

Exploration of Idealism and Realism in Arthur Miller's Play, *Death of a Salesman*

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Abstract: The current research examines the elements of Idealism and Realism in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*. Miller's play is opted through purposive sampling technique. Primary source, a Play, *Death of a Salesman*, and secondary sources, such as dissertations, articles, thesis, and newspapers are used as an instrument for data collection. Plato's Idealism and the realism of Aristotle are used as a framework for the present work. Idealism is revealed through the analysis of the hero, Willy Loman's Character. The protagonist misunderstands American Dream, he is a dreamer salesman. He wants to become a successful businessman, but he fails. Willy lives in illusions, while the real world is absolutely different. He is the echo of postmodern American society. Realism is an important theory identified in Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*. Charley is a practical character in the play, his approach is rational, practical and realistic towards life.

Key Words: Idealism, Realism, Postmodernism, American Dream, Existentialism, Capitalism Emptiness

Introduction

[Arthur Miller \(1915-2005\)](#) was born on 17 October 1915 in New York City. His eminence as a playwright is acknowledged when he composes his play *Death of a Salesman*. Miller won a Pulitzer Prize for this play though he had written some plays before *Death of a Salesman*. The present research work reveals the elements of Idealism and Realism in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, along with other important and relevant aspects of the play, such as Postmodernism, the American Dream, and Capitalism. Miller's literary contributions

echo the social injustice and imbalance in his contemporary society. Miller depicts the disillusionment and disintegration of Post-war American society in his play, *Death of a Salesman*. Hooti and Azizpour assert about the play; is a story of violence within the family, about individual exploitation by placing him below the unbearable needs of capitalist society (Hooti, Azizpour, 2010 p 17).

Idealism is a philosophy or theory which believes that reality is constructed through the pre-existing idea behind it. It believes in how things should be in our surrounding or society. Idealists believe in perfection, which

is the minds of people, and it constitutes and shapes reality. Idealism is a school of thought developed in 400 BC by Plato. His Republic (375 BC) presents an ideal sketch for the justice and governing system of a state. Plato argues that humans' condition can be revamped by improving their thoughts and correcting the knowledge which they possess since their birth. In the drama, Willy Loman is an idealist in the sense that he believes in his son Biff's ability to excel in society. He thought that his boss Howard shall be friendly and supportive as a result of his more than thirty years of service to his company. In the play, Willy makes plans, but he doesn't implement his plans in a practical way WILLY:.....one day I will have my own business, and I'll not have to leave home any more (*Death of a Salesman*, p.19).

On the other hand, Realism is an idea that the only reality is the outer world. Human is an empty vessel. All knowledge comes from observation of the material world. Initially the philosophy of realism is developed by Plato's student Aristotle. He disagrees with Plato in the definition of realism and idealism. Scientific and objective approach prevails with the idea of realism by Aristotle. Realism deals with the existence of reality in the world independent from our thoughts. Realists don't believe in imagination, the material world which has concrete existence, is the reality according to Realists. Charley is a friend of Willy in the play, he and his son Bernard succeeded in life because of their rational perspective towards society. ([Charley, S., & Dhanavel, S P. 2014](#)) Miller says that the protagonist Willy Loman's character is based upon his uncle Newman who was a salesman. Miller, he wrote the story of *Death of a Salesman* when he was at the age of seventeen. Miller distinguishes between reality and illusion in the play *Death of a Salesman* in an unconventional way. In the play, Willy pursues the ideal without knowing its reality which leads him to failure. Willy looks at his

society with an entirely different angle. Therefore, he is detached from his society. It is a universal phenomenon, that one has to be stable in order to face challenges and meet his dreams but in the play *Death of a Salesman* Willy goes through wrong direction. Miller's approach is realistic, he places Willy in the play, with an ideal approach for unfolding the reality against the ideal approach of Willy. Miller's other plays also address the social and cultural issues of postmodern American society. Miller died of heart failure on 10th February 2005,

Background

After World War II in 1950 people struggle to achieve happiness and mental serenity in a materialistic way. Americans focus on the pursuit of happiness and liberty. The perspectives of freedom vary from time to time, in postmodern society, people want to get freedom from the shackles of traditional norms and religious sanctions, even relationships are not considered as an important tie. In America, people want to recover from the terrible outcome of the War. The state focuses on the development and re-establishment of the nation. It is a time of great financial success and prosperity in America, but on the other hand, people started to get skeptical about previously established norms such as grand narratives and patriotism. Hopelessness is a dominating factor of American postmodern society. Traditional values and the notion of prosperity in the capitalist system are exposed by many postmodern playwrights including Miller. In *Death of a Salesman*, the protagonist Willy thinks that being well-liked is a secret to success, but it is nothing more than a fantasy. He is a dreamer salesman, who wants to turn the American dream into reality in his own way. The play casts a cold eye on the American dream. Samiha Zaidi says, Willy is a man who exerts to achieve the 'American Dream which is to

make sense of his position in his society (Samaha, Zaidi, 2012, p.3).

War brings pessimism in American society. Science, technology and new discoveries are rejected by postmodernist literary figures, due to mass destruction in World War II, science is considered to be the cause of the great annihilation. It is because of scientific advancement that people are isolated from one another. Science causes destruction in the War. Unemployment and pollution due to industrialization, are also the major factors of advancement in the realm of science. A change of the period is reflected in everything. The style of architecture poetry and plays are changed. Unlike modern writers, postmodern writers believe that it's not possible to reflect reality thoroughly in literature. Even the philosophy of grand narrative is not dominant as it is prevailing in many modern literary figures' contributions. Julian Barnes (1946) is an eminent postmodern English writer who questions even the credibility of the historian in his novel *Sense of an Ending* (2011). As it is mentioned that Postmodernism is a reaction against modernism, Karim and Hossain quote some lines of an eminent writer in their research article; "It hardly need be said that Postmodernism has something to do with what is allegedly happening to modernism. So, if modernism is a culture of the modern age (or, simply, of modernity). Then Postmodernism has something to do with the breaking apart of modernism"(Delanty, 2000, p.131, Lemert, 1997, p.21, Karim. Hossain 2013, p.173). Loytard and many other critics support micro-narrative, which focuses on individuals. Postmodernists find flaws in the notion of grand narrative. In modernism grand narrative is valued and propagated, whereas in Postmodernism the idea of grand narrative is no more on its peak. Modernism is marked by many movements and philosophies, including rationalism, enlightenment, nationalism, humanism and feminism. In the postmodern era, people

start to think about their aimless presence in the world. Nuclear Bombardment by America and their allies, on Japan eliminate humans on a large. Many terms take place in the field of drama according to the situation of people, such as "Kitchen Sink Drama", "Angry young man", "The Theatre of the Absurd" and Existentialist plays. The playwrights focus on the absurdities, anger, pointlessness, and empty life of postwar society. The world is reflected as an irrational and empty place of humanity and love in postmodern plays. In the play. Willy represents the pointless and idealistic mind of common Americans. Willy is unable to assess himself in a realistic way. He is excessively boastful about himself but in reality, he is a weak and worn-out old man, who struggles to maintain his dignity among his people. Dr Pradip Kumar says; Willy's self-assessment is nothing more than his self-delusion. In the real sense, he is not a successful salesman (Kumar,2013, p.142). Miller is a realist playwright, he depicts the postmodern society realistically, by placing Willy, an ideal character against the harsh reality of postmodern American society.

Literature Review

Idealism and Realism are the dissenting literary theories in almost every genre of postmodern literature, It is observed in *Death of a Salesman*, that the protagonist Willy, doesn't believe in the previously established norms of society, Willy's dream of a success in life falls apart, due to his misunderstanding the reality. The term 'tragedy' is used over centuries. The first meaning of tragedy is conflict and fear, later it changes to the sad or sorrowful event. The origin of tragedy is not certain, but the form of tragedy is originated from Aristotle's *Poetics in the 4th century*. In *poetics*, Aristotle describes, that tragedy is an imitation of serious action which also has great importance and magnitude. The imitation of an action, significant, complete and of

certain enormity, and through scene of pity and fear bringing about the 'Catharsis. ([Poetics, Nirmala P. 2015, p. 2](#)). Dr Padmavat refers the lines from *Poetics* which reflects a clear idea of Aristotle's definition of tragedy. Human suffering, miseries and happiness are part of life, thus these feelings are imitated in tragedy through actions and different situations. Initially dramatists follow the established rules of tragedy. A tragic play, which is composed according to the Rules of Greek tragedy, is called a classical tragedy. The first important rule according to Aristotle is, the hero must be a noble man, better than a common man who goes from happiness to misery. Secondly, the hero should possess good nature but he is not perfect. The third important element of classical tragedy is the downfall of the hero due to his own fault. The Fourth is that the hero is not totally deserved of the punishment he faces. Fifth one is Anagnorisis, it means self-knowledge or self-realization. Sixth is catharsis which is caused by the situation of a hero on the audience. (S.H Butcher, the *Poetics* of Aristotle, p.4547, Ghanchi, Bose, 2014, p.1943). Aristotle's *poetics* has a crucial importance from ancient to present tragedy, even postmodern playwrights remain under the influence of *poetics*. The approach of literary figures keeps changing towards the classical contributions. Aristotle's *poetics* loses its grasp over the playwrights of renaissance and ultimately drastic changes are brought in tragedy by postmodern playwrights. Miller plays a pivotal role in introducing a new kind of tragedy. Deviating from ideal to real hero, Miller deals with a common man and the situation which he faces is his day-to-day life. Dr Irkan also says in his work that Willy is a current day tragic hero, Willy is a common man of modern and postmodern eras. He is in fact a modern tragic hero in 1940's American society whose wish is to be "someone" in his society (Irkan, 2012, p. 101).

Death of a Salesman is the depiction of real society, while the hero of Greek tragic

hero is ideal and could hardly be found in present day society. It is strikingly different from the traditional tragedies as for as tragic hero and structure are concerned. Miller's definition of modern tragedy is sketched in detail, in his essay *Tragedy and the Common man* (1949). He doesn't prefer to follow the traditional rules in his plays because it may not echo the reality of his society. *Death of a Salesman* is not the stereotype of the traditional form. Miller refutes the first Aristotelian concept of well-bred and high stature protagonist. He says that Greek tragedians use a high rank tragic hero because they lived in a hierarchal society, and they mostly believed in this idea. Miller's protagonist is not superhuman and distinctive than other people of his society, this is something which makes him different from conventional playwrights. In order to mirror the contemporary society realistically, Miller adopts unconventional style in his writings.

Aristotle's rules of tragedy were followed strictly by many playwrights of the Renaissance. Ben Johnson is one of the eminent dramatists who follow the rules of tragedy strictly Ben Johnson's (1572-1637) comic play, *The Alchemist* (1610) is a striking example of a classical tragedy in which he follows the rules. Three unities are followed in the play, *The Alchemist*. The Traditional form of tragedy changes with the passage of time. In Renaissance, Shakespeare's (1564-1616) tragicomedies are an innovative step towards a new form of drama. Tragicomedy is different from the traditional way, and it is comparatively close to real life. Since life is full of miseries and comforts. Sadness and happiness go side by side in real life and literature is a mirror of society therefore, postmodern writers try to depict their society in their literary contributions. Ghanchi and Bose state Klein's view about tragedy in their research article; Tragedy is a part of life if not life as such (Klein, *Tragedy*, p.163, Ghanchi, Bose, 2014, p.1938). The philosophy of

Idealism and Realism can be found in 17th century drama as well. In English literature, the 16th and 17th centuries have a pivotal place. The influence of 17th century drama can be witnessed on Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*. A quest for knowledge, power and wealth are the dominant factors in 17th century drama.

A revolutionary change takes place in the field of drama in the modern era. It is the era of the beginning of a modern drama. Playwrights disagreed with Aristotle's definition of tragedy. Shakespeare is one of them who initially came up with successful experiments in the field of drama. Being a Realist playwright, Arthur Miller is influenced by 17th century playwrights, especially by Shakespeare, who places the corner stone of a new tragedy which departs from the strict rules laid down by Aristotle. There is a similarity between Miller and Shakespeare's tragic heroes and their predicaments. Ghanchi and Rose argue that Hamlet and Willy Loman themselves opted to die, Hamlet wants revenge on his uncle and Willy desires to get his dream of living luxurious life, therefore, he sells his entire potential or kills himself for his sons and his wife. (Ghanchi, Bose, 2014, p.1945). Tragicomedy is an innovation of Renaissance playwrights. Postmodern playwrights tend to come up with tragicomedy because this form of play can represent life realistically. Sadness and happiness are a part and parcel of each other; thus, it is apt to show them together in drama. According to [John Dryden \(1631-1700\)](#) literature should deliver a lesson in a delightful way. One main end of *Dramatic Poesy* (1668) in its definition...was to cause delight (Farhan, 2014, p.29). Dr Farhan affirms the definition of drama according to Dryden in his article which is different from *poetics*. Dryden defines tragedy in his *essay on dramatic poesy* (1668) in his own way, which clearly indicates his detachment from the classical rules. Dr Farhan reinforces his notion by giving some lines from Dryden's

essay. a just and delightful image of human nature, reflecting its passions and humors,.....,for the delight and instruction of mankind (Farhan, 2014 p 28). Moral aspect can be examined in Renaissance plays, for instance, *Hamlet*, and *Dr Faustus*. Miller also echoes a moral aspect in his plays. In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller delivers a message through his protagonist Willy, that how the father embraces death for the sake of his family. Pratiwi states that, This play tells us about father sacrifice for the people who really cared about his children (Pratiwi, 2013, p. 11). Miller's approach is realistic in his plays, he encloses all social and political issues in his plays. Dr Farhan argues; the didactic function of drama to praise virtue and condemn vice.... the absence of Aristotle's "catharsis" in his contributions is more Averroistic than Aristotelian (Farhan, 2014 p 39). Dr Farhan says that Dryden is more inclined toward Averroes (1126-1198) than Aristotle in regard of moral lesson in tragedy. Miller also follows the moral aspect his in literary contributions which is a departure from Aristotelian concept of literature. Miller affirms; its final result shall be the reinforcement of the onlooker's bright opinion of the human animal (*Tragedy and the common man*, *New York Times*, 2008 p 2). Miller's approach towards the aim of tragedy is fairly different not only from Aristotle but also from his contemporaries. It is believed that tragedy is a form of literature which always stresses on the pessimistic view of life and society. Tragedy is considered to be the depiction of bleak aspect of society, but Miller upholds the idea that tragedy is more optimistic than pessimistic aspect of life. Standing against the social injustice in society, is an optimistic view of life. Miller asserts; the tragic flaw can be found in the sense of optimistic perspective, it is an adjective not usually given to tragedies (Miller, *tragedy and the Common man*. Ghanchi, Boss, 2014, p.1944). He uses his plays as a tool to present the real picture of

postmodern American society. The reflection of social and economic aspects of society in *Death of a Salesman* are not bound to postmodern American society, they are applicable in societies all over the world. Willy Loman is a tragic hero of the play. Willy's error is his judgment about his own place in society. He is unable to understand his position. He wants to be well-liked because this is the key to success according to his self-made notion. This is his tragic flaw which causes his downfall. Willy's deplorable plight arouses the feelings of pity and fear in the audience's mind and they have sympathy with Willy. It is Willy's delusion that he is still popular and good looking, His wife is the only person who appreciates his personality and talent, but it is just to make him satisfied. Willy is over sixties, now he is jaded and exhausted yet he never puts his delusion down. He is spellbound to the American dream in such a way that he is unable to look around and observe his own position in his home and in society. It is an important characteristic of classical tragedy that it should deal with serious and important issue. Anish and S K Sing describe Aristotle's definition of a tragedy in their research work; A tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, and also as having a magnitude (Singh, A. 2014, p 67). Miller deals with important and serious issues of his society in his plays, such as social injustice, economic imbalance and uncertainty of the postmodern society.

Capitalism is one of the prevailing theories in a postmodern era which is associated with Idealism and Realism in the present research work. In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy is a common man, and according to Miller, he is an appropriate tragic hero. He dreams of success all over his life, he observes the cluster of successful American people all around and desires to become like them. At the verge of his old age and shabby condition he realizes his own position and the attitude of the utilitarian

society. Willy is afraid of his contemporary society. Fredrick William Gilliard argues; Willy just cannot manage with the traditions and practices of the current world, and, in fact, he is frightened by it; Willy's fear is portrayed quite clearly in Act II, shortly before his boss, Howard, fires him (Gilliard, 1966, p.44). Being an aged salesman, Willy is unable to resist against the capitalist system. Willy says to Howard; Willy!:..... I gave thirty-four years into this business, ... You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away (*Death of Salesman*, p 78). With the last meeting of Willy with his boss Howard, he is totally broken after being fired from his job. Howard says that there are no relationships in business. Miller gives an idea of utilitarian and capitalistic approach through the character of Howard. Willy's boss doesn't care about his seniority. Willy symbolically uses a word 'orange'. Capitalists exploit their employees just like a leach the blood of an employee is sucked in the capitalist system. Howard says to Willy that 'business is business. This statement is really socking for the reader. Miller deals with the hot issues of the capitalist world, which can be depicted by a common American in a better way rather than by an elite or distinctive protagonist who may not be able to feel the anxiety of a common American. The capitalist system is based on injustice in terms of using workers like machines. Willy Loman's lofty ambitions and dreams couldn't turn into reality. Dr Mwangi Wa Githini argues in his presentation at Habib university; capitalism itself was a system founded on injustice. There is no capital without workers (Githni, Dawn, 2017, p.24).

Willy Loman gradually gets alienated from the postmodern world, because he doesn't succeed in achieving his objectives. Willy flees from harsh reality instead of accepting it, and this is the grim issue with him which ultimately resulted in disaster for his family. Biff flunks his math paper, and he is about to be taken out of his class, but Willy

is not worried about it because he believes that Biff is Well-liked which is the only essential trait for success. The society never values such kind of ideal philosophy which Willy strictly follows all over his life. Arthur Miller says that the protagonist makes a concept about himself according to his own perception, tragedy results when his society denies accepting his self-made concept of success. Miller says; each person has a chosen sketch of self and his position in society. Tragedy results when the characters' environment rejects the fulfillment of this self-concept (Miller, Ghanchi, Bose, 2014, p.1944). In search of identity Willy loses even his existing position. His constant struggle to have his own identity can be noticed in retaliation to the assertion of his son, Willy is unwilling to accept his failure,

BIFF: Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you! WILLYI am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman! (*Death of a Salesman*, p 98).

Willy is a symbolic representation of the scattered mind of postmodern American working class. Willy still hopes for a successful life ironically, even after serving the company for more than thirty years without any progress. He is just a common salesman even after spending all of his potential and precious years of his life. Miller is well acquainted not only with Greek but also with Renaissance and modern literature. He makes the use of his prior knowledge appropriately in his writings. He precisely mentions in his essay that a common man and a noble one, encounter with their societies and social norms in the same way, starting from Orestes to Hamlet, King Lear, and Othello to Macbeth, where the "underlying struggle to get the rightful place in society. (Taha, 2009 p 3). Dr Taha describes the similarity between the classical and modern tragic heroes. He affirms that all of the tragic heroes try to have a distinctive place in society which they feel themselves deserved for. Willy struggles in the same way.

The main ingredients of the play are taken from the technological culture of modern society. Illusion is replaced by dream and fantasy subordinate reality in the play *Death of a Salesman*. Idealism has been a major element of drama since Greek tragedy. Miller discovers these features in common man in his plays. Two heterogeneous literary theories are explored in Miller's writings by researcher, Willy and Biff and idealists, while Charley and Bernard are practical and realists. Willy lives in dreams, and the only reality of his life is that he doesn't want to come out of his idealistic approach towards life. On the other hand, Miller sketches the austere reality of capitalism in American society. Charley and his son Bernard are not capitalist in their approach but they know the reality and key of survival respectably in society. Bernard and his father constantly try to take Loman's family out of their idealistic perspective of life, but Willy himself deviates from reality, and he constantly tries to make his sons follow the shallow dreams. Willy infuses his false ideas into the minds of his sons. He doesn't bother about the character building of Biff. The very habit of theft is not prevented, which causes the continuation of the same habit in Biff's future. Dr Pradip Kumar argues; Willy injects the false dream and dishonest habit into the sons. He destroys in a way, the peace of domestic life with false business ethics (Kumar, 2013, p.141).

Research Methodology

The technique which is used for the study is qualitative, previous pertinent written, and text from the primarily source, a play, *Death of a Salesman* are used for the answers of the research questions. Qualitative is a comparatively suitable approach for the collection, analysis and development of critical theories, and descriptive study, therefore, qualitative research technique is used for the current study. Clear, disciplined, systematic and objective approach is needed to find out an accurate result. Qualitative

research is inferable, and research scholars reveal meaning and insight in selected research study (Mohajan, 2018,p.4). Literature is descriptive in nature, research scholars can analyze, observe and interpret a text of descriptive writings. The content can't be calculated or measured in a statistic way therefore, qualitative method is effectively applicable for the current study. The present study deals with the quality not quantity.

Exploration of Idealism and Realism in *Death of a Salesman* in the purpose of the study. Existential elements, and the American dream are also examined in the play, because these literary theories are linked with Idealism and Realism. Primary source, Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and secondary sources, such as newspapers, articles, and dissertations, in which the relevant content is published are a part of the study. Miller other dramas are also studied and the relevant data is found in the process. A novel by Julian Barnes *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) and *Look Back in Anger* (1956) by John Osborne, are also studied to be used as a part of the research instruments due to its nexus with the present research work.

Various steps are followed scientifically, to make the work more accurate and precise. Firstly the research scholar has studied a play *Death of a Salesman* with its meticulous details. Idealism and Realism are examined as a crucial aspect of the play. the pertinent materials such as articles and dissertation are found and investigated through internet browsing. Reviews of related books and newspapers are also studied as a process of the current research work. The stated data is included after painstaking and analytical observation. The writings of Miller, research articles, thesis and newspaper reports which have immense relationship with the present study, are added as a part of the research. MLA (Modern Language Association) is applied for the study. MLA is an effective method of writing which is approved and used by academics worldwide.

Analysis

Idealism and Realism are revealed by the researcher in the text from primary source with detailed textual analysis. Various aspects of the play are investigated to unfold the elements of Idealism and Realism. Arthur Miller's contributions reflect postmodern American society. After critical analysis, it is established that the content of the play echoes the two major aspects of Idealism and Realism. In his play, *Death of a Salesman*, Willy is a common person who idealizes his future according to the American dream. Willy deceives himself; rather, every member of the family takes part in their self-deception. Willy deceives himself by selecting profession of salesmanship. He thinks that this is the only profession in which he can make a fortune. Dave Singleman is an old man who inspires Willy immensely. Willy says about Singleman;

I met a salesman..... His name was Dave Singleman.and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states..... I perceive that selling was the distinguished career a man could wish (*Death of a Salesman*, p 57).

The meeting with Singleman makes Willy's mind for the profession of salesmanship but Willy goes only for his outward appearance and getup. Willy doesn't bother to know about the tough process of going up on the ladder of success in American society. One needs to be diligent and consistently determined for the execution of plans, as Charley's son Bernard does, to have an appropriate place in society, this is what Willy never thinks about. Bernard is a hardworking boy in his school, moreover, he always helps Biff to make progress in his studies but neither Biff nor his father is worried about it. Bernard says; BERNARD: Willy, I remember, our grades came out. And he'd flunked math. WILLY: That son-of-a-bitch! Failed Biff... (*Death of a Salesman*, p, 67). Willy blames the teacher instead of his son Biff, this is his self-

deception which ultimately causes his doom. Willy's over estimation of his son is basically his self-deception though Biff is not worthy enough to be praised and glorified but still Willy always stands with delusions. Willy talks to his wife Linda about his son Biff;

WILLY: Like a young god. Hercules — something like that.the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? Right up from the field,.... And the buyers I brought, and the cheers.....— Loman, Loman, Loman! (*Death of a Salesman*, p 49).

In reality Biff is a common man and he is quite aware of himself but his father forcefully pulls him to be a successful businessman and distinctive than the rest of the society. The play, *Death of a Salesman* deals with American society along with all its historical economic and cultural issues. After the Great Depression in 1930s America faces very serious economic crisis and World War II also affected the economy of the state. The stake holders of the United States make policies for the rapid development of the country in which capitalists are set free to exploit the working class. People of the lower class are gradually brought under worst conditions. Unskilled members of the society could hardly survive with self-esteem. In the play, Biff and Happy (Biff's brother) belong to the unskilled working-class, whose future is uncertain. Biff and Happy talks about their future;

HAPPY: But I think if you just got started — I mean — is there any future for you out there? BIFF:I don't know — what I'd need to do (*Death of a Salesman*, p 14)

Willy not only deliberately deceives himself by constant delusions but also his sons. He gives them the impression that he is a successful salesman, and he is known by many people across the state; WILLY: Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the Mayor. (*Death of a Salesman*, p 19). Biff got excited about his father's meeting with the mayor. Willy is

proud to have a meeting with Mayor, and he tries to fabricate his stories to his sons in order to impress them, but contrary to his exaggeration of himself, he is a failure in every aspect of life. Bernard is a diligent student; he wants Biff to study because Biff is likely to be expelled from school if he fails his paper this time. Instead of making Biff understand the situation Willy rather gets judgmental about Bernard's hardworking nature; WILLY: Bernard can get the best marks in school, understand, but when he gets out in the business world, you are going to be five times ahead of him (*Death of a Salesman*, p. 21). Willy delves in his illusions to such an extent that he is unable to distinguish between the right and wrong way towards success. He is complacent about his sons that they are well-liked because of their attractive personalities; he even compares them to Adonis, who is famous for his beauty and attraction in Greek mythology. Willy gives his own example, although he makes nothing of himself except maintaining the livelihood of his family hardly. Willy avoids the reality all around, which ultimately haunts him to his death as a failure. This is what he delivers to his sons, they make plans for their future only not to execute them in practical life. Miller is a keen observer of his society. He is well aware of the fabricated story of the American dream, which may work as a political motto to manipulate the working-class of American society, but in reality, it turns into a nightmare for those who believe in it blindly like Willy Loman. Business on a large scale becomes the order on the day. Humanity and human rights have no value at all, in the capitalist system. Willy expresses his rage when his boss Howard behaves rudely; WILLY..... — I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! (*Death of a Salesman*, p 58).

Urbanization of the American society also plays its role in increasing the exhaustion

and desperation of the working class. Willy feels extremely exhausted in the congested buildings of New York City. He recalls the past when there was natural beauty all around. Willy has to travel long distances even in his old age. He is now totally unfit for driving on the road because of his reveries, but still he has to continue that in order to maintain his job. Miller portrays a hero of the play with all its surroundings who represents every common American who is entrapped in social norms and culture in which he is misfit but still being a part of it, he has to live his life accordingly. Pradip Kumar says; when the play opens, Willy is already an old man of sixty years and something of an anti-hero. In his stage direction, Miller portrays Willy's ideal world of open spaces being pressed to the limit by coils of the metropolis (Kumar, 2013, p 141).

Conclusion

The objective analysis of the play, *Death of a Salesman* reflects the blend of the two dissenting literary theories, Idealism and Realism. It is established as a result of the study that Idealism and Realism are equally important aspects of the play. Existential elements, Postmodernism and American Dream are also explored in the analysis of different characters and situations in *Death of a Salesman*. The objectives of the study are precisely explained in the current study with the help of primary and secondary sources.

Arthur Miller says that theatre is a place where the true picture of society is reflected through drama. Audience can understand their own situation by observing the

characters similar to them. Their action on stage is a reflection of the contemporary society and culture. The prevailing culture and life style of the American society is dominated by capitalists (Miller, Tragedy and the common man, New York Times, 2008). Frederick William Gilliard affirms in his thesis; Miller observes the theater as a place where truths are unfolded, and individual man, by analyzing these truths, understands better himself and his fellow man (Gilliard, 1966, p. 7). In *Death of a Salesman* Willy struggles for dignity just like other people of his society who belong to the upper middle class. Every individual across the world desires to live with respect and dignity, but it is not easier to have a desired place in society, as it is witnessed in the play. It is a business culture which affects Willy desperately because Willy is unwilling to accept the new ideas and change in his society. He still believes that a man can succeed by attractive personality and disposition. Nahvi argues about it; one of the main reasons that Willy cannot go with the flow of time is because he keeps on holding the perspective that one can succeed in the world of business by being well-like and an imposing personality (Nahvi, 2016, p. 2). As an idealist character Willy's nature never changes throughout the play. Willy is an old man, holding conventional ideas in his mind, but the current society loses traditional values. Mankind in the postmodern world becomes materialistic to great extent. Miller asserts that the protagonist should belong to the contemporary society who would challenge the established culture and norms, and he wouldn't live his life just passively.

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