A TRACE OF MODERN EUROPEAN LITERARY CURRENTS IN ARTHUR MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

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In reading Arthur Miller's masterpiece *Death of a Salesman*, one can unmistakably observe the presence of many modern European literary currents that are working in the background of the play. Among these literary currents are expressionism and symbolism. It seems that Miller deliberately used these currents to achieve a specific purpose in the play. With their aid, Miller believes that he will be able to externalize, enlarge, and enhance the debacle that his main character is confronting. Miller strongly believes that expressionism and symbolism can add depth and profundity to the play. They can present the hidden forces of the individual by playing out these forces on the stage. With the employment of these two literary tides, the play becomes a deep-minded work.

The use of expressionism made the play appear as a penetrating study of the inner workings of the human psyche as it struggles to cope with betrayal, failure, and a search for

identity. And with the help of symbols, Miller dives into the psyche not floats on its surface.

Death of a Salesman is a development of expressionism of an interesting kind. In this play, Miller has been attracted to the German socio-expressionists after World War I. The expressionistic elements of this play are consciously used by Miller. He has willingly employed expressionism but always to create a subjective truth, and this play seemed as though nobody had written it at all but that it had simply happened.

The first expressionistic element to start with is the very setting of the play. The setting of *Death of a Salesman* is expressionistic in which Miller tried to suggest symbolically certain inner feelings of his character or his subject matter. The setting is made purposefully of unfamiliar pieces.

During the writing of the play, Miller intended to present on the stage an enormous face. This face would appear and then open up, and the audience would see the inside of a man's head.[1] By the time Miller had completed the play, he had found a substitution for the giant head, a transparent setting: "*The entire setting is wholly or, in some places, partially transparent.*"[2] Miller believes that by substituting a transparent setting for a giant head, the audience will be able to examine the social context as well as the individual organism. The story of the play is told partly through the mind and memory of Willy Loman. It wavers between past and present, so the physical properties on the stage must represent this; that is why whenever the action is in the present, the actors observe the imaginary wall lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and the characters enter or leave a room by stepping through a wall on to the fore stage. By this way, the action--in the character's mind--and the setting will correspond to and complete each other.

In expressionism, the emphasis is not on the development of the plot itself, but on the essential experiences of individuals. "The plot and [the] structure of the play [tend] to be disjointed

and broken into episodes, incidents and tableaux."[3] What the audience see is never an orderly presentation of the plot. The barriers of time and space disappear, scenes are brief and they alternate between reality and fantasy.

The structure of the plot, of *Death of a Salesman*, follows an aesthetic rather than a logical mode of development. Events and incidents are unfolded in a way that resembles the stream of consciousness technique.

In his introduction to *The Dream Play* (1902), the expressionist dramatist August Strindberg wrote that "time and space do not exist… they are dissolved and logical process is abandoned, as in a dream."[4] In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller employs a disjointed time structure, in which the play shifts setting and time within the act. The play moves between fifteen years back and the present, and from Brooklyn to Boston without any interruption in the plot. The times of the play fluctuate between a point in 1942 and another in 1928. There are fourteen to fifteen years between these two times. Willy Loman constantly returns to the year 1928 because, as Henry L. Squires remarks, it was the prime time and "the last perfectly happy year before his break with [his elder son] Biff."[5] About the time structure in the play, B. S. Goyal states that one important manifestation of the structure of the play is the break down of the chronological time order.[6] And this, as Goyal points out, is deliberately done in order to "dredge the important elements from the past into the troubled present."[7] And this form, Goyal concludes, "is integral to the theme and characterization of the play."[8]

Another characteristic associated with the expressionistic play is that, "its atmosphere [is] often vividly dream-like and nightmarish. This mood was aided by shadowy, unrealistic lighting and visual distortions in the set."[9] This is true with Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in which the play looks as a dream. It alternates between reality and fantasy, and Willy Loman himself seems as if he were in a trance. He appears as a dream

walker in search of a meaning for his life. This dreamer is breaking down the chronological time boundaries, recreating incidents and individuals. Within this dreamy atmosphere there are Willy's dream-like remembrances of the past which are known as the dream sequences or the flashbacks. But Miller explains them not as flashbacks but as "a mobile con-currency of past and present."[10]

The dream sequences or the flashbacks are not scattered through the play at random, even though Miller does not present them in any tidy chronological order. He selects and arranges them in a definite pattern that gives increasing depth and dimension to the protagonist and at the same time illuminating the contradictions in his character. Each flashback moves us deeper into Willy's consciousness. Regarding these dreamy recollections--flashbacks--Ramji Lall remarks that

> the recollections are not straight flashbacks,… but they are distorted, speeded up, and accentuated by repetition and selection. These recollections merge with the present, but they are at the same time distinguishable from present reality.[11]

This return to the past in Willy's mind occurs because "the family is all important to him and partly because he is becoming deranged,"[12] or as Miller himself remarks that Willy has reached "that terrible moment when the voice of the past is no longer distant but quite as loud as the voice of the present."[13] As a matter of fact, Willy Loman does not, in any way, return to the past. It is the repressed past that returns subtly to his present. The past, as in hallucination, comes back to him not chronologically but dynamically with the inner logic of his erupting unconscious. In psychiatry, Dennis Welland explains this situation which he calls "the return of the repressed."[14] It happens when the mind breaks down and no longer be capable of compromising with reality.

The use of the flashback technique helps to enrich the dramatic force of the play. It also reflects Miller's desire to make the audience feel the horror in the spectacle of a man losing consciousness to the point where he engages in conversations with unseen persons. The flashbacks are the expressionistic devices that Miller employed to show Willy's state of mind, his inner crisis, and his psychological unbalance. They also can show Willy's inner debacles and his social dilemmas. The dream sequences are very vital in *Death of a Salesman*. They are part and parcel of the play. It is only through them that the audience become acquainted with some of the most important events in Willy's life. Events that changed his life radically like: Biff's prowess on the cricket field, Ben's adventurous nature and the fabulous wealth he acquired, and Willy's affair in Boston and Biff's unexpected arrival.

Willy Loman is now sixty years old and his two sons, Biff and Happy, are mature young gentlemen. But in the scenes of the past, Miller has to present the boys not as gentlemen but as teenagers. To achieve this, the director has to make Biff and Happy change their clothes and appear as youngsters. Even the carriage of the actors should be changed. When Willy is in the present time, he walks with stopped shoulders and the weariness of an old man. But in the flashbacks, he steps lively and forcefully. Allowing the characters to split into younger versions of themselves is another expressionistic element that Miller employs in *Death of a Salesman*.

Among other marks of expressionism is the use of symbolic characters,[15] and a rejection of the strong individualistic figures. This is true with *Death of a Salesman* in which Willy Loman, like the great tragic figures of Sophocles and Shakespeare, is both an individual and a broadly relevant type. Willy Loman carries a symbolic dimension in his character. He functions as the most representative member of the American commercial society. He can be regarded as an American Everyman who carries his social status with his very last name. His last name, as

Henry L. Squires points out, is a "pun on low-man."[16] He is "at the bottom of the rung in a creative or capitalistic world."[17] He owns nothing and makes nothing. And he lives closer to our experience than many protagonists. He is struggling with the pressures of the twentieth-century life--of money, of the city, of the family, and of the job. While his weaknesses are those which ordinary humans share; loneliness, the inability to decide exactly what one wants, and the break down of communications between the two generations are all part of our lives to some extent.

The second symbolic character in the play is Ben. He is Willy's elder brother. Ben is a shadowy figure who functions more as a symbol or illusion than he does as a character. The audience see Ben only through Willy's illusions. Although died several weeks before, Ben often appears in Willy's hallucinations. This is because, as Goyal remarks, whenever Willy gets "lost in the world of emptiness and nothingness, [he] conjures up the vision of his successful brother Ben."[18] The image rises up in Willy's mind and becomes a palpable reality to him. Ben appears in flesh and blood and tells Willy that it was an accident that when he was going to find his father in Alaska, he ended up in Africa due to a "faulty view of geography" (1. 32). And in Africa he found diamond mines. Ben offers to Willy and Biff a practical wisdom, the key to success in the so-called free, open, and democratic society based on the jungle-law: "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way" (1. 33). Behind Ben's speech, Haná Khalief Chani sees social implications and thus she remarks that "Ben, it seems here, is fully aware of the nature of the system under which he is living. He realizes…that life in America is one of struggle for survival."[19]

Ben is the ideal for Willy. He stands for success incarnate in a world where men must use not their personality but their hands and guts. As a character, Ben represents the individual whom Willy can rely upon in a moment of extreme depression. Ben becomes, as Goyal points out "Willy's psychological

crutch."[20] As a matter of fact, Willy and Ben are considered Miller's greatest expressionistic creation.

The Woman is also an expressionistic type, the play's only generic character, other than the marvellously individualized salesman. To prove to himself that he is well-liked, Willy has made an affair with a strange young woman. She is an assistant in a company in Boston which Willy deals with. She has a continuing affair with Willy when he visits New England. About the nature of the relationship between Willy and the Woman, Brian W. Last remarks that "the woman is simply for company,"[21] because Willy feels terribly alone when he travels. So, she offers him a good company. Both Mehdi Zia′ee and Ali Haji Shamsa′ee agree with this opinion and they add that "the woman's attention and admiration boost Willy's fragile ego."[22] Her sweet and inspiring words have made Willy feel as if he were another man living in another world. She starts feeding his pride with her praising words, and thus she frequently tells him: "You're a wonderful man" (1. 24). The Woman has made Willy feel wanted, and has made him feel as though he were the salesman that he imagines himself to be. But Brian W. Last derives a sad conclusion from the affair episode saying that it "reveals the superficiality of [Willy's] family life."[23] It is true that his concern for Linda and the boys is genuine, but his need for success overcomes his feeling of loyalty.

When Biff failed in math, he comes to Willy to make him talk with the teacher to change the grade because, as Biff believes, Willy is a well-liked individual who can do wonders. Biff shows up in Boston and catches Willy in his hotel room with the woman. Biff loses faith in his father, and his dream of passing math and going to college dies. For Biff, the situation was a shock. He was thunder-stricken because Willy is not, in the eyes of his sons, just a man but a god. It is this illusion of sexless godhood that is shattered when Biff catches Willy with this lustful woman. Biff breaks down, weeps, and walks out

while his father is on his knees pleading for forgiveness, understanding, and lost godhood.

The hotel scene strips Biff of his faith in Willy and Biff begins questioning all Willy's values that they are all fake. The god-like mask falls from Willy's face and events begin to intensify Willy's own responsibility for the hopelessness of the situation that confronts him. The scene in Boston is considered a turning point in Willy's life. It echoes in his mind, mixing the past with the present and making Willy's mind, as Miller said "a mass of contradictions."[24]

Willy is now in his old age. He is sixty-three years old. After some forty years of working with the Wagner firm, and after sucking all his youthful energy, Willy is brutally fired for he is no longer able to keep up working for twelve hours a day. Ammar Shamil sees this as the most pathetic event in the play because the audience can clearly see how the "tyranny of man [is directed] against his brother man."[25] Now Willy has nowhere to turn, he must now rely upon his boys, but his boys are not reliable. Willy cannot bring himself to ask for help from his boys because he will have to then realize that they are incapable of helping him. It is here that Willy mentions that "the woods are burning" (2. 80). This develops into Willy's method of saying that life is closing in on him and that he has no place to turn for help.

Now there is no place for Willy to go, therefore, he conceives of a way out of his burning woods. This involves suicide. Through suicide he would be able to leave his sons twenty thousand dollars--the insurance money. In this way Willy passes from selling things to selling himself and has become a commodity that will, at a certain point, be economically discarded. Commenting on Willy's decision of suicide, Chani states that

> Willy's choice of committing suicide is not an escape from shame and humiliation. Rather, it

> is a last attempt to re-establish his self-confidence, his dignity and his family's integrity….Willy is ready to sacrifice his life in order to preserve his personal dignity and splendid self-image.[26]

Chani goes on describing Willy's suicide as an "assertion of bravery,"[27] because he has achieved a very powerful piece of knowledge which is that he is loved by his sons.

Because Willy is a representative figure of the American society, his problems are much less personal dilemmas than they are public issues. Through Willy, Lall said, "we are witnessing the malady not of an individual but of society."[28] This means that Willy has become a medium through which Miller launches his social criticism and "this quality of his [Miller's] is the first trait by which we identify this play as an example of expressionism."[29] Certainly this concern with large social issues is the key to Miller's definition of expressionism which is "form…manifestly seeks to dramatise the conflict of either social, religious, or moral forces."[30]

Death of a Salesman is considered a direct criticism of the decayed moral and social standards of contemporary America. Through the major character of the play, Willy Loman, Miller wants to show the social injustices and the social ills that make the individual an easy prey of its ruthless mechanism. The play is a faithful documentation of a year by year frustration in America. A frustration that makes Willy get lost and become a failure in the land of success. Willy suddenly realizes that he is, as Goyal points out, "a victim of the callous world"[31] of relentless social system. A system that rises up just one motto, "business is business" (2. 58), in which the survival is of the fittest and the winner is the ruthless aggressor who carries the slogan: "Never fight fair with a stranger" (1. 33), to use Ben's words. It is against this cruel, ugly, and dehumanizing world of business, which is embodied in the character of Howard, Willy

utters his globally known angry cry: "You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away--a man is not a piece of fruit" (2. 59)!

In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller launches an attack against the society that throws man like a scrap heap to fall into his grave like an old dog. Miller here is mobilizing the public opinion to aid and support the poor, crushed, and down-trodden people, stating that with all their frailties and littleness, they are still human beings and human consideration must be given to them.

Expressionism has done more than any other movement to develop the expressive powers of stage lighting and music. In this play, these two elements have come to be known as the visual and the aural devices. The visual device is concerned with the colours of lighting employed in the play, while the aural device is associated with the sound of the flute. These two devices played a very functional role in supporting the expressionistic technique in the play. They are used carefully and wisely to enable the playwright to achieve his goal in externalizing the feelings of the main character--Willy Loman. An example of the use of lighting in an expressionistic way happens at the end of Act One when Biff "*comes down stage into a golden pool of light* (1. 49);" as Willy recalls the day of the baseball championship when Biff was "like a young god" (1. 49). The pool of light both establishes the moment as one of Willy's memories and suggests how he has inflated the past giving it a mythic dimension. The lighting also functions to instill a sense of irony in the audience for the golden light glows on undiminished. But it begins to fade right after Willy's exclamation: "A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away" (1. 49). The irony lies in the fact that Biff's star has faded even before it has the chance to shine.

From this golden vision of his son, Willy's thoughts turn immediately to suicide. Willy's suicide is indicated by the blue flame of the gas heater that begins to glow through the wall--a foreshadowing of Willy's desire to gild his son through his

own demise. Besides the blue flame of the gas heater, there is an "*angry glow of orange* (1. 1);" to reflect the reality of the surrounding apartment houses. Both the blue flame and the orange glow join with the red glow rising from the hotel room and the restaurant give a felt sense of Willy's cry "the woods are burning" (2. 80). Without these sensory clues, audiences may fail to appreciate the desperation of Willy's state.

As for the aural element of the play, it is associated with the melody of the flute which the play begins and ends with. Act One begins with a reference to the sound of the flute, as it appears in the following stage direction: "*A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon* (1. 1)." This music provides a significant comment on the thematic implications of the play. The play deals with the dreams and desires of Willy Loman who is searching for his place in the world. The grass, trees, and the horizon, Goyal comments "signify the perennial world of dreams and ideals that sustains the human spirit in the midst of severe trials and tribulations."[32] Besides this, the music of the flute "means something other than a tune, [it is] a representation of life in the open, a life full of hope and peace."[33] Another clever use of music happens at the beginning of Act Two when hope seems to rise again for Biff is going to meet Bill Oliver, his former employer, to borrow some money. So, there is a promise that the Lomans can live together as a family unit. This promised happiness is conveyed by Miller through gay and bright music. According to Lall, this gay and bright music has a double function: "It reminds an audience of the temporary reconciliation which has taken place in the Loman family and also diminishes the grim hint of Willy's suicide."[34] Music in combination with sound effects is used at a moment of particular intensity in the play, for instance when Willy is with the Woman in the hotel room, "*raw, sensuous music accompanies their speech* (2. 87)." A knocking is heard at the door. Discovery is inevitable and the situation builds to a richer dramatic climax by the repeated

rhythm of the knocking on the door and the sensuous music. Music and sound effects again combine in the climax of Act Two when Willy drives his car into the darkness, "*the music crashes down in a frenzy of sound* (2. 105)." And this sound slowly changes to a dead march as the characters prepare to take their places for the scene at the grave-side. The play closes with Linda leaving Willy's grave and "*only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage* (2. 108)," playing a rather sad dirge.

Thus the flute melody opens and closes the play or it may, as Squires says, "encompass the entire drama."[35] It holds the play together in one unit, and it becomes the theatrical device that fuses all the expressionistic elements into a statement of artistic truth.

The music, setting, plot and time structure, dream-like atmosphere, split personality, symbolic and type characters, lighting plus tackling big issues like society and social ills are all the expressionistic elements in the play. The elements that expressed the world inside Willy Loman's head, a world in which social and personal values meet and merge and struggle for integration.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller uses many symbols. They are used with great subtlety and effect. They recur and thus help to structure the play. In other words, by their repetition they give form to a play which has abandoned conventional formal arrangement. In the play, there are four major symbolic objects, besides some other minor ones. Among the major symbols are: the seeds, stockings, diamonds, and the rubber hose.

Willy always desires to buy some seeds to be planted in his backyard but Linda often reminds him that nothing will grow back there because of the lack of the sunshine. Fired from his work and denied from his own sons, Willy feels that things begin to close in on him. By now the desire of buying seeds becomes compulsive: "I've got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground" (2. 93). Here, seeds symbolize growth, fertility, some thing that is permanent,

material, and tangible. Willy's preoccupation with seeds is symbolic of his realization that he has created nothing tangible in his life. For Willy, seeds represent the opportunity to prove the worth of his labour. He has a strong urge to create something or to leave something even if that thing is only some seeds in a barren ground. In fact, Goyal finds a striking identification between Willy and the seeds for Willy is a rootless and groundless man and, like the seeds, Willy wants to be planted somewhere in this world.[36] But , Goyal concludes, "the world doesn't offer any comfortable assurance [to Willy]"[37] for there is "not enough sun gets back there" (2. 51).

Willy buys the seeds and goes out with a flash light to plant them. On a bare stage, this might be seen insufferably allegorical. It is, as E. R. Wood states, "an unconscious attempt to supply meaning to life."[38] Planting seeds at night means that it is already too late to rise hope in Willy's heart. It also suggests desperation, futility, and the sense of failure of all Willy's endeavours to cultivate, nurture, and finding harmony with Biff. Or references to seeds can simply be interpreted as Willy's desire to be close to nature.

Besides the seeds, there are references to stockings. These stockings have a narrative and a psychological function in the play. Within the narrative, they are used as a mystery-making device for whenever Willy saw Linda mending her old stockings, he would scold her and ask her not to do so, at least, not in his presence. And Linda hides the stockings as one might hide an object which arouses a sense of guilt or shame. Thus the stockings provide an area of mystery. On the psychological level, the stockings imply not only an adulterous affair but also disillusionment in Biff's mind. The stockings in this play are a symbol of Willy's betrayal and sexual infidelity to his wife. They also reflect the sense of guilt that he has always carried with him, for Willy has given them as a present to the woman with whom he had an affair in Boston.

The stockings also emphasize Linda's homey qualities and, at the same time, they carry a sad connotation because "they place Linda in the role of the abused wife and mother,"[39] as Sequires maintains.

Throughout the play there are mentions of diamonds. Here diamonds are used symbolically. They represent both a material wealth and success. But for Willy, they symbolize his failure. As a symbol of wealth, diamonds are a validation of one's labour and life and the ability to pass material goods on to one's offspring, and these are the two things that Willy desperately craves for.

Diamonds are the main source behind Ben's fortune. He obtained his wealth by wandering through diamond mines in Africa and becoming affluent by the time he was twenty one. Diamonds also can be seen as a symbol of failure for Willy because when he was younger, he missed the opportunity to go to Africa with his brother and thus passed up the prospect of becoming something.

The fourth major symbolic object in the play is the rubber hose. In *Death of a Salesman* Miller uses the rubber hose to symbolize death, grief, deception, and failure. The hose is a stage prop that reminds the audience of Willy's desperate attempt at suicide. Willy has apparently attempted to kill himself by inhaling gas and the attempt proved a failure. The hose can be seen as a symbol of grief especially when Linda finds it and guesses its intended purpose. While the deceptive nature of the hose is apparent when Willy is confronted about it by Biff, Willy not only denies that he is going to use it but he also denies ever seeing it before.

Another symbolic object in the play is the very setting. The setting of the play is symbolic in which towering apartments are over-shadowing Willy's small house. This symbolically reflects Willy's smallness and his littleness in his society. The towers also reflect Willy's insignificance in the modern world of materialism.

Another symbol of high importance is Howard's tape recorder. The recorder serves two purposes: When Willy stumbles against it and sets it accidentally into motion, it precipitates a hysterical break down that symbolizes the central theme of the play in Willy's horror at his inability to switch it off. To switch off the recorded past, whether the past is that of his own sons recorded on his memory and conscience, or that of Howard's son recordings on the mechanical instrument. According to Dennis Welland, "it is the past, more than capitalism of which Willy is always the victim."[40] The machine also provides a means of dramatizing Howard's ingenuous pride in his children. They are far more real to him than the memory of his father to which Willy constantly appeals. The tape recorder emphasizes technological innovation and novelty. It shows that Howard is more interested in the future than in the past. The recorder also symbolizes Willy's obsolescence within the modern business world for he is unable to deal with innovations. Or it signifies the change in Willy's life through the advancement of the modern age.

Willy's car too is used symbolically in the play. Usually cars are a symbol of individual mobility and social status. In *Death of a Salesman*, the American dream is symbolized by the car. It is the vehicle that Willy and his two sons clean and polish in a manner which took on the proportions of, as Lall puts it, a "Sunday ritual."[41] But the car wears out and breaks down. It becomes Willy's source of troubles and his mental breakdown. In the past, the Lomans used to love and cherish their car. This past association of the car with family happiness contrasts with the symbol of the car in the present, when its implications include mental and physical exhaustion and a means of committing suicide.

Another symbol that is associated with the symbol of the car is the symbol of the road. The road has a psychological and metaphysical dimension for Willy. It is the road that once his father has roamed in a covered wagon by absolute courage, and

it is the road that has opened new territories to Willy in his early business career, and it is the same road that becomes hellish and devoid of sense for Willy in his old age.

Willy is very active with tools. He is efficient as a handyman rather than as a salesman, thus he asserts: "A man who can't handle tools is not a man" (1. 29). Tools in this play are given symbolic connotations. Like the symbol of seeds, the symbol of tools contains implications of growth--of living to make something with one's own hands and leaving it as a memorial after death. About the two symbols Lall stresses that "both symbols, one from the world of Nature and the other from the world of craftsmanship--suggest a frustration of growth and the subtraction of dream from reality." [42]

One of the largest symbols in *Death of a Salesman* is the symbol of the mortgage. This symbol is strongly emphasized by the car and the refrigerator. Willy had never been able to get anything paid for before it was used up. He was constantly "in a race with the junk yard" (2. 52). Willy reflected this thing in his agonized cry: "They time those things. They time them so when you finally paid for them, they're used up" (2. 52). And this is, in essence, applicable to Willy's life too. The debts are used symbolically to suggest that all aspects of life are closing in on Willy. At the end of the drama, and after finishing all his debts, Willy too is used up and broken just like the products that surround him and he is ready only for the grave.

The American Dream is also symbolized in this drama. It is symbolized by three different figures: firstly, Ben who went into the capitalist jungle and came out rich. Secondly, there is Dave Singleman who by his irresistible personal lovableness built his fame and fortune. Thirdly, the American Dream is symbolized in its most noble embodiment by Willy's father who was a creator who made his flutes and sold them all over the country.

Other powerful symbols are the names of New England's cities along Willy's route. The names of the cities symbolize not Willy's success but his and his two sons' pain. Boston

symbolizes Biff's disappointment and separation with Willy after he found him in a Boston hotel having an adulterous relationship. And Portland, the city that Willy was unable to reach, because of his mental break down, suggests his failure to achieve the port or fulfillment which he might have expected during the last years of his career.

Wherever Willy goes, he carries with him two heavy and large sample cases. The cases here are symbolic objects. They symbolize Willy's business world that becomes a heavy burden on his shoulders, or they represent the burden of his two sons that he carried wearily throughout his life. When Miller was once asked about the nature of the goods that Willy is selling he answered "himself."[43] In this sense, and as Squires concludes, "it is [Willy's] life which is in the suit case,"[44] that is why as soon as Howard fired him, Willy committed suicide.

Willy Loman's house too is symbolic. It symbolizes Willy and Linda's thirty-five-year struggle to own some thing in this aggressive and commercial society. And how ironic it is, because when the mortgage is finally paid off, no one is left to live in their house. Even the hammock that once swung in the Lomans backyard is suggestive. It represents the earlier carefree state that they were enjoying when they first bought their house.

As a matter of fact, Miller uses symbolism to expand the conflicts within the Loman family. For instance, Happy and Biff represent the two sides of Willy's ever conflicting personality. Happy who often receives his consolation of unsuccessfulness through women, represents Willy's more phoney side. Biff who is more capable of genuine humanity represents the kinder and more realistic side of Willy. Willy himself is a symbolic icon of the failing America. He represents those who have striven for success but in struggling to do so, have instead achieved failure in its most bitter form. And even the death of Willy Loman is symbolic. It represents the break down of the whole concept of the American Dream in the American society.

Finally, the university of Virginia emblem on Biff's shoes symbolizes his high ambitions. And the letter (s) on his football sweater represents Biff's superman status in Willy's eyes.

NOTES

[1]B. S. Goyal, *Death of a Salesman* (New Delhi: Aarti Book Centre, 1988), p. 190.

[2]Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, ed. E. R. Wood, with an introduction by the same editor (England: Fletcher & Son Ltd., Norwich, 1968), 1.1. All subsequent textual quotations are taken from this reference book and indicated in the body of this research paper by Act and page numbers.

[3]J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*; *Expressionism and Epic Theatre,* vol.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 4.

[4]Strindberg, in Ramji Lall, *Death of a Salesman*; *A Critical Study* (New Delhi: Rama Brothers, 2007), p. 111.

[5]Henry L. Squires, *Death of a Salesman* (Canada: Cole Publishing Company Ltd., 1972), p. 16.

[6]Goyal, p. 189.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Styan, p. 4.

[10]Miller, in Lall, p. 111.

[11]Lall, p. 120.

[12]Brian W. Last, *Death of a Salesman* (England: Longman Group Ltd., 1980), p. 30.

[13]Miller, in Lall, p. 111.

[14]Dennis Welland, *Miller; The Playwright* (England: Methuen Ltd., 1983), p. 48.

[15]Lall, p. 113.

[16]Squires, p. 61.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Goyal, p. 97.

[19]Haná Khalief Chani, "The New Concept of Tragedy as Reflected in Modern British and American Drama" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Baghdad, 2005), p. 179.

[20]Goyal, p. 156.

[21]Last, p. 32.

[22]Mehdi Zia′ee and Ali Haji Shamsa′ee, *A Critical Guide to Great Plays* (Tehran: Omid Mehr Publication, 2005), p. 57.

[23]Last, p. 32.

[24]Miller, in E. R. Wood's introduction to Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, p. xiii.

[25]Ammar Shamil Kadhim, "The Concept of Catharsis in Selected Plays of Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill" (M. A. thesis, The University of Mustansiriya, 2005), p. 105.

[26]Chani, pp. 181-182.

[27]Ibid., p. 182.

[28]Lall, p. 85.

[29]Ibid., p. 84.

[30]Miller, in Lall, p. 84.

[31]Goyal, p. 80.

[32]Ibid., p. 78.

[33]Last, p. 50.

[34]Lall, p. 112.

[35]Squires, p.59.

[36]Goyal, p. 148.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Wood in his introduction to *Death of a Salesman*, p. xi.

[39]Squires, p. 60.

[40]Welland, p. 41.

[41]Lall, p. 104.

[42]Ibid., p. 105.

[43]Miller, in Welland, p. 46.

[44]Squires, p. 11.

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