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## A Comparative Study Between Arthur Miller's *Death Of A Salesman* And August Wilson's *Fences*.

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### Abstract

Arthur Miller's *Death Of A Salesman* (1949 Pulitzer Prize) portrays the life of an American family in the forties of the previous century. Willy Loman, the protagonist, is a traveling salesman in his sixties. He believes in the attractiveness of personality and popularity as a secret of success. He victimizes his son Biff, who was an outstanding football athlete in the high school with three scholarships from three different universities, by his (Willy's) adherence to his wrong philosophy and the past. The same thing goes for Troy Maxson, the protagonist of August Wilson's *Fences* (1987 Pulitzer Prize) which portrays the life of an African-American family in the fifties of the previous century. Troy is a former star athlete who turns to be a sanitation garbage collector believing that he has been segregated by the society. He victimizes his son Cory, a promising football player in the high school, preventing him from getting college football scholarship by his (Troy's) adherence to the past and his wrong belief. Yet Rose Maxson, the loyal wife and caring mother, manages to maintain her family together following Linda Loman's steps through patience and forgiveness.

The study will shed light on the aspects of similarities between the two plays which deal with American society in the post World War II insofar as characterization, familial relationships, friends and relatives are concerned.

Willy Loman is "past sixty years of age."<sup>1</sup> He is attached to his past since he is exhausted chasing his dream of success in vain. He believes naively in the power of personality and popularity as a secret for success. Accordingly the most important thing to him becomes, as he tells his brother Ben, that:

who you know and the smile on your face! It's contacts, Ben, contacts! ... and that's the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis for being liked! (2.63)

Willy also expresses his complete dependence on appearance and the power of personality to his two sons saying:

...Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. (1.20)

In fact Willy is obsessed by the idea of being "well-liked" (1.20) and the power of personality as a formula for success to the extent that it becomes his motto and measurement in life. Furthermore he dares to formulate success as being "Well-liked" (1.20) and not only being "liked." (1.20) Accordingly he assures his two sons that "some day I'll have my own business" (1.17) and that it will be "bigger than Uncle Charley[']s! Because Charley is not-liked. He's liked, but he is not-well liked." (1.18). Remarkably Willy's philosophy is constantly echoed throughout the play even by Willy's sons themselves. Thus, when Biff describes his friend Bernard saying that: "He's liked, but he is not well liked" (1.20) Willy replies instantly:

That's just what I mean. Bernard can get the best marks in school, y' understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y' understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. (1.20) [since you (Biff) are well-liked]

Apparently Willy has lived by his false theory and is imbued with it to the extent that it blinds him from seeing the truth. He naively devotes himself to his wrong belief that all what a person needs to achieve success, wealth

and fame is to be "Well-liked" and to have a charming personality. He ignores completely what is the real substance of success that is hard working. Furthermore he uses his false theory to justify wrong doings arguing that being handsome and popular guarantee not to be blame for wrong doings. Thus when Biff (in a flashback) has stolen a basketball "from the locker room" (1.17) Willy doesn't rebuke him, instead he encourages him saying that: "Coach'll probably congratulate you on your initiative ... because he likes you." (1.17) Thus Willy himself as well as his sons are ravaged by his theory. He does not alert even when the red lines are crossed daring to justify errors using unreasonable causes that are based on his wrong philosophy. Consequently Willy's philosophy prevents him from dealing with reality.

In fact Willy wishes to be another copy of his ideal Dave Singleman a salesman whom Willy has met at his youth. Dave achieves success depending on his popularity and the power of his personality that all he has to do is to

pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eight-four he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want....when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. (2.58-9)

Thus Willy embraces his theory wholeheartedly to the extent that he refuses to deal with what contradicts it that is reality. Moreover his illusion becomes to him the sole fact, measurement and way of life. So he lives by the wrong rules of his own philosophy, depending on his false belief in the significance of attractiveness and popularity, aiming at what is right that is success. Therefore he is perplexed losing his ability to concentrate on things in reality and is constantly deluded with flashbacks. Accordingly he surrounds himself with the shell of his wrong philosophy isolating himself from reality turning his face away from it. As a result his failure as a salesman and as a father become inevitable.

Willy is deluded by his own theory to the extent that it becomes to him not only the answer for all the problems but also what guarantees him

high connections and friends everywhere. Thus he boasts constantly that he is "the New England man. I'm vital in New England." (1.4) He even dares to tell his two sons (in a flashback) that:

they know me, boys they know me up and down New England .... I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own. (1.18)

But the truth is bitterly the opposite. Willy's faith in a wrong philosophy makes him unable to deal with reality engaging constantly in flashbacks. Consequently he is immersed in the past. In fact the past represents to him the happy times when he was young and his son Biff was a promising athlete in the high school with three scholarships from three different universities. So "Willy's [happy] and romantic images of the past and the hard reality of the present"<sup>2</sup> make him engage constantly in flashbacks out of his wish to relive those happier times. Even when he is compelled to encounter reality in a scarce moments, he ends up being attached more and more to the past rejecting his failure as a result rejecting reality and the present. This is very obvious in one of those few exceptional situations in which he is able to realize his failure as he tells his wife:

I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take me .... I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me. (1.22-3)

So Willy's adherence to his wrong philosophy causes his living in his illusions retreating from reality devoting himself to the past. Therefore "it is the past, more than capitalism, of which Willy is always the victim."<sup>3</sup> As a result Willy cannot cope with reality since he is attached to "the old days."  
(2.54)

The same thing goes for Troy Maxson. He is "*fifty-three years old, a large man with thick, heavy hands.*"<sup>4</sup> He is a garbage collector who is attached to the past. He believes that racial discrimination prevents him from achieving his dream. In fact, seventeen years earlier, he has been a

promising athlete who has dreamed of playing for Major League Baseball but his dream has thwarted by his skin's colour, as he tells his wife Rose that: "I decided seventeen years ago that boy wasn't getting involved in no sports. Not after what they did to me in the sports." (1.3.543) Accordingly he insists on living in the past and refuses completely to deal with reality. Furthermore he defends his wrong philosophy that he has prevented from playing for Major League Baseball only because of segregation arguing that he has prevented from playing "just [because he] wasn't the right color." (1.3.543) Even when Rose tries to help him to see the truth, arguing that: "Times have changed from when you was young, Troy. People change. The world's changing around you and you can't even see it." (1.3.544) But Troy insists on his idea. He rejects the idea that times have changed and that the blacks can get ahead and succeed in the whites dominated world. Instead he believes that the whites will hinder any blacks' effort to get ahead in their world telling his son Cory that: "The white man ain't gonna let you get no where with that football no way." (1.3.542) Rose does her best to open Troy's eyes to compell him to deal with reality consequently confesses the truth, saying: "Troy, why don't you admit you was too old to play in the major leagues? For once...why don't you admit that?" (1.3.543) But as usual he turns his face away from reality holding by to his philosophy. Accordingly Troy is deluded from seeing the fact that when he has been released from prison (for stealing) he was too old to play in Major League Baseball and not only because he is a black man.

Troy is just like Willy who is used to engage with his illusions (flashbacks). Thus he (Troy) is used to engage with his illusions speaking about seeing Death and speaking with it as he tells his best friend Bono saying :

I done seen him. I done wrestled with him.... I looked up one day and Death was marching straight at me. Like soldiers on Parade! The Army of Death marching straight at me. The middle of July, 1941. I got real cold just like be winter.... He touch me just like I touch you. I got cold as ice and Death standing there grinning at me.... I say, what you want, Mr. Death? You be waiting me? You done brought your

army to be getting me? I looked him dead in the eye. I wasn't fearing nothing I was ready to tangle. (1.1.529)

Or speaking about his epic wrestling with Death telling Bono:

I ain't making up nothing. I'm telling you the facts of what happened. I wrestled with Death for three days and three nights and I'm standing here to tell you about it. (*Pause*) Alright. At the end of the third night we done weekend each other to where both of us can't hardly move... He throwed on that robe and went off to look for sickle. Say, "I'll be back." Just like that. "I'll be back." I told him, say, "Yeah, but you gonna have find me!" (1.1.530)

When Rose tries to drag Troy to reason, his insistence on his story is increased boasting that he is not only has seen, spoken and wrestled with Death but also with the devil himself saying: "Aw hell, I done seen him too! Done talking with the devil." (1.1.530)

In fact Troy is just like Willy who is imbued with his own philosophy embracing it and living by it. He rejects any thing which contradicts it turning his face away from reality dealing with life not as it is but according to his own point of views. Consequently each one of them becomes the victim of his own illusions and wrong philosophy which are the major cause of their destruction. Accordingly they live by their dreams and illusions and cannot cope with the present and reality, therefore they lose their ability to look ahead.

Another semblance between Willy and Troy is that their preoccupation with their roles as the supporters of their families. Willy, as the head of his family, wishes truly to succeed in his role as a father. Thus he keeps working even when he becomes an old salesman losing his formula of success (according to his own wrong philosophy). Furthermore he continues his working on the road in spite of the fact that he is degraded when he is put on the straight commission instead of being rewarded in his old age with a job in an office. He expresses his worries clearly when he tells Linda that he fears "that I won't make a living for you, or a business for the boys. There's so much I want to make." (1.24)

In fact Willy is obsessed with the idea of being the bread winner of the family to the extent that he sacrifices his own dignity to maintain his image as the provider for his family from being shaken. Therefore he constantly borrows money from his friend Charley in order to give it to Linda as if it is his weekly salary. Furthermore he maintains his role as the provider of the family to his death sacrificing his own life committing suicide in order to guarantee his son the money that is needed to accomplish his son's project. As a result Willy is consumed with his idea.

Remarkably Troy's obsession with his role as the bread winner of his family is not less than Willy's. He is also proud of himself being the head and the supporter of his family. In fact it provides both of them with what they need most that is the esteemation for being the supporters of their families. Troy clarifies this thing telling his son Cory:

It's my job. It's my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house sleep you behind on my bed clothes fill you belly up with my food cause you my son. You my flesh and blood.... Cause it's my duty to take care of you. Cause I owe a responsibility to you. (1.3.543)

Moreover Willy's devotion to his responsibility as the man of the family is mirrored by Troy as he tells Rose:

I do the best I can do... I give you the lint from my pockets. I give you my sweat and my blood... I get up Monday morning... I go out. Make my way. Find my strength to carry me through to the next Friday. That's all I got, Rose. That's all I got to give I can't give nothing else. (1.3.544)

Accordingly both of them are consumed with their role as the supporters of their families.

Another correspondence between the two plays is represented by the role of the wives which is depicted with great similarity. Linda is described to be

*most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exception to Willy's behavior-she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminder of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end. (1.2)*

So she is a devoted wife who loves her husband truly. She even develops mechanism of her own to enable herself to digest and forgive Willy's cruelty and faults. She is used to standing by him scarifying every thing for his sake. And the same thing goes for Rose who is described that

*She is ten years younger than Troy, her devotion to him stems from her recognition of the possibilities of her life with out him.... aloneness with its attendant pain and frustration. She recognizes Troy's spirit as a fine and illuminating one and she either ignores or forgive his faults, only some of which she recognizes. (1.1.526)*

In fact each one of them puts her complete faith in her husband consequently their lives revolved around their husbands. Moreover each one of them is such a kind and faithful wife beside being such a caring and a nurturing mother. Yet each one of them is ready to reject her sons for her husband's sake. Linda expresses that clearly telling her son:

Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him [Willy], then you can't have any feeling for me. No. You can't just come to see me, because I love him. (*With a threat, but only a threat of tears*). He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have any one making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You've got to make up your mind now, darling, there's no leeway any more. Either he's your father and you pay him that respect, or else you're not to come here. (1.38)

Linda's attitude and dedication towards Willy are echoed by Rose even after the death of her husband rebuking her son for his refusal to attend his father's funeral saying:

Boy, hush your mouth that's your daddy you talking about. I don't want hear that kind of talk this morning. I done raised you to come to



this? You standing there all healthy and grown talking about you ain't going to your daddy's funeral?...You just get that thought out of your head.... Whatever was between you and your daddy the time has come to put it aside. Just take it and set it over there on the shelf and forget about it. Disrespecting your daddy ain't gonna make you a man, Cory. You got to find a way to come to that on your own. Not going to your daddy's funeral ain't gonna make you a man. (2.4.571)

In their turn Willy and Troy appreciate their wives expressing their love and gratitude to their loyal wives. Thus Willy tells Linda "you're my foundation and my support, Linda"(1.7) and "You're the best there is, Linda, you're a pal, you know that? On the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life outa you." (1.24)

Troy's appreciation towards Rose is clearly expressed with his words telling her: "A man couldn't ask for no women to be a better wife than you've been."(2.1.558) And also in Troy's words to his best friend Bono, saying: "I love Rose, she done carried me along ways and I love and respect her for that." (2.1.555)

So Linda and Rose's role is not a complex one yet it is very essential to maintain the family together. It is their love and care for their families which enable their families' members to get better with each other. Furthermore it is their patience, sacrifices and their ability to forgiveness which held their families together. Noticeably Linda and Rose are not only shared with such positive qualities, because they are shared with a negative one that is both of them are betrayed by their own husbands.

Willy is disappointed with his own theory yet he is stuck to it. He believes that salesmanship is "the greatest career a man could want" (2.58) depending on the power of his personality and being popular. But time is changing and the charm of his personality does not represent the brand of success any more. Besides his obsession with his role as the provider of his family and his wish to maintain this image before his wife and his sons which mean his inability to tell any one of them about the pressures he is confronted with. In fact such a burden does make him feel lonely as he expresses it justifying his affair that:

Cause I get so lonely-especially when business is bad and there's nobody to talk to. I get the feeling that I'll never sell anything again, that I won't make a living for you. (1.24)

Thus he needs to get rid of the feeling of being lonely besides proving to himself that he is still well-liked and that he still has personal attractiveness.<sup>5</sup> So the outlet for his tension is represented by his affair with the women in Boston. In spite of the fact that Linda never knows about her husband's infidelity,<sup>6</sup> so this spares him the confrontation with her, yet his affair costs him a lot. In fact Willy is surprised with his son's (Biff) visit to his hotel room in Boston, witnessing his father's infidelity. Accordingly Willy's affair represents a turning-point in Willy's as well as in Biff's life, since Willy's image as the idealized father is shaken. Consequently it costs him losing Biff's love and respect for him, which turns Biff against him.<sup>7</sup>

Troy's situation is not better than Willy's since he has to encounter his wife Rose telling her about his affair with Alberta. He is preoccupied with the idea of being the bread winner of the family. Thus he works hard to secure his family's members needs. He is too proud of himself to support them ignoring his own needs, as he tells Rose saying: "I done locked myself into a pattern try to take care of you all that I forget about myself." (2.1.558) Besides his bitter disappointment with himself the promising baseball player who ends up being a garbage collector as a cause of racial discrimination. Accordingly he needs a space from these pressures, and his affair with Alberta represents the chance he needs. He justifies the matter that he needs to think of himself once in his life, telling Rose that: "I just might be able to steal second. Do you understand after eighteen years [of marriage] I wanted to steal second." (2.1.559) Because Alberta

gives me a different idea a different understanding about myself. I can step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems be a different man. I ain't got to wonder how I'm gonna pay the bills or get the roof fixed. I can just be a part of myself that I ain't never been. (2.1.558)

In spite of the fact that Rose is a devoted wife but Troy, just like Willy, has to pay as a reason of infidelity. Thus Rose tells him:

I'll take care of your baby for you cause like you say she's innocent and you can't visit the sins of the father upon the child. A motherless child has got a hard time.... But you a womanless man. (2.3.563)

So the husband-wife relationship in the two plays represents an additional similarity between the two plays. Thus Willy and Troy have faithful, loving and caring wives but they have taken them for granted betraying them making love affairs with other women. But both of them (Willy and Troy) have to pay (even if differently) for their infidelity.

Perceptibly the most comparable thing between the two plays is that father-son relationship, which represents the source of most of the tension in both of them that emanates from the attachment to the past and sport. One of Willy's flashbacks gives a clear-cut of his relationship with his elder son Biff. In fact Willy has put his faith in his favourite son Biff who was an eminent football player in the high school and who respects and worships his father. In fact Biff is attached to his father so much as Linda describes it telling Willy: "Few men are idolized by their children the way you are." (1.24) Furthermore he believes truly in his father echoing his philosophy of popularity and personal attractiveness as the secret of success in life.

In the present Willy and Biff cannot get along with each other. So when Biff returns home the tension is escalated between him and his father and they begin to argue and fight with each other urging Linda to say to Biff: "But you no sooner come in the door than you're fighting!" Besides "it's when you come home he's [Willy] always the worst." (1.37) Obviously there is something wrong between them thus she tries to know the truth saying:

When you write you're coming, he's all smiles, and talks about the future, and - he's just wonderful. And then the closer you seem to come - the more shaky he gets, and then by the time you get here, he's arguing and he seems angry at you.... Why are you so hateful to each other? Why is that? (1.37)

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But Biff is used to evade explaining:

Because I know he's fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows! ... just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him that's all I have to say. (1.40)

Accordingly Linda is bewildered and perplexed by the antagonism between her husband and her son. Thus she keeps trying to elicit the reason from Biff saying to him:

What happened to the love you had for him? You were such pals! How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he could come home to you! (1.40)

And she repeats the same attempt with her husband saying: "Willy dear, what has he [Biff] got against you?" getting the same evasive answer.

Willy loves Biff and cares for him, therefore he is constantly worried about him and his best interest because he doesn't settle down in any business accomplishing nothing for himself as Willy expresses that saying:

In the beginning when he was young, I thought, well a young man, it's good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But it's more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty five dollars a week. (1.5)

In fact Willy is disappointed with Biff who was a promising athlete in the high school with such a promising future turning up to be a complete failure. Furthermore he is dissatisfied with him believing that he has blown his chance to achieve success. Accordingly he is bewildered by Biff's failure expressing that telling Bernard (Biff's boyhood friend) saying:

There's something I don't understand about it. His life ended after the Ebbets Field game. From the age of seventeen nothing good ever happened to him. (2.68)

But Bernard tells Willy that the turning-point in Biff's life has happened after the game when he goes to see his father in Boston. When he (Biff) returns, as Bernard explains to Willy stating:

I'll never forget this, it mystifies me.... [Biff] took his sneakers-remember those sneakers with 'University of Virginia' printed on them? He was proud of those, wore them every day. And he took them down in the cellar, and burned them up in the furnace. We had a fistfight. It lasted at least half an hour. Just the two of us, punching each other down in the cellar, and crying right through it. I've often thought of how strange it was that I knew he'd given up himself. What happened in Boston, Willy? (2.69-70)

Another of Willy's flashback explains the reason behind the crack which has happened between Willy and his son Biff. When Biff has flunked mathematics, he decides to go to Boston to see his father asking him to utilize his charming personality to convince the mathematics teacher to give Biff the four marks he needs to pass the exam telling his father:

You gotta talk to him before they close the school. Because if he saw the kind of man you are, and you just talked to him in your way, I'm sure he'd come through for me.... The class came right before practice, see, and I didn't go enough. Would you talk to him? He'd like you, Pop. You know the way you could talk. (2.89)

But Biff is shocked seeing a women in his father's hotel room who refuses to depart before taking what Willy has promised her saying: "Where's my stockings? You promised me stockings, Willy!" (2.90) Thus he is disappointed discovering his father's infidelity. Therefore he begins weeping telling his father angrily: "You-you gave her Mama's stocking! .... You - liar! You fake! You phoney little fake! You fake!" (2.92) Consequently the image of his idealized and perfect father is shattered. Accordingly, Biff loses his belief in his father, which has changed him (Biff) for ever deciding "never to go to college-which, in effect, is a vow never to succeed in life"<sup>8</sup> giving up every thing.

Willy is so proud of Biff pinning all his hopes and aspirations on him, the promising football player, who has three scholarships from three different

universities. Moreover he believes that Biff is so close to obtain what Willy himself has failed to achieve that is success. Besides he (Biff) will be the proof of the credibility of Willy's philosophy since he (Willy) "habitually deflects consciousness of his own failure by focusing attention on his son's"<sup>9</sup> success. Thus when Biff gives up his life Willy believes that he (Biff) does that only to "spite" (2.92) him leaving him to face his bitter disappointment in his favourite son. So Boston's confrontation "with its implied destruction of the father-god stunted Biff's career and [has] left Willy with a load of remorse"<sup>10</sup> causing an insurmountable hardships in Willy and Biff's relationship.

In spite of his constant dispute with his father, Biff is deeply touched when Linda informs him about his father's continuous thinking of committing suicide. He promises her to set things right deciding to borrow money from Bill Oliver (his friend in the high school) in spite of the fact that "a team of horses couldn't have dragged me [Biff] back to Bill Oliver." (2.85) Biff wants to start a shop selling "sporting goods" (1.45) with his brother Happy. Celebrating the occasion, the two brothers decide to invite their father to have a dinner at the restaurant that night. But when Biff has gone to Bill's office he is ignored by Bill as he tells Happy:

And then he gave me one look and- I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been. We've been talking in a dream for fifteen years. I was a shipping clerk. (2.78)

Although he fails to attain the loan from Bill Oliver, his disappointment disillusion him and enlightens him enabling him to face reality for the first time seeing life and facts as they are. So he decides to behave and act according to his own new values dealing with reality and facts rejecting his father's illusions.<sup>11</sup> Thus he decides to tell his father the truth imposing fact on him. But he cannot tell him anything because Willy is confused engaging in a flashback. Consequently Biff is deeply moved with his father's condition describing it saying:

Miss Forsythe, you've just seen a prince walking by. A fine troubled prince. A hard-working, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion. Always for his boys. (2.86)

So Biff is changed positively since he is released from his father's illusion of charming personality and popularity as the key of success in life.<sup>12</sup> Thus he is able to appreciate his father's suffering, sacrifices and hard-working for thirty four years to support his family calling him "a prince." Accordingly he does not only respect his father but he is also proud of him. Moreover he is able to accept himself as he is telling his father:

I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither you are.... Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!.... Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? .... I'm just what I am, that's all.... [Biff] *break down, sobbing, holding on to Willy.* (2.102)

Willy is touched with Biff's tears saying: " Isn't that - isn't that remarkable? Biff – he likes me! .... Oh Biff! (*staring wildly*). He cried! Cried to me (*He is choking with his love.*) (2.102) So he is assured of Biff's love and appreciation for him deciding to sacrifice his life for Biff's sake.<sup>13</sup> Willy realizes that he "end[s] up worth more dead than alive." (2.73) deciding to commit suicide to make amends for Biff besides allowing him to have the twenty thousands (the insurance money) he needs to start a new career.

The same tension in Willy and Biff's relationships is repeated in Troy and his son Cory's relationship and for the same reasons that are the attachment to the past and sport. Cory, just like Biff in the high school, is a promising football player who has also a scholarship from a university. But Troy prefers that his son keeps his after-school job working at A&P supermarket justifying his attitude telling Cory:

You go on and get your book – learning so you can work yourself up in that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something can't nobody take away

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from you. You go on and learn how to put your hands to some good use. (1.3.542)

Troy is worried about his son Cory and he cares for his (Cory's) best interest believing that Cory should secure his life and future financially by having a regular job rather than playing football. But Cory tries to convince his father that his high marks qualify him to seize such opportunity to enroll in college saying: "I get good grades, Pop. That's why the recruiter wants to talk with you. You got to keep up your grades to get recruited. This way I'll be going to college." (1.3.542) But Troy refuses "to sign the permission papers" (1.3.541) for his son insisting on his attitude telling Cory:

You go down there to that A&P and see if you can get your job back. If you can't do both then you quit the football. You've got to take the crooked with the straights. (1.3.542)

Obviously Troy's attitude towards Cory is related to his past, as he tells his wife Rose saying: "I decided seventeen years ago that boy wasn't getting involved in no sports." (1.3.544) In fact in the past Troy himself was a promising baseball player who has been prevented from his right to play in the Major League because of the racial discrimination. Thus he is embittered by this unjust and painful experience and tries to carry its impacts into his son Cory believing that he is doing the right thing for his son and that he is protecting him by preventing him from playing football as he tells Rose : "I got good sense, women. I got sense enough not to let my boy get hurt over playing no sports." (1.3.544) So out of his genuine fatherly feeling towards his son Cory he divests him from getting his hope up in football in order not to be knocked down by segregation. As this would be a repetition of what has happened to him (Troy) in the past when he was a promising athlete ending up collecting garbage because of racism. Thus he says to Rose: "I don't want him [Cory] to be like me! I want him to move as far away from my life as he can get." (1.3.543) He Justifies that to Cory, saying: "you the only decent thing that ever happened to me!" besides "it's my duty to take care of you. Cause I owe responsibility to you!" (1.3.543) So his attachment with the past blinds Troy from seeing the truth, as Rose tells him that: "Times have changed



from when you was young, Troy. People change. The world's changing around you and you can't even see it." (1.3.544) Nevertheless he insists that Cory should have a practical career rather than playing football working at A&P supermarket. Thus when Cory encounters his father explaining to his mother Rose saying:

Papa done went up to the school and told Coach Zellman I can't play football no more. Wouldn't even let me play the game. Told him to tell the recruiter not to come. (1.4.552)

Troy denies his responsibility for preventing him from playing football hinting to Cory's refusal to work at A&P supermarket, explaining: "I ain't done nothing to you. You done it to yourself." (1.4.552) Consequently Cory compelled to face his father with reality explaining:

I can't work after school during football season, Pop! I tried to tell you that Mr. Stawicki's holding my job for me. You don't never want to listen to no body. And then you wanna go and do this to me! ... Just cause you didn't have a chance! you just scared I'm gonna be better than you, that's all. (1.4.552)

In fact the same continuous conflict between Willy and his son Biff which causes Biff constant complaining that: "I can not get near him [Willy]" is echoed by Troy and his son Cory causing Cory asking his father: "How come you ain't never liked me?" (1.3.542) But later on, Cory is gradually able to reach an understanding with his father and his motives accepting his father's decision and its impact.<sup>14</sup>

The inevitable truth is that both of the fathers Willy and Troy behave and act out of genuine love and care for their sons believing that they are doing the right thing for their sons concerning their son's best interest. In their turn the two sons care truly for their fathers. Rose expresses that clearly justifying Cory's attitude to Troy saying: "He's just trying to be like you with the sport" (1.3.543) and that "every thing that boy do he do for you. He wants you say 'Good job, son.' That's all." (1.3.544)

The similarities between Miller's *Death of Salesman* and Wilson's *Fences* expand to the main characters in both of them. Thus there are the same characters of the rich uncle, the loyal friend and the marginal character of the second son.

Ben is Willy's successful brother who has died "couple weeks ago" (1.29) before the play begins. Yet he usually appears in Willy's flashbacks specially in his (Willy's) depressed moments.

*He is a stolid man, in his sixties, with a moustache and an authoritative air. He is utterly certain of his destiny, and there is an aura of far places about him.* (1.29)

In fact Ben has the will and the courage to adventure. He believes in himself and his right to live and to achieve success. So he departs America ending up in Africa owning diamond mine, as he tells his two nephews:

Why, boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. (*He laughs*) And by God I was rich ... [owning] diamond mines! (1.32)

Ben is described by Willy that he is the "success incarnation" (1.26) He represents all that Willy has failed to attain showing his (Willy's) limitation such as securing regular income for his family and not owning a house.

Ben's character is echoed by Gabriel's character in *Fences*. He is Troy's brother

*he is seven years younger than Troy. Injured in World War II, he has a metal plate in his head. He carries an old tramped tied around his waist and he believe with every fiber of his being that is the Archangel Gabriel.* (1.2.536)

Gabriel also has involved in real life participating in the World War II and has injured, as Troy tells Rose:

Man go over there and fight was messin' around with them Japs, get half head blown off and they give him a lousy three thousand dollars. And I had to swoop down on that. (1.2.538)

So Gabriel is a brave man who participates in the war. He believes in himself and fights for what he believes is the right. So he departs America to Japan where he has injured. As a result he is remunerated by the government with amount of money that is used by Troy to build the house in which he and his family live in. Troy justifies his behavior to Rose saying: "That's the only way I got a roof over my head cause of that metal plate .... I'm just stating the facts." (1.2.538) Troy admits the fact that he cannot have a house without Gabriel's money. Accordingly Gabriel manages to offer a secure home the thing that Troy fails to obtain.

Both of them (Willy and Troy) are supported by a sole close friend. So Charley is Willy's best friend. "*He is a large man, slow of speech, laconic, immovable. In all he says despite what he says, there is pity, and, now, trepidation.*" (1.27) He is a successful person who own a company, believing in the hard working. He cares truly about Willy and is used to be kind to him. He offers Willy a job, which he is compelled to refuse. Otherwise it means that all what Willy believes in and does are wrong. Besides Willy knows that Charley is a true friend telling him: "Charley you're the only friend I got. Isn't that remarkable thing?" (2.73) So that is why he (Willy) continues to borrow money from him every week. Thus, in the requiem scene, besides Willy's family he (Charley) is the only person who attends the funeral.

Likewise Jim Bono is Troy's best friend. His "*commitment to their friendship of thirty – odd years is rooted in his admiration of Troy's honesty, capacity for hard work, and his strength, which Bono seek to emulate.*" (1.1.524) There are mutual respect, care and understanding between them to the extent that Troy considers Bono one of the family telling Rose:

Aw hell, women this is Bono. Bono like family. I done know this nigger since .. how long I done know you? .. Hell, I done know him

longer than I know you. And we still standing shoulder to shoulder. Hey, look here, Bono a man can't ask for no more than that. (*Drinks to him*) I love you, nigger. (1.4.552)

In fact Troy has met Bono in the prison and after getting released out of it they work together in garbage collecting. They are stuck to each other and are only parted when Troy dies. In the requiem scene, Bono is there with Troy's family to say the final goodbye to his sole friend.

Happy is Willy's younger son. He is two years younger than Biff, he is

*tall, powerfully made. Sexuality is like a visible colour on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way, for he has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seemingly more content.* (1.8)

Willy's flashbacks show us that Happy is totally eclipsed by Biff (Willy's golden and favourite son who has a bright future). In fact Willy's life revolves around Biff as the representative of the credibility of Willy's philosophy neglecting Happy completely. Throughout the play Happy tries desperately to draw his father's attention to him. Thus he is used to state that: "I'm losing weight" (1.17) and that "I'm gonna get married" (1.48) trying in vain to be recognized by his father. Accordingly he has to live with the feeling of being the neglected son. Thus he repays his father with the same coin by rejecting him in the restaurant.

Happy's marginal character is mirrored by Lyons' character. He is

*Thirty-four years old, Troy's son by a previous marriage.... Though he fancies himself a musician, he is more caught in the rituals and "idea" of being a musician than in the actual practice of the music.* (1.1.530)

He is used to come to his father's house either to borrow money from him (his father) or to have it back.

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To conclude, apparently almost all the characters in the two plays are comparable. There are the characters of the two fathers Willy and Troy. Each one of them is the head of his family who is obsessed with his role as the provider of the family. Besides each one of them embraces a wrong philosophy in his life living by it. Consequently both of them are immersed in their illusions and their past. Moreover the past bears a painful experience with sport in each of the two plays.

The tension in both of the two plays emanates from two bound things. The first is that the adherence of both fathers to their wrong philosophies living by them. Accordingly both of them are attached to their past, since their philosophies bind them to it (the past), refusing to deal with the present that is reality. So both of them are the victim of their own past. Thus when they victimize their own sons by reflecting their own bitter experiences of their own past on their sons the tension is escalated between the two different generations. Nevertheless the conflicts between the fathers and their sons reveal mutual love, appreciation and respect among them.

The semblance in the roles of the two wives Linda and Rose in the two plays is very obvious. Linda is a loving and a caring wife and mother. Moreover she is a devoted wife who supports her husband constantly choosing him even over her own sons, likewise the role of Rose which mirrors Linda's role. Besides each one of them is rewarded with infidelity by her husband having a love affair out of matrimonial system.

The minor character of Ben the rich and the adventurous brother is echoed by Gabriel's character who offers a roof for his brother's family. There is also the character of the best and the sole friend which is represented by Charley. He genuinely loves and supports Willy until his death attending his funeral. The same thing goes for Bono who remains faithful to Troy even after his death attending his funeral with Troy's family.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Artur Miller, *Death Of A Salesman* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1949), 1.2. Subsequent reference to this edition will appear between parentheses in my text. The numbers following scenes, in the parentheses, refer to the page numbers.

<sup>2</sup>J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama In Theory*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 143. (Cambridge:

<sup>3</sup>B. S Goyal, *Arthur Miller: Death Of A Salesman* (New Delhi: Aarti Book Centre, 1988), p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>August Wilson, *Fences*, In Jerome Beaty & J. Paul Hunter eds., *New World Of Literature: Writings From America's Many Cultures* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 1.1.524. Subsequent reference to this edition will appear between parentheses in my text. The numbers following acts and scenes, in the parentheses, refer to the page numbers.

<sup>5</sup>Mehdi Zia'ee & Ali Haji Shamsa'ee, *Critical Guide To Great Plays* (Tehran: Omid Mehr, 2005), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup>Brian Parker, "Point Of View In Miller's Death Of Salesman," in Robert W. Corrigan, ed., *Arthur Miller: A Collection Of Critical Essay* (London: Prentice Hall International, Inc., 1969), p. 100.

<sup>7</sup>Alan S. Downer, *The Art of Play* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955), p. 74.

<sup>8</sup>Edward Murray, *Arthur Miller: Dramatist* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1967), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup>Irving Jacobson, "Family Dreams IN Death Of A Salesman" in P. C. Kar & D. Ramakrishna eds., *The American Classics Revisited: Recent Studies Of American Literature* (Hyderabad: American Studies Research Centre, 1980), p. 677.

<sup>10</sup>Kenneth Tynan, "American Blues: The Plays Of Arthur Miller And Tennessee Williams," In Alvin B. Kernan ed., *The Modern American Theatre* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1976), p. 37.

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<sup>11</sup>Bamber Gascoigne, *Twentieth - Century Drama* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1962) p. 176.

<sup>12</sup>C. W. E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction To Twentieth - Century American Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 169.

<sup>13</sup>Harold Clurman, "Introduction," in Harold Clurman ed., *The Portable Arthur Miller* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), p. xv.

<sup>14</sup>Harry J. Elam, Jr., "August Wilson" in David Krasner ed., *A Companion To Twentieth Century American Drama* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2005), p. 325.

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## دراسة مقارنة بين مسرحية ارثر ملر موت بائع متجول ومسرحية اوغست ولسون /سيجة

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### الملخص

تصور مسرحية ارثر ملر موت بائع متجول (الحائزة على جائزة البولتز ١٩٤٩) حياة اسرة امريكية في الاربعينيات من القرن الماضي. ويلى لومان، بطل المسرحية، هو بائع متجول في الستينيات من عمره. هو يؤمن بجاذبية الشخصية والشعبية كسر للنجاح. هو يجني على ابنه بف، والذي كان لاعب كرة قدم بارز في المدرسة الثانوية ولديه ثلاث منح دراسية من ثلاث جامعات مختلفة، بتمسكه بفلسفته الخاطئة والماضي. وهذا بدوره ينطبق على تروي ماكسون بطل مسرحية /سيجة (الحائزة على جائزة البولتز ١٩٨٧) لاوغست ولسون، والتي تصور حياة عائلة امريكية من اصل افريقي في الخمسينيات من القرن الماضي. تروي هو نجم رياضي سابق انتهى به الامر كجامع نفايات في البلدية مؤمنا بانه فرق عنصريا من قبل المجتمع. هو يجني على ابنه كوري، والذي هو لاعب كرة قدم واعد في المدرسة الثانوية، مانعا اياه من الحصول على منحة رياضية جامعية بتمسكه (تروي) بالماضي واعتقاده الخاطئ. لكن روز ماكسون، الزوجة المخلصة والام المهمة تنجح في الحفاظ على تماسك العائلة متتبعة خطى لندا لومان من خلال الصبر والتسامح.

هذه الدراسة ستلقي الضوء على جوانب التشابه بين المسرحيتين والتي تتناول المجتمع الامريكي بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية فيما يتعلق بالشخصيات، العلاقات العائلية، الاصدقاء والاقارب.