thus perpetuating a cycle of indebtedness (LaGumina 327).

However, the desire to immigrate had infected the Italian public, and the American Dream was at the forefront of the desire to escape the difficulties in Italy. As immigrants flooded the shores and new communities arose within the nation, ghettoization occurred. People gravitated toward ethnically defined areas that were familiar to them. Stereotypes began to develop about what was expected of the different groups. Housing projects had committees that would determine whether families were suitable to live in the area. As mentioned in Peter Golenbock's *In the Country of Brooklyn: Inspiration to the World*, the committees would not allow families with a felon amongst them to move into the

projects, and they gave preference to those who would “fit” into the community (Golenbock 491). New York became ethnically structured, as different ethnicities dominated a territory from one neighborhood to the next. For the Italians, the neighborhood was Brooklyn. The variety of unskilled labor positions available around the Brooklyn waterfront proved attractive to the arrivals.

According to the preface of the play, Miller set the play in such a setting to emphasize that Red Hook is part of New York where the struggles of immigrants from all over the world contend with the powers that be and usually come to grief. The people in these neighborhoods were fighting to preserve their identities and at the same time were caught in a battle to be accepted as Americans. As the lines below make clear, however, America is seen as the great leveler, the melting pot that indifferently consumes and digests the newcomers into one vast undifferentiated throng:

ALFIERI. This is Red Hook, not Sicily. This is the slum that faces the bay
on the seaward side of Brooklyn Bridge. This is the gullet of New
York swallowing the tonnage of the world. And now we are quite
civilized, quite American (*A View From the Bridge* 12).

Eddie Carbone, the protagonist of the play is also one of those who chase the American Dream like his forefathers and has been consumed and digested through it together with his newcomer relatives. The play revolves around a plot that actually reveals the failure of the American Dream as it portrays the struggle of immigrants who are neither Italian nor American. The theme of culture verses culture is depicted with sub-themes such as economic necessity and struggles.

From the windows of the Carbone house, Red Hook is seen with ramps representing the streets, going up and down like the bumpy lives of Red Hook society. Miller visualizes the place in order to portray and foreshadow the ebbs and flows of the struggles of the society. The borough’s social structure is composed of neighborhoods of immigrants, especially from Italy, living more or less according to their own rules.

The Italian-American lawyer Alfieri, who is a bridge between Italian and American culture, illustrates the social structure of the borough: "...people in this neighborhood lack elegance, glamour. After all, who have I dealt with in my life? Longshoremen and their wives, and father and grandfathers, compensation cases, evictions, family squabbles – petty troubles of the poor – and yet..." (12). His task is to display the "view from the bridge" of Brooklyn that carries the life of the immigrants either to Manhattan, the most glorious part of New York City and the United States, or to its boroughs where they continue to struggle and end their lives hoping to pass over to the other side.

Alfieri acts as a chorus for Miller in his play. According to Drama Lecturer Graham Ley, the chorus represents "otherness" in that most actors never fully come to a place in which they can comprehend the meaning and intent of the drama. The function of the chorus, in its basic rudimentary concept, is to create commentary on the action and to help move the story forward (115). For Miller, the character Alfieri acts as a chorus, helping to contribute to his imitation of Greek tragedy and creating a certain ambiance of the genre as he writes his play. Alfieri provides background, creates a context, and forwards the action of the play.

It is an urban landscape made from all of the street laws that were brought from Italy and adjusted to compensate for the lack of social control from the state. Apart from the social structure, Alfieri also informs the audience about the violent nature of Red Hook since the Italian immigrants brought with them a type of indigenous social order that was at odds with the laws of the United States, which were not always the laws of the community, and were sometimes rejected by the community. In this community, "Law has not been a friendly idea" (11).

The communities that mushroomed in different areas and that were run by their own rules was the world that interested Miller when he began his play. In Red Hook, they have created their own small world, which they govern according to their own laws. In fact, the tension between the laws of the "tribe" and the laws of the land is made clear from the

opening lines of the play. In Red Hook, to meet a lawyer or a priest on the streets is unlucky. Lawyers are only thought of in connection with disasters (10).

They have created their own world and their own justice in which judgment is decided by the community law. The story of Vinny Bolzano, who informed on his uncle to the Immigration Bureau and was judged by his own family, was given for the purpose of showing the rough nature of Red Hook that lives by its own culture. There were many in Red Hook who were justly shot by unjust men. "Justice is very important" (12). Vinny Bolzano's head was bounced like a coconut by his five brothers and his father. Moreover, they also spit in his face and he lost his reputation, which is the individual's most important possession in the community. This story not only foreshadows the upcoming disasters but also expresses the code of conduct of the society in which the action and judgments take place.

Apart from its rough nature, Red Hook is a place where only lower class longshoremen and their families live. In the harbor and ships, it is just the longshoremen, whose heads turn like windmills when they see a female walking on the street. It is not a safe place for a woman or for anyone else. Eddie, the protagonist of the play, also does not like the neighborhood; he was even worried when his niece had the opportunity of working for a big firm around that area. It never seemed safe for anyone. His wife's response suggests the danger clearly: "If nothing happened to her in this neighborhood it ain't gonna happen noplacelse" (20).

As for the economic conditions, the play opens with the scene of a longshoreman's clean and sparse flat in the neighborhood of Red Hook. It contains a few simple pieces of furniture that give the impression of a poor but tidy and well-maintained family home. The owners of the house, the Carbone family, has moved to this place and holds on to it with a passion, like the others in the community – as the name Red Hook suggests passion (red) and holding on (hook). Eddie Carbone is a middle-aged longshoreman who has spent more than twenty years working on the docks. As an Italian American he follows the customs of his nations and also his community. He does not hesitate to open

his house to his wife's cousins, who enter the country illegally with the hope of finding a source of survival for themselves and their families. As an Italian host he not only opens his house but also gives his bed to them, as he did to his previous guests when his father-in-law's house burnt down. For him, it is not a burden but an honor. He puts himself in their place and wonders what he would do if his father had not come to the United States. He thinks he would be suffering in their place; however, he is not aware that to work on the docks and ships under very hard conditions is also nothing more than suffering.

His wife is a typical submissive housewife who tries to do her best with limited means. Her life is spent in the house where they live – nothing more. She has no idea about the world outside her house. She lived in a house all her life and knows nothing about the outside world (21).

Despite very poor conditions, she keeps her house clean and tidy. As a wife, she is strictly addicted to her customs. She tries to serve the best to her cousins from Italy. As a typical housewife whose only duty is to take care of her house in the best way, her concerns before his cousins arrive are to buy a new tablecloth, to wash the walls, to put a new cover on the chair, to wax the floors, etc. Since they do not have enough money to buy a new tablecloth, her niece offers to borrow one from a neighbor. However, the economic conditions are the same throughout this immigrant society – the neighbor does not have one either.

The only food she can serve is fish, which is cheap since they are living near the harbor. They also have illegal opportunities to get food from the ships where Eddie is working. For instance, Eddie “bust a bag to the coffee” on the ship and brings some home. Miller shows us that even for a meal or a cup of coffee illegal acts are necessary for this kind of immigrant community. They get used to it so that it becomes a normal act for them.

Apart from being a good housewife, Mrs. Carbone is protective toward her family members. She receives her cousins from Italy with open arms. Moreover, she has taken care of her orphan niece and accepted her as her own daughter for years. Although she

realizes her husband's interest in her, she never tries to keep her away from her house. She never treated her as a threat. She even tries to consolidate his destroyed relations with Catherine when she wanted to marry Rodolpho, one of her immigrant cousin from Italy.

She is a constructive figure throughout the play. She is a submissive woman who has had no chance to go to school – a typical immigrant housewife. It is obvious that her only concern is the survival of her family. She is trapped in the city and the society in which she lives. She hints about this entrapment when she mentions that she would like to be on one of those boats to see other countries – to see the world like her immigrant cousins who used to be seamen. This wish displays her imprisonment in her forefathers' American Dream. It is obvious that it was not her choice to live in the United States as an immigrant, but just her submission to her father's or husband's decision. Through this decision she has been a captive of the system she finds herself in. In addition to her husband's interest in her niece she rebels and asks when she is going to be a wife again, Eddie (36).

Beatrice has also another important factor throughout the play. Her words and acts foreshadow important points that Miller wants to make, as when she mentions the sardines in the ocean, which are followed by seaman all over the ocean, from Africa to Yugoslavia. With this dialog Miller portrays the situation of the immigrants, who are like sardines – so tiny and almost invisible in the immense ocean, and always in danger of being eaten by the bigger fish. And as the fisherman chase the sardines from Africa to Yugoslavia, the immigrants chase the American dream.

Beatrice creates another symbol that foreshadows the failure of the dream of the immigrants. She takes down the Christmas decorations as Eddie comes home after he informs on the illegal cousins to the Immigration Bureau. Christmas time represents hope and a new life; however, their cousins are taken away. With Beatrice's action Miller implies that the dreams of the immigrants, like the Christmas decorations, will be taken away and their hopes will be destroyed.

The other female character, Beatrice's niece Catherine, is portrayed as a young Italian American whose life is drawn by the opportunities of the poor immigrant family and the opportunities that the United States provides her. She is a lively woman who is naturally coy. She is unaware that her natural coyness catches the attention of her uncle Eddie and conquers his heart. As a typical Italian immigrant, she doesn't have a chance to go to college, yet her beauty is compared to American college girls when her uncle Eddie compares her to American college girls. In this way Miller points out that American girls and American beauty are valued more than in other nations. Catherine's receiving these compliments also portrays the loss of her own identity by being compared with the American girls.

Ironically, she is successful in school and is offered a job with a big company as a stenographer. It isn't exactly a secretary, it's a stenographer first, but pretty soon she may get to be a secretary, as the school manager says to her since she is the best in the whole class (18). Miller portrays an immigrant girl who is the best in her class but who can only become a stenographer, not even a secretary. That is the best offer that an immigrant girl from Red Hook can receive.

Furthermore, she is portrayed as if her lover, who is chasing after the American Dream, sees her as a "green" girl. That is, while Rodolpho wants to get a green card from their marriage, Catherine turns out to be a means for him to achieve the American Dream. Even though he denies it, he rejects life in Italy when they marry. He insists that he is not a beggar, and Catherine is not a horse, a gift, a favor for a poor immigrant (61). She is just the one with whom he wants to settle down and live his life in the United States.

Apart from the Carbone family, who have the status of "native immigrants" as far as the newcomer cousins are concerned, the driving force that brought them to America was the hope for a chance at success, even if that success is defined as nothing more than living just a marginally better life. This is not always the result, but the opportunity for this chance is enough to attract these immigrants, as portrayed by Miller throughout the play.

The economic conditions of the new immigrants are so limited that the low economic conditions of the Carbone household seems to them like a millionaire's house when they compare it to the way they lived in Italy. When the immigrants see the Carbone's house for the first time, they cannot believe that the Carbone's are poor since they compare their house with the houses in Italy.

They have come from a place where manpower is little better than animal power. If they are lucky, they would have a chance to push carriages and earn money for doing the work of an animal. As Rodolpho mentions, to push carriages up is a feature of their town. The horses in their town are skinnier than goats, so if there are too many passengers they help to push the carriage up to the hotel to earn money (28).

Moreover, they even went to Africa in a boat to catch fish to earn money. It was just possible when one of the families that owned a boat was sick. Their other option is that they can work if they build a house or fix something. In summer, they work in the fields "if there is work." Marco explains the gravity of their situation when he describes the survival of his children. Moreover, Marco's wife buys medicine for their children with the money that he sends to her. So he not only works for their food but also for their health. If he "stays there, they will never grow up. They eat the sunshine" (29).

The situation is the same for the young single citizens. That's why Rodolpho rejects Catherine's demand to live in Italy, where there is little food or work. He responds to her that they cannot cook the view. He does not want her to suffer in Italy by taking her from a rich country to poor one. In Italy they feed the babies with boiled water with a bone in it.

Yet just as today, it is not easy to start a new life in a country where not all immigration is legal. New life and labor is for sale. Those who have money can reach it, or those who just have plenty of it can provide for themselves and their family by giving their all, as seen through the characters Marco and Rodolpho.

As Eddie mentions, even though they are illegal newcomers, they are given regular seaman papers. The system is organized so that the papers are arranged in Italy for the seamen and even the captain. Miller portrays how illegal acts are allowed by the United States. This system has continued for years and still continues as the authorities are paid off. To get in, to work, to survive, one must pay. In other words, you must pay to be paid. As Eddie says, “The syndicate’ll fix jobs for them; till they pay’em off they’ll get them work everyday. It’s after pay-off, then they’ll have to scramble like the rest...” (24).

The play portrays the system that offers a chance to participate by receiving financial support – at the cost of betraying your comrades and your community – which creates an atmosphere in which you cannot trust anyone, even those closest to you. As Eddie points out, the state “got stool pigeons all over this neighborhood, they are paying them every week for information, and you don’t know who they are. It could be your best friend (23).

However, even if one obeys all the rules and becomes part of the system as an illegal immigrant, one can also lose one’s identity in the legal phase. Miller shows that if an immigrant gets hit by a car and he has no papers to show, he has no identity. Just like an insect that does not belong to the “clean” homeland, they will be deported from the country.

If they are “lucky” enough to stay, Miller portrays a situation that is not so different from the one they faced in their homeland. First of all, they are always under the pressure of gratitude to the households who opened their doors to them. That kind of a favor needs a life-long pay-back since they not only saved the immigrants but also their families. On the other hand, even if the syndicate is paid off, the only opportunity to earn money is to work on the docks. The conditions on the dock are not so different from the conditions in Italy, as described by Mike and Louis, who portray the situation of Marco. According to Louis “he is a regular slave” (36). Also, Marco is “a regular bull. They leave him alone and he would load the whole ship by himself” (37).

Marco, who came to the United States to save his family and to provide for them, mentions another important point: they miss their homeland, families, and children so much that they feel “lonesome” (52). Hence it is hard to concentrate on earning money under such primitive conditions.

On the other hand, this situation is the same back where they left their families. As Marco mentions, there are many families in their town in which the children never seen their father. They do not know a father figure, and also their mothers long for their husbands for years. For economic necessity, physiological needs are suppressed; but there are a few surprises for the husbands when their wives have other children from other men, or on the contrary some husbands never go back to their wives and children but establish a new family in the States.

The characters of Marco and Rodolpho represent the unskilled laborers who have come to earn their chance at the American dream. Since there is a lack of jobs and food in their homeland, America represents a great opportunity for them. However, they not only must work hard, but they must also behave according to the rules of the new community. Because they are assimilated into an Italian-based community within the United States, the basic laws by which the culture lives and acts must be completely understood. That’s why Marco acts according to the laws that are constituted by his society. He is aware that he should stand strong and act as a masculine man. He should always prove his superiority toward others who question it. If not, he knows that he and his brother can be easily destroyed. This concept is underlined by Miller when Eddie tries to defeat and hurt his brother Rodolpho while he is teaching him boxing. Marco asks Eddie to lift the chair on one knee with one hand behind his back. Eddie tries but he cannot. Finally, Marco grasps it and raises it, facing Eddie. The chair is raised like a weapon over Eddie’s head.

The reason why he shows his power to Eddie in a threatening way depends on his treatment toward his brother Rodolpho. Apart from Rodolpho’s interest in his niece Catherine, his behavior on the docks destroys his reputation in the community. Rodolpho becomes an object of criticism because he is blonde and cooks and sews better than a

woman, and he dances while singing. The Red Hook community does not welcome these characteristics. As he sings on the deck of the ship, he is called a canary or paper doll. For the other longshoremen he is a regular freak show, and the Italian-based community, in which masculinity is dominant, cannot accept it. Their comment about him is “he ain’t exactly funny, but he is always like makin’ remarks.... He comes around, everybody’s laughin’” (37).

With the character Rodolpho Miller portrays a different phase of the American Dream. Apart from economic needs, Rodolpho’s dream is based on fame and glory that also brings financial power with it. Rudolpho has no desire to be an unskilled laborer, but seeks the fame and fortune he feels is implicit in the American Dream. He wants to be an American so he can work without any legal obstacle. He may even sing and be successful. He wants to stay forever and witness the rich and confident life that is available to millions of others for years. He always wants to wander around Broadway since he saw its pictures when he was a child. On the other hand, with his first salary he buys clothes, shoes, and records while his brother’s kids are starving in Italy. He lives in a fantasy world and is a victim of the American Dream that implicitly forces individuals into consumerism. He thinks he will continue to earn money and with more opportunities and income he will also gain power. Miller points out that the America’s brilliant life has caught the attention of millions across the ocean. Once again, the concept of the American Dream has been inflated. The work and luck involved in creating the full measure of that dream is obscured by the blind hope with which the dream has developed. The American dream is ethereal, as unrealistic as the concept of most dreams, but the drive toward being that one-in-a-million who succeeds is supported by a hope that is hard to quell.

The point that Rodolpho misses and Miller displays is actually what the American Dream offers, apart from its amusing side that attracts most individuals and impels them to chase after it. Unfortunately, the reality is quite different from what is promised: immigrants who move to the United States without questioning whether it is worth it or not can become part of a vicious circle and can suffer for years. Eddie “worked like a dog twenty

years ... in the worst times, in the worst when there wasn't a ship comin' in the harbor ... he went to Hoboken, Staten Island, the West Side, Jersey, all over" (49). Because he made a promise. (49)

The illusory side of the American Dream is also portrayed by some symbols in the play. For instance, Catherine is surprised when Rodolpho mentions that "they got oranges on the trees where he comes from, and lemons ... on the trees" (39). What surprises her more is their color is not green and they are not painted.

A young girl grows up in the United States without being aware that lemons grow on trees. On the other hand, Eddie, as an adult, supports the idea that they are yellow but painted before they are put up for sale. Moreover, as an Italian he does not remember the original color of a fruit that grows in his own land. In this way Miller displays how unnatural is the system in the United States, and how artificial its dreams are. Additionally, Eddie is an example of how individuals lose touch with themselves and with their homeland.

Even though in some ways Eddie has lost track of where he came from, he tries to live according to the code of conduct of his community. However, his mind is in conflict with his heart when his love toward his niece is considered. According to Eddie, Rodolpho violates the ethics and codes of his culture with his love for Catherine. As an object within his household for whom he desires a sexual connection, he defends his home and his objects through whatever means he thinks will bring him the result he needs. Unfortunately, his defense for informing on Rodolpho to the Immigration Bureau violates the code of conduct of their community. By his action he not only devastates Rodolpho, but also Marco and two other illegal immigrants, as well as the people they are supporting. As Marco states, in a way he killed their children by informing on them to the Immigration Bureau (77).

His action is something unacceptable according to the conduct of the community as portrayed in Vinny Bolzano's story. In their country he would be dead or would not live

long. Marco mentions that nobody will talk to Eddie even if he lives to be a hundred. Moreover, to promise that he will not be killed is dishonorable. Marco is disappointed by the law in the United States, and he mentions that some laws are not in the book. His culture is opposed to the laws of the country. On the other hand, Eddie wants his name back after Marco spits in his face. He wants Marco to give him back his name in front of the neighborhood to regain his reputation. After his betrayal, his commonality is shattered, his associations are violated, and his position in the community is destroyed. The dream is ended.

CONCLUSION

The American Dream has long attracted those who were dissatisfied with their homelands to America's shores, along with their hopes and plans of establishing a new life. The early years of immigration required people to endure long journeys on ships, during which many passengers failed to survive. Moreover, it meant leaving behind family and friends who had shared generations of history and culture. However, throughout the centuries, wondrous tales of the new world crossed the Atlantic and overcame the fears of such dangers. Men and women followed the dream and set their lives on a course to meet the challenges it presented. And during each time period, literary promotion supported the building of the American Dream.

However, there has always been a difference between the American Dream and the reality of life in America for the masses who pursued their chance in the promised land of opportunity. From its beginning until today, the American Dream has not always been achieved by those who took the chance and came to the United States. During the years of immigration, some unfortunates struggled not only with hard conditions, but also with persecution, which forced many of them to leave the New World. Additionally, after the settlement and foundation of the new nation, the struggles of the immigrants have always been the main fact for those who left their own history, culture and families behind in order to enter the newly established world whose dynamics were rapidly changing. Immigrants were always struggling to fulfill economic needs through a system that forced them into lifelong debt, and a vicious circle in which one can become a tool to be exploited for the benefit of others. Moreover, from the time of the Puritans, who brutalized those who did not conform, until today, when freedom of opinion is questionable in a world of mass media controlled by large corporate and class interests, the much praised freedoms of America have often been in doubt.

In other words, the myth of the "land of opportunity" does not imply that anyone can come to the United States and be successful. It rather means that whoever comes to the United States may be successful, as in other parts of the world. The myth of this phrase contradicts with the offer that it actually has made. Success has never flowed from unending fountains of power and wealth and streamed into the pockets of people, as the myth seems to imply. The promised freedom of opinion and speech has not been easily fulfilled, nor has the expression of political and religious

freedom always been allowed as advertised. Freedom, the most important word, which is used to define the American dream, has failed to live up to its promise (Scheweke 4). Moreover, it has never been easy to be “free” of the cultural obligations that determine an individual’s acts and contribute to the overall social reality.

In short, coming to the United States never guaranteed success, nor does economic and political freedom insure that one will be free from one’s past in the social sphere. In fact, throughout its history the American dream has failed to fulfill its promises. Among historians and writers, the playwright Arthur Miller portrays in his dramas the failure of the American Dream from economic, political, and social perspectives that are closely related to each other. In his plays Miller depicts the failure of the American dream as his protagonists are torn between their pursuit of success and their inability to accomplish their dreams. While the American Dream encourages optimism for the individual to pursue higher goals, Miller’s plays emphasize that the very notion of the American Dream is an illusion rather than a reality. The dramatist has succeeded in his attempts to depict the harsh realities of capitalism that absorbed the vitality of Americans in the post-World War II era. Sudden economic growth prompted both the lower and the middle classes to hoard wealth, which eventually led to extreme suffering and even, as in the case of Miller’s characters, death. Miller’s characters cannot adjust to capitalism and the new social structures within which they are trying to establish their lives. They fail in their attempts to adapt to a new society, and they stumble over the harsh realities of life – as demonstrated in the tragic failures of Willy Loman in *Death of A Salesman*, John Proctor in *The Crucible*, and Eddie Carbone in *A View From the Bridge*.

As analyzed in depth in *Death of a Salesman*, Miller portrays the tragic end of Willy Loman, a salesman who devoted his whole life to the company he is working for in order to establish an economically stable life for his family. However, while chasing after the American Dream to satisfy his family economically and psychologically, he does not realize that he is just a victim of the capitalist system, and his life has been taken over by consumerism. Believing that he is entitled to the luxuries of life that the American Dream offers, he has spent his years struggling for a high standard of living without actually having an adequate income. During that time he does not show enough interest in his family and this irretrievable failure results in two lost sons

who lack self-confidence and economic and psychological stability. Tragically, after over forty years of struggle he fails to achieve the economic standard he wishes to reach. Unfortunately, he realizes that he finally has a house but no one to live in it in. Moreover, his service is unappreciated by his company, and he decides to commit suicide for the future of his sons who could establish a life for themselves with the money they will receive from his life insurance, on the day he has paid the last installment on his house.

In his play *The Crucible*, Miller portrays another aspect of the shortcomings of the American Dream. The tragic end of John Proctor displays the fake side of freedom of opinion and speech in the United States. Miller sets the play in Salem in the late seventeenth century in order to mirror the hysteria of the terrible contemporary events of the 1950s McCarty era scandals. He creates parallels between the torture of suspected witches and the torture of suspected communists, both of whom were pressured to confess their so-called crimes. Throughout the play, Miller uses witchcraft as the main symbol to reflect the irrational definition of communism as evil during the McCarty era. Another important parallel in the play is the measures taken by both authorities to take away the freedom of individuals in both societies. The victims have two choices: they can either confess their so-called guilt, or die. Those who confess their so-called crimes implicate others in order to live, which is a heavy burden. The protagonist of the play is also forced to tell the truth and die, or tell a lie and live. Even though John Proctor signs a public confession to live at first, later his pride and fear of losing his name and reputation compel him to withdraw his 'confession.' He declares that the authorities cannot use him to justify their own actions, which tragically results in his death.

In *A View From the Bridge* Miller displays the disharmony of the Italian immigrants who can neither be American nor survive as Italians. His protagonist Eddie Carbone is unable to act according to the mores of the other Italian immigrants – in the United States or in their homeland. Eddie Carbone is portrayed as someone who has become an American, but he cannot break off his social connection with his culture. As an Italian American he at first lives according to the code of conduct of his community when he welcomes the illegal immigrant cousins of his wife. He hides them in his house and protects them against the American laws. However, he turns against the values of his community when he informs on the immigrant cousins to the American

government in order to avert the marriage of his niece, whom he has fallen in love with. With this action he loses the respect of his community and his reputation in the neighborhood since his act not only puts the immigrants in trouble but also their families in Italy who survive with the money they receive from the illegal immigrants who work like slaves in the United States. According to Sicilian-American social codes, that means losing one's identity. As a typical tragic hero, in the end Eddie Carbone faces what he deserves.

Miller concludes that capitalism in America is ineffective to fulfill the long-cherished dreams of many Americans. He shows the limitations and failures of the American Dream insofar as it promises wealth and economic freedom to Willy Loman, who commits suicide for the future well-being of his family. Additionally, in *The Crucible* Miller shows the illusory freedom of opinion and speech in the United States, where suspected Communists were often pressured to confess the crimes they didn't commit. This fact reflects the impact of McCarthyism in shaping Miller's sense of betrayal of the American Dream. Finally, in *A View From the Bridge* Miller depicts the failure of the American dream by comparing and contrasting life in Italy and the promised life in America for Sicilian immigrants who came to New York for a better life but were rejected and ostracized by the American community. As demonstrated by this study, Miller's plays stage the failure of the American Dream from economic, political, and social perspectives. The immigrants who fled from Mussolini's fascism were in turn faced with the spectacle of the McCarthy trials and social dilemmas concerning the cultural obligations in their new society, while those who came to the United States for economic reasons, such as the Italian immigrants, often perished through the capitalist system.

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BIOGRAPHY

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