



\*Corresponding author:

**Ienas Talib Naseef**

University:

University of Baghdad

College:

College of Education for Women

Email:

[ienas@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:ienas@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq)**Keywords:**

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## Memory and Reconstruction of Identity in Arthur Miller's The Price

### ABSTRACT

Memory is an area of study in many academic domains, including sociology, cultural studies, psychiatry, psychology, and literature. It is a significant subject of discussion regarding the human dynamism of identity. As Miller thinks that the past is a misty spot and mirrors it consequently in his drama, he merges the past with the present. He shows how the past is embedded in the presence of his characters. Therefore, for Miller, past experiences constitute the present crises of his characters. Considering these experiences, this paper examines the themes of traumatic memory and identity within the scope of post memory theory on the familial and social level in Arthur Miller's play The Price (1968). The play demonstrates a unique issue on family, memory, and identity, particularly picturing family as a site for memory, and a fundamental mechanism of transgenerational trauma transmission. It reveals the interweaving of family traumatic memory in the production of individual identity.

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### الذاكرة وإعادة بناء الهوية في مسرحية آرثر ميلر الثمن

م. ايناس طالب نصيف/ قسم اللغة الإنكليزية/ كلية التربية للبنات/ جامعة بغداد  
الخلاصة:

تعتبر الذاكرة مجالاً للدراسة في العديد من المجالات الأكاديمية، بما في ذلك علم الاجتماع والدراسات الثقافية والطب النفسي وعلم النفس والأدب. إنه موضوع نقاش مهم فيما يتعلق بالديناميكية البشرية للهوية. يؤكد ميلر أن الماضي بقعة ضبابية ويعكسها بالتالي في دراما. إنه يطمس الحاجز بين الماضي والحاضر. يوضح كيف يتم تضمين الماضي في حضور شخصياته. لذلك، بالنسبة لميلر، فإن التجارب السابقة تشكل الأزمات الحالية لشخصياته. بالنظر إلى هذه التجارب، تناقش هذه الورقة استخدام ميلر للذاكرة في مسرحيته الثمن (1968). تتناول هذه المسرحية موضوعات الذاكرة الصادمة والهوية في نطاق المستوى الأسري. تُظهر المسرحية مشكلة فريدة تتعلق بالأسرة والذاكرة والهوية، لا سيما تصوير الأسرة كموقع

للذاكرة، وآلية أساسية لنقل الصدمات عبر الأجيال. إنه يكشف عن تشابك الذاكرة العائلية المؤلمة في إنتاج الهوية الفردية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الديناميكية البشرية للهوية، الذاكرة، نظرية ما بعد الذاكرة، الثمن، الذاكرة المؤلمة.

## **Introduction:**

*"If any faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I think it is memory. There seems something more speaking incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, and the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient; at others, so bewildered and so weak; and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond control! We are, to be sure, a miracle every way; but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting do seem peculiar past finding out" (Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 149).*

In general, life moves in a linear form from beginning to end, from birth to death, and from childhood to old age. One's identity, the concept of oneself, and place in the world are all shaped over the course of a lifetime of progression, the accumulation of experience, and memory which give life purpose. Despite a recent increase in interest in the last twenty years, this subject has been the subject of much research since the late nineteenth century. Henry Bergson remarks this memory system is the significantly influential on humans. Thus, the dramatists attempt to dive into their characters' psyches, or more accurately, their unconscious psyches, in which painful experiences serve as the sole protagonists. Malkin emphasizes the significance of Freud's views about theatre "With Freud the theatre of memory moved inward, beyond the imagination, into the psyche; and its drama was played out between repression, symbolic encodings, and therapeutic retrieval" (p.5).

The concepts of trauma and post memory are now frequently used interchangeably since Marianne Hirsch's idea of post memory has permeated trauma studies so deeply. It is "a description of the relationship that the generation after bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before-to experiences they remember only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right". Post memory highlights the second generation's relationship with powerful and

influential, often traumatic, memories that were conveyed to them in such a manner that they form their own memories and identities.

In fact, Hirsch is strictly "motivated predominantly by ethical concerns. She aspires to defend the interests of the weak and oppressed. She conceives of her intellectual work as a form of social activism and upholds her commitment to righting injustices. This social commitment, which goes beyond narrow conceptions of legal justice, consists of bringing about acts of repair and redress, forms of justice for which Hirsch takes responsibility through her academic work in the field of memory. If there is any trauma underlying Hirsch's decision to dedicate herself to memory activism, it is certainly not comparable to the psychological abnormalities shown by the survivors of profoundly disturbing events" (Frederick, 1967 p.6).

Furthermore, Ferrán refers to an inherited traumatic memory as a postmemory. It is believed that identity is combined with memory through the concept of trauma. Memory usually is associated with identity which is "the way in which people define themselves as members of a community". Critics indicate that, "memory results from past interactions with the people and objects that surround them. Thus the construction of identity has a narrative structure that holds past events and contemporary information resulting from negotiations between past and present experiences, dreams, and desires" (p.63). It is commonly accepted that identity or a sense of self is constructed through stories about our lives. Memory studies have shown that individual memory is always conflicted, and compromised. Moreover, the memory that is affiliated with traumatic experiences of the past recreates an influential part of identity. Thus, identity is created and recreated by memory's emphasis to unite the present with the past to re-stage and cure psychological damages.

The construction of an individual's identity is inextricably connected to the traumatic experiences in the collective memory of their home culture. This study tackles the effect of trans-generational trauma and collective memories on the individuals of the second generation as it is represented in Miller's play *The Price*. In drama, the conflicts of human beings have been depicted in a more private familial context. The exposition of confrontations between brothers, fathers, and sons has always been of prominent interest in the world of theatre. Miller introduces the play as a kind of trial between two brothers, they engage in a ruthless analysis of their father and question everyone's responsibility in what is going on. The character of the father is assumed to be responsible but in contrast, he is selfish and vicious.

### **Memory and Rootedness of Franz's Family (Renegotiations of past and present)**

One of the considerably complicated issues of the twentieth-century was the memory study. People who are heavily afflicted by terrible memories and the psychological recordings of traumatic experiences were used to recall them painfully. Although trauma is an experience that relates to memory or the past, this memory comes into focus in Miller's drama. Memory is the instrument that transfers the characters back in time by delving deeply into their past. It encompasses both remembering and forgetting. Miller is seriously concerned with memory issues and his characters denote both memory and forgetfulness, therefore, *The Price* is the outcome of his extensive research into memory mechanics. Miller examined memory in regard to time, relations, and family property in *The Price*. His drama is referred to as memory theatre due to show his interest in spontaneous memories and memory psychoanalysis, which found its way into his writings "Memory theatre might be doubly defined as a theatre that imitates conflicted and sometimes repressed or erased memories of a shared past, and as a theatre that initiates processes of remembrance through practices of repetition, conflation, regression, recurrent scenes, involuntary voice, echoing overlap, and simultaneity" (Malkin, p.8).

Miller is fascinated with the issues of history, memory, and trauma in the construction of identity. Maurice Halbwachs asserted that a family is a critical unit in the production of memory. In the play, memory takes the central scene. This theme takes a dangerous course because it deals with the conflict between two opposing outlooks toward life and reality in a class-based society because values in such a society are adjacent. They negatively affect every aspect of the American man's life, especially the familial one. *The Price* aims to analyze the maturation of these themes for personal confrontation through which the characters reveal themselves and reach their self-realization proving their failure. Thus, the past, present, and future all recreate a significant part of life. Identity and self-awareness are exposed through the past, people develop their own sense of the past as time passes, sometimes humans recall the delightful aspects of their life while ignoring the painful events that occur. Some people forget about others' nice deeds and never accept responsibility for their own. Reading this play indicates that "memory and remembering the self" depends not on repairing an original

identity, but on remembering, setting past and present selves concurrently, moment by moment, in a decisive process of reconstruction of identity.

*The Price* is a play that analyzes the complicated relationships that exist between memory, nostalgia, and identity. It is presented as a memory play that starts with stormy beginnings. It is a kind of trial between two brothers, who engage in a ruthless analysis of their father's responsibility for what is going wrong. These two brothers deliberate the past, in an attempt to make sense of their life and the decisions they have made in their past life. The play reveals the selfish departure of the older brother Walter who struggled to continue his education and becomes a wealthy surgeon leaving his younger brother Victor alone. Walter is a "self-made man" who emerges from poverty to become wealthy and famous, his longing to achieve what he believes it as the American dream; Contrary to his older brother, Victor who sacrificed his education and worked as a policeman to support his ruined father who has been destroyed by the Great Depression. As Miller articulates the reason behind writing this play:

"Basically what I was interested in *The Price* was what it takes to be a person who refuses to be swept away and seduced by the values of society. It is in one sense the price of integrity. In other words, the policeman has refused to adopt the sex and success motives of society. He has walled himself up against them and has kept a certain kind of integrity as a result... he pays for that. Still, he is saner than Walter with a hold on reality" (Hayman, 1970. p.2).

Thus, the concept of post-memory demonstrates the relationship of the second generation to the social, personal, and cultural trauma of those people who passed before them. In addition to the events they remember mainly through the behaviors, memories, and beliefs in which they previously lived. However, such memories are conveyed to those people in such a significant and affective way that they seem to be traumatic memories. Traumatic memories haunt the two brothers throughout the play. The entangled memories of the past are the driving force in the play. They finally meet together after sixteen years to sell their father's property, the old house and its furniture remind Victor of his youth. This scene provides an appropriate background for the revelations of the past that flow to the present. In an atmosphere of accusation and defense, the two brothers do not come to a forgiving understanding, because each of them tries to throw the blame on the other and justify himself. Therefore, they do not come to a forgiving and understanding.

The story is set in the attic of a brownstone in Manhattan that is going to be demolished. The room is dusty and gloomy, with numerous shadows. The little attic is filled with furniture from the other 10 rooms of the house. The boys' chests, armchairs, and harp all stand as metaphorical references to the unfulfilled promises and wishes of a long-dead family. Loneliness and despair dominate the atmosphere. Although the audience doesn't know much about the Franze's childhood, it seems unhappy. The set depicts the Franz family's past. The chair like the father is symbolized melancholy and loneliness. The set also reflects the family metaphorically; their father is represented by the chair, the brothers by the chests, and the mother through the harp. The other trinkets illustrate the family's past and future "places must be understood both as flexibly constructed by people through their own attachments and narrative productions of self and as reflecting these multifarious identities back to their occupants" (Taylor, 2010, p.11).

*The Price* revolves around family secrets and deception. Bigsby (1984) observes insightfully "the misery of their own family life was not a sign that there was no mercy in the world, but rather that there was 'no love in this house'" (p. 223). It is about two brothers, Victor and Walter, and the dispersal of their deceased parents' goods, which are held in a ten-room brownstone. The used furniture broker, Solomon, has offered a thousand dollars for these items, and Victor has struck a tentative arrangement with him, despite the fact that his wife and brother both push him to demand three times the sum offered. The sale of the family furniture caused the destruction of the house where the heritage is kept, it also serves as an opportunity to determine how much each of the brothers has paid so far for their actions (Balakian, 2003, p.132). The presence of a large amount of the furniture to be sold is an onerous and stifling presence in the set, symbolizing the fatherly inheritance as a weighty load that is not so easy to dispose of. However, the interrelationship between memory, place, and identity has always been contested. the place should be seen as essential in establishing a core of identity and a sense of belonging among individuals who occupy it because of its distinguishing structure of the place, as Richardson (2008) indicates that "memory, like a place, is a phenomenological experience, which is rooted in the senses and the body" (p. 20).

In artistic works that usually contain post memory, a painful experience is conveyed, but at the same time encompasses an ethical obligation to the past. Our experience of place has changed according to some theories, since the transition changes our relations and attachment

to the place and leads to reduced so-called conventional attachments to places, such as local communities, homes, or hometowns. According to some theories, leaving places, such as local communities, homes, or hometowns, leads to a decline of so-called conventional attachments. In the absence of these long-standing links, Individuals do not have "convenient" identities in regard to their surroundings. As Richardson investigates the relationship between memory, place, and cohesive belonging, employing the concept of authenticity to demonstrate how the intersection of personal histories with past memories can produce uncertainties in people's life, complicating or disrupting the sharing of common sense of belonging to the place. Weaving together painful memories and personal narratives provides forms new views on people's identities by emphasizing how individuals tell their own unpredictable circumstances to change their character (Richardson, p. 75).

*The Price* provides a better context for assessing our indebtedness to the past's heritage. The dramatic situation is a symbolic reaffirmation of what the price is appropriate for the past (or, more accurately, one's perception of the past), and how we are to pay for what we did or did not do in the past. Many critics like Neil Carson and Balakian (2003) point out that by selling the family property, the brothers are forced to face their own misrepresentations (illusions) of what once was, but they also betray the fundamental roots of their current selves (p.135).

Simply stated, along with the furniture, the two brothers sell a part of themselves. In this perspective, Walter's manipulation in obtaining the highest possible price for the furniture, and Victor's acceptance of the price initially provided by the Jewish furniture trader, become relevant. Apparently, Walter perceives the past and its impact in terms of financial importance, but Victor sees the past as holding a personal and emotional valuation story and Walter is depicted as the "idealist and the materialist" as Balakian remarks (p.132), which reveals the fundamental ethical tension at the center of American culture that obsessed Miller's career. Familial conflicts especially between brothers, fathers, and sons have constantly caught the interest of dramatists because human problems have always been depicted in drama as sympathetic to the private familial environment or to the personal and societal fabric.

Despite Victor and Walter's opposing moral positions, the encounter with the past leaves both characters painfully empty at the end of the day. The two brothers lose their sense of self

because of their collision, as they are stripped of their illusions as well as the roots of their origin, which measure their successes and also provided them with a view of who they were. The siblings have no regret for selling their memories or escaping their past shows that their respective families lacked to be the safe places that they were previously considered to be. Victor finally realizes not only his father's exploitation of him but also, as Walter points out that "but there was no love in this house. There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement" (Miller, 2008, p.111). consequently, nothing to be lost. Distinctively, this argument promotes Walter's avoidance of taking responsibility for his past decisions. If there were no principles in his family to save, as he believes, he did the correct thing by abandoning it all.

The concentration of Miller's attention in this play is on the revisitation of the past, yet the past is haunting, and its ghosts resurface in the present. The brothers in this play do indeed carry these ghosts within them, as the father becomes a personification of the haunted past. The brothers' fatherly legacy runs deep in their veins, and the father's treachery comes back to haunt them now. This satirical scene reflects the dysfunction and creates a retelling of the archetypal duty that the father is expected to play. If children have deceived their parents in the past "as Walter did when his father abandoned him financially and emotionally", parents betray their children when they leave them completely without a good model to follow. However, it's no wonder, that the brothers lacking positive examples of the ideal family repeated their parents' flaws as Bigsby (1994) states "a present reality and memory become alive as a three-dimensional fact" (p.169), but there is still a powerful sense of nostalgia for a past that has vanished irreversibly.

The traits of the two brothers are presented in an uncertain manner; it appears to be a contrast between heroic self-sacrifice and cynical self-interest at first glance. But underneath this public persona is the "bare figures" as Pirandello referred to them. (Nelson, 1970, p.296). Miller's desire to access "the pantheon of forces and values that lay behind the actual surface of existence" is evidenced by this seeming reversal of moral force. In this play, memories of traumatic pasts have influenced and re-formed Victor's identity.

Victor is revealed to be a weak and indecisive man who refuses to accept responsibility for his own actions and deliberately avoids hard truths by escaping into delusion. Walter, on the other hand, is a guy who has gradually come to see the futility of riches and achievement and



is now attempting to pass on his knowledge to others. Victor and Walter both embody complicated and often contradictory human attitudes. Bigsby expresses this apparent complication in the play's moral structure as follows: "The qualities of the two brothers are ambiguously presented. At first sight, it appears to be simply a contrast between heroic self-sacrifice and callous self-interest. But beneath this public face is what Pirandello used to call the "naked figures". This apparent reversal of moral force is evidence of Miller's wish to penetrate to "the pantheon of forces and values which lie behind the realistic surface of life" (p.36). Therefore, Victor is shown as "a weak and irresolute individual, unwilling to concede responsibility for his own life and consciously avoiding painful realities by retreating into illusion". While Walter, on the other hand, is "a man who has gradually come to understand the inconsequence of wealth and success and who now tries to pass on his insight to others" (pp. 226-27).

According to Freud, memory is the primary carrier of objectively preserved, unalterable past experiences, which are worked up as a mash-up of perceptions that transform according to the development and the demands of the recalled. Therefore, memory is "the Past, present and future and stung together as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them" (Freud, 1980). However, the focus of the play is that man should have a new vision of life, to feel that he has limitless options and opportunities. This idea is true regarding the furniture when Walter and Solomon tell Victor, that there are no more possibilities when one has such furniture because one will be imprisoned within the past as in the case of Victor but it can liberate a person from the guilt as it does with Walter.

Whatever the characters struggle to bury and eliminate from their memories they still determine shape their future. However, because the hurtful memories are tightly buried, their recollection resembles flashbacks, and their significance is fragmentation. For Miller's characters, their presence is "a constant replay of memorized moments through ghostly figments" (Malkin, p.39). Memory is often used as a technique in this play to trigger and engage delusion within the protagonist's life.

### **An Identity under the Umbrella of an Unstable Past:**

*"Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us" (Oscar Wilde).*

Whatever the variations, Miller employs an influential theme in his plays, the clash between memory and reality in shaping human identity, to convey American society's misery, difficulties, and ideals. Miller's enormous success as a dramatist relies on a great range of the reality he has had worth writing about the modern social order. This technique has been a fabulous method for interpreting the conflict that arises out of the conditions of the society in which he lived. Miller's character act in a very intelligible way within the family atmosphere as a father, son, uncle, and so on rather than citizens of society. Yet, Miller feels obliged to reflect clearly on their connections with the social environments as in any play which is a product of social conditions and expresses its milieu.

Jeannette Malkin (1999) emphasizes the significance of memory in the theater especially in postmodernism era "The space of memory, its circulations, and echoings fit naturally into the spatial art of theatre" (p. I). She views theatre as "a suitable vehicle for memory; she considers memory as a topic, theatre as an object, and postmodernism as a form to inscribe memory because postmodernism is associated with remembering and forgetting". The Price is a memory play with a plot that seems to be made up entirely of scenes that settle longer life events that have been performed over many years. Arthur's characters are often haunted by the memories of the past. There are numerous memories throughout the play that frequently dominate the characters' emotions and moods within every scene. Even the most problematic character of Victor's name is associated with memory. The idea that knowledge is the power of hegemony and memory is the means by which the characters get at it is another prominent perspective on the use of memory. At this point, it can be firstly claimed that the play's main characters are truly striving after what is perhaps the most precious information that bestows strength. It is the knowledge and comprehension of the self—by delving deeply into their past.

Walter and Victor are depicted in the modern configuration as in the classic story of Cain and Abel, yet they are obviously more sophisticated and disconcerting characters in their modern forms than they were in their previous incarnations. The conflict between the brothers is partly motivated by their fundamentally distinct personalities, and their moral, emotional, and intellectual differences. In Miller, the traditional opposites of corruption and innocence, strength and weakness are repeated as struggles between Victor's failure and self-sacrifice versus Victor's prosperity and self-interest (Walter). The disparities between the brothers, on

the other hand, are not so much learned attributes as important, inborn personality traits that are also profoundly required. No dramatic confrontation would be conceivable without these fundamental rivalries.

Thus, Miller's *The Price* is based on the assumption that relationships between individuals, whether they be family members, spouses, or close friends, maybe artificial and superficial if they aren't honest about their previous experiences. Instead of building bridges to allow them to communicate effectively with one another, each of these characters seems to have built barriers against one another, culminating in their loneliness. As a result, for these argumentative characters, the entire play is a construction site; the winner will be the one who creates the strongest bridge between the past and the present against his opponent.

Memory is, without any doubt, among the most important features of human beings. Its importance becomes especially apparent in cases of constructing the identity. Although memory is a key element in many theories of personal identity and the exact role that memory plays in the constitution and preservation of identity remains largely effective. In this drama, memory constructs a sense of uncertainty, thus, the characters' memories are clouded and blurred. It is noteworthy to observe that Miller's playing with his characters' memories makes uncertainty a keystone for the play as there are many grievous memories about the same past. The past for Miller is something the dramatist must take into real consideration when investigating character behavior. Therefore, *The Price* "grew out of a need to reconfirm the power of the past and the way to possibly reaffirm cause and effect in an insane world" as Miller believes (Centola, 2007, p.298). Going back to the thirties of the Great Depression in 1929 and its bitter damages as explained by Miller:

"The thirties have been a time when we learned the fear of doom and had stopped being kids for a while, the time when the birds came home to roots and the past became a present. And that depression cataclysm, incidentally, seemed to teach that life indeed had a beginning, middles, and consequential ends" (Centola, p.299).

Family memories provide a sense of identity for the new generation which is a significant element in the postmemory theory. These circumstances are the main reasons behind the fleeing of Walter, the sacrifices of Victor, and above all the bankruptcy of the father who acquitted all kinds of business and social activities. Victor's entire life has been constructed on

his self-sacrifice for his father, and he relies on the moral obligation incurred as a result of his sacrifice. Despite the fact that the father rejects his son Victor, the father still lives inside him. Out of a sense of duty and faith towards his father, Victor carries on his shoulder his father's responsibility. Victor remains a faithful son to his sinister father and a considerate brother for a self-interested and indifferent brother. This is clear in Esther's argument with Victor when she says:

**Victor:** "I don't know why you keep putting it like charity. There's such a thing as a moral debt. Vic, you made his whole career possible. What law said that only he could study medicine? ... That's real debt and he [Walter] ought to be made face it. He could never have finished medical school if you hadn't taken care of Pop. I mean we ought to start thinking about the people talking!" (Miller, 2008, I.p.355).

It is true that post-memory revealed how the subsequent generations associate with their ancestors' trauma. Later on, Victor reflects on the consequences of his faithful, wondering whether he made a fatal mistake by exaggerating his father's predicament, both moral and financial. To cope with his current failures, he returns to the past in his memory and looks to be losing touch with reality. This anxiety has developed itself to the point that Victor grits his teeth at night, causing discomfort in his right ear. Each member of the Franz family seems unable to overcome this barrier of the past, and as a result, each escapes into a sphere of illusion where he gets the comfort and sense of value that the actual world does not look can provide. Victor should face his current circumstances without illusions and accept personal responsibility for his wasted prospects. The authenticity of Miller's theater with respect to mirroring the real details of American life in that period makes him unmistakably convincing as a "first-rate reporter" as Harold Clurman observes. (Clurman, 1998, p.21)

The audience realizes that the two brothers are not progressing toward improvement but rather are constantly slipping into desperation as they remain bound to a past that they can't forget or forgive. The characters' difficulty in acknowledging and adjusting to reality is one of the most distinguished and critical themes of *The Price*. After twenty-eight years of faithful and honest work, Victor will retire from the police department. He is frightened and apprehensive about retirement. Victor can't escape the terrifying feeling that his previous years were not just a waste of effort, but also a lie. In the play,

Miller discusses a significant factor of the twentieth century called the "lost protagonist confronting apparitions from the past, the isolated individual seeking connection in a godless wasteland" of modern technocracy" (Meserve, 1965, p. 75).

In this drama, Miller depicts the crisis of Post-World War II such as "the dissolution of the American family, the failure of the American Dream, and the collapse of capitalism in American economics. American drama between the two world wars deals, in a significant manner, with the enigma of the emerging American family, its vacillations and institutions, and its eventual collapse". There is a clash between family loyalty and self-advancement involving the inescapability of the past and present and the price of one's choice, whether or their success. It is the typical theme of Miller, presenting the two opposite attitudes of the two brothers, with Walter, who is to follow his personal success, striving for independence and achieving himself outside the family. He tries to justify that his fleeing does not constitute a betrayal of his family's love since this love has never been found in Franz's house. Through this journey, Walter comes across severe distress, insecurity, and the guilt of betrayal. Therefore, they are helpless, isolated, and victims of their father's irresponsible. Walter's success in the external world is still threatened by unresolved psychological issues that started in his parent's household. He remains at a loss and self-depresses and keeps asserting that his father needs nobody's sacrifice and help and that he could survive the Great Depression on his own.

The dramatist examines the shattered family in *The Price*, in which deceptions, fragility, and morality conflict. The play is not just a trip ahead in time, but also a return journey into the former lives of all the characters, who constantly fall back into their old memory. In his personal life, Victor is confused about himself. He is conflicted over what he wishes to achieve or where he wants to go. Victor stands as a decent parent and husband, as well as a dedicated worker for twenty-eight years in a work he confesses to despise. He is perplexed by his existence, yet he is determined to discover the "truth" about his worth no matter the cost. Victor is somewhat foolish and perhaps defeated. He has given up good opportunities that might lead to success, like that of his more determined brother, by preferring to support a father that was hardly worth any sacrifice.

Lately, he feels that the elapsed years seem worthless and in vain like a marriage ending in nothing. He admits that one has to make up his mind and think rationally without knowing what is involved. Otherwise, one can never be sure of what one tries to accomplish. These harsh memories are rooted in Victor's disillusionment, which he obviously reveals in his distaste for the past apparent when he tells Solomon his unappreciated sacrifice. As Walter's fortune grew, Victor approached his brother and requested a \$500 loan so that he could continue his studies. Walter, on the other hand, would not make the loan because of his suspicion, which appeared to be correct, that their father was keeping money from his sons. As a result of the new contextualizations, the ancient tale of betrayal is remolded and reinterpreted. Victor's self-sacrifice was essentially in vain: his father just used him as a caretaker as he had enough money to survive even after the 1929 catastrophe. Walter, on the other hand, is depicted as an evil person who simply betrayed his familial obligations by not assisting his father in his time of need or by refusing financial support for his brother (which money could have helped him advance in his university studies to become a doctor). Thus, the brothers' separation is the climax of Miller's drama.

Essentially, the first glimpse of Victor's prior disappointment occurs when Walter offers him money and a decent career on the condition that he accept the futility of his sacrifice, but Victor refuses. He is asserting the ethical value of his conduct in the past. Victor is rebuking Walter for his knowledge that their father had the money that could have enabled him to study. As a result, Miller contends that Victor's disenchantment with childhood is fundamental to the play. While Victor gave up his life for his father, Walter has not let anything distract him from his ambition, he is now well-known in his field. Walter has eliminated everything unnecessary from his life—including his family. He abandoned his father to be sponsored only by Victor in order to pursue his studies in medicine. He has turned into a man who takes money from others and notoriety in the world. It seems that the father and the elder brother participated in destroying Victor's scientific ambition, exploiting in a mean way his foolishness and his generosity.

Walter's speech indicates the notion that he must have the right to depart while Victor was wrong to stay despite the fact that he had demolished his future with his own hands by keeping his conscience and devotion. However, the play is an invitation to contemplate the

cost of such an effort and faith, the price was to join the police force to be secure financially. In fact, it is Miller's choice more than Victor's; Miller wants to show through Victor's uniform what kind of character he is. Actually, Victor's uniform is a reference to his wish to establish a world based on order and justice. Victor believes that Walter has just betrayed himself as well as his father since he did not preserve his commitments to his family. But now Walter is tormented by guilt and regret, he has paid a high price; since nobody can expect to have everything.

Walter must have passed through a kind of losing-gaining process similar to that of Victor. Despite being successful, Walter, like Victor, finds no purpose behind the accumulation of wealth and fame which puts his personal life at stake. It seems that Walter paid a "price" for ideals he believes to be essential in society such as respect, a career, and above all, money which constitutes the power itself, just as Victor paid for his sense of responsibility. Due to the previous events between the two brothers, Walter confesses that he has had a nervous breakdown and has become anxious. That means Walter himself participated in his alienation from himself and so he then found out what he has done.

Sadly, he has also paid a high price for his accomplishment. As a result of a psychological breakdown his once-skilled doctor's hands now quiver. His wife has abandoned him, and his children have left him. He has a lot of money, yet he is unhappy. He backs to the attic really attempting to compensate for the lost years of Victor, but there is bitterness beneath the pleasant grin that will never fade. Generally, in this play, the responsibility is always put on others' shoulders to free themselves from the chains as Walter did. But the protagonist of Victor does not evade this responsibility. In this play, Victor is described by the term "Personal myth" which the psychoanalyst Kris explained as "a coherent of autobiographical memories, a picture of one's course of life as part of the self-representation has attracted a particular investment, it is defensive since it prevents certain experiences and groups of impulses from reaching consciousness. At the same time, the autobiographical self-image has taken place of a repressed fantasy" (Kris, 1956, p. 653)

Victor objects to rediscovering the love he put into the house and finally insists on seeing love as a value worthy of defending and sacrificing for, no matter what others, like Walter, considered it. Victor even realizes that he even loved the old man, a new feeling that reveals to him how he was involved in his sacrifice. So his experience becomes his own rather than

some imposed unreality. There is a great avoidance to close ties, especially from the side of Victor, as the present has emerged out of the past. In addition, Victor is tormented by the thoughts that he would not be a humble policeman if he objected to taking up the burden of supporting his father like Walter. In other words, the career Victor chose for him was not a selfish one, but it was out of necessity to survive in the Depression.

Victor and Walter are able to hold the voices of the past and the past memories that have caught each of them with a collection of their memories. Consequently, the need to confront facts or people appears fundamental as long as man finds things not usually used to be. Man becomes a loss in such a rapidly changeable world. As a result, all of Miller's characters are not sure of what is right and what is wrong. In such circumstances, the sanctity of the family's unity is also threatened and unprotected from the creeping evil of the intrusion of society. There is an ebb and flow within the dialogue between the brothers but the mode is empty of extremity. However, it is a precarious one because the two men are presented in all their humanity and from their own viewpoints. Victor remarks that Walter pays his personal and his material life as a price for success when Victor adds:

**Victor:** "There's a price people pay, I've paid it, it's all gone, I haven't gone any more. Just like you paid, didn't you? You've got no wife, you've lost your family, and you're ratting around all over the place? Can you go and start all over again from scratch?" (Miller, 2008, I, p.428)

Walter's main concern is to repent the guilt he flees about having left Victor to be a failure, while he had advanced successfully in society. Walter replies in an excusing way but a realistic one signaling a new change of attitude. The audience also notice that the theme of memory digs into Walter's desertion of his father and threatens his peace of mind. In a kind of self-justification, Walter tries to attack his brother making Victor admit that he is as mistaken as Walter. On one hand, Ronald Hayman states that Victor refuses to be bought because he has already paid by living the uneasy kind of life he has to live. (Hayman, p.79) There's an attempt by Miller to imply that these brothers are "like two halves of the same guy" (Miller, 2008, II. p.112), On the other, hand Moss argues that Walter succeeds in reaching "truer insight and more honest conventions" than Victor whose faithfulness was not based on mutual affection between him and his father" (Moss, 1980, p. 80).



The idea of the past eternalizes itself in *The Price* and mirrors the memory to equate with reality which is always masked or shadowed by other characters' loss of the real. One of the brothers adopts the success norms on which the father brought them up while the other believes instinctively and wholeheartedly in faith and love that must overwhelm any family. Ironically, it is the success of Walter that is more appreciated than Victor's sacrifice to the father. Victor is not surprised that his father lied to him concerning having money because Victor powerfully thinks that should stay adherent to what he was brought up on when he says:

**Victor:** "Not that I excuse it; it was idiotic; nobody has to tell me that. But you're brought up to believe in one another, you're fueled by that crap...I wanted to ... stop it from falling apart".

**Walter:** "We are already brought up to believe in one another? We were brought up to succeed, weren't we? What was here to fall apart? When he [father] needed her [mother], she vomited. And when you need him, he laughed... It's that there was no love in this house. There was no loyalty. There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement" (Miller, 2008, II. P.437).

Like all of Miller's characters, the two brothers were brought up to absorb the success myth but it is apparent that Walter absorbed it well while Victor did not. The misery of the family's life as Walter sees it was not because there was no mercy in the world but rather because there was a lack of affection and love. His mother blamed her husband for destroying her musical career, and when the father left his son, Victor unnecessarily sacrificed his future for him. Walter asserts that Victor should realize that he is motivated by an illusion in his sacrifice and that Victor himself has "invented a life of self -sacrifice, a life of duty" as Walter puts it:

**Walter:**" All I ever wanted was simply to do science, but I invented an efficient, disaster-proof, money-maker... We invented ourselves, vice, to wipe out what we know. You invent a life of self-sacrifice, a life of duty" (Miller, 2008, II, p.438).

Walter's eloquent comments remind Victor of something that he is constantly trying to forget "There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement" (Miller, 1981, p.368). Furthermore, Victor's confusion regarding his father's financial

situation is another sign of a cloudy and sharp memory which promotes a sense of contradiction. Alison Winter uses terms such as "repressed memory syndrome" and "false memory syndrome" to shed further light on all these examples of memory that reveals the details of the sense of ambiguity. Victor refused to face this particular fact by creating a huge fantasy; he forced himself to sacrifice sixteen years of his life to give substance to this illusion. But there is a need to face the real world with boldness and determination. In this way, Walter recognizes that only when the individual is prepared to confront reality and cease defending himself, he could really take his destiny into his own hands. Esther, Victor's wife tries to comprehend things. She takes Walter's side and agrees that Victor's life has been a "farce" dream that is transformed into a fearful nightmare. But Victor defends himself and confirms that his loyalty to his father dignifies his existence and he justifies it by saying that he could not behave as though nothing has happened in the house.

The quest for identity has been prevalent in the drama of American writers. The characters' experience existential crises, as well as issues accepting reality and finding their place in the world. Nearly all characters are committed to courses of action rooted in the past. In other words, the play cannot move forwards without moving backward to dig deep into the past. Victor cannot be indifferent toward his father. To some extent, Victor is a victim, but he is partly responsible for his own fate. Both his past and personality of Walter frustrate Victor's desire to respect himself although affection and connections obligate him to do that. Moss thinks that Victor is not judging his father as much as judging what he did for his father throughout the play. Therefore, studying the role and relation of memory and theatre are fundamental aspects, Mahlu Mertens (2014) states, "On one hand theatre's fundamental mode of repetition makes it a child of memory for to perform a play is in itself an activity of remembering. On the other hand, the theatrical metaphor is used as an explanatory model for memory; remembering is described as an act of scenic imagination" (p.15). Thus, we have the truth of human dreams and ambitions played out on the stage's sphere which confronts the bitter reality.

The individual in Miller's works always defend and mature their choices whether these choices are instinctive like Victor's or self-centered like Walter's. Therefore, both Victor and Walter are insisted on the rightness of each choice on which self-esteem is based. Essentially,

as a social playwright, Miller utilized his characters to demonstrate his view of society in various ways. The Price examines the issue of social dilemma and moral values of how one can be certain of what he accomplished and believed throughout his life. The two brothers stand as a contrast, representing two incompatible personalities; one stands for innocence and the other for the cynic. It is the same sort of eternal conflict that humanity witnessed between Cain and Abel, Adam's two sons; one of them is an idealist and the other is not. But, Walter still demonstrates the possibilities of their reconciliation, as they are not enemies.

The post-memory theory is to some extent aligned with the concept of trauma as a result of psychological damage, the after-effects of which are still felt by subsequent generations. By now Walter understands that life is a give-and-take affair, and Victor has given too much but takes little, unlike Walter who has given nothing and he has something to give. So, Victor has to accept what Walter was trying to give to make some corrections. Miller makes Victor's need for appreciation as strong as Walter's urgent need to feel free from guilt when they have been disclosed to each other.

Walter tries earnestly to stretch his hands to help to make up for the bad experience of the past and compensate for what his brother has lost. These moments have been emotionally burdening. This charge of personality in Walter makes him no more indifferent towards his paternal relatives, that is, he is responsible as Victor for the family's welfare, a sense that must have been felt a long before. These moments are emotionally loaded. The bitter life Victor experiences makes him more hardened and less flexible to respond to Walter's invitation of forgiveness and it belittles the chances of an agreement by forgetting the past. Walter impatiently attributes this to revenge when he protesting states:

**Walter:** "Vengeance. Down to the end. He is sacrificing his life for Vengeance. It is all envy! And this moment you haven't the guts to face it! But your failure does not give you moral authority! Not with me! ... you will never again make me ashamed!" (Miller, 2008, p.p. 440-441).

The past experiences and memories are the most significant conflict changers, with their effects on the present, allowing us to explore the facts from the foggy memories of the past which requires so extensive mental effort. However, Miller believes that tragic emotion is

evoked whenever we are in the presence of a character, which is willing to give his life to gain his sense of personal integrity. And Victor was determined to do so, whatever the price. Thus, his painful memories have reinforced his regrets about how things have turned out, and his uncertainty as to whether leaving is the right choice at that time.

In his plays, Miller depicts the crisis as a confrontation between the trustful man and the societal and economic system, showing his social commitment. It is true that Victor's authority has not given him moral authority as Walter says, but Victor's integrity has bestowed him an authority that Walter has not acquired from success and fame. Victor is reluctant to remove the hook of guilt from his brother when he says "you won't get it [reassurance], not till I get mine... there's nothing to give" (Miller, 2008, II, p.440). One can feel that there is a sense of ill-defined guilt, which is the guilt of the survivor in Miller's plays. In fact, the terror of Nazi persecution drove Miller to immigrate to America and forced him to revise his perception of human nature.

At the end of the play, the saintly and idealized sacrifices of Victor which Walter resents have changed into a feeling of vengeance and hostility. In fact, it may be something more than revenge that stops Victor from responding; it can be the sudden change that Walter is trying to make after twenty-eight years. This makes Victor unripe psychologically and physically for such a radical change in life and work. It is a realistic recognition of one's ability and condition. Furthermore, he may never forgive Walter because he had a duty and fled, as opposed to Victor, who remained quiet in the face of the assault to his dignity. This asserts the idea that man is responsible for his life's absurdity. In this respect, Miller believes that absurd feeling results from the failure of social and personal values and not from the human condition. This is a wealthy society in which only matter rules and people are at the mercy of money. This imperfection of man and society is a reality that must be accepted, but it is not in any way surrendered to despair. It is necessary to accept one's actions, despite the fact that it implies the disintegration of human connections and dignity, for which Victor and Walter pay a high price for it.

Sabine Kozdon (2005) suggests the term "life review" to Miller's character as "a protagonist who tries to narrate and review past events from his perspective; these memories —often take on the shape of a search or a quest for meaning". (p.233). Victor himself experiences an internal turmoil when he suspects whether he achieves anything by standing by his father.

Victor's immature and static style of life reflects the furniture, which have been preserved in a small room for sixteen years. Victor has lived and dedicated his life to his father as though there was no other alternative for him. Now he is trapped in a permanent state of becoming rather than being. He does not react to the positive actions of Solomon and Walter as if he made one choice that defects all other prospects even the positive ones. In this way, Victor is standing still in a moving and changeable world.

According to John Frow's observations on memory (2007), he argues that "memory rather than being the repetition of physical traces of the past, is a construction of it under conditions and constraints determined by the present" (p. 153). Thus, *The Price* focuses on memory, which leads to identity reconstruction, and the significance of good and negative emotions in remembering crucial events in memory, which leads to identity building or deconstruction. Traumatic memories are an intriguing material for theatre since of their vivid and distressing nature. Traumatic memory imagery can be compared to the symptoms of the plague, according to Antonin Artaud (1974): "The plague takes dormant images, latent disorders and suddenly carries them to the point of the most extreme gestures. Theatre also takes gestures and develops them to the limit. Just like the plague, it refuges the links between what does and does not exist in material nature" (p.18). It is clear that Victor is in a condition of suspecting the criteria of rights and wrongs because of his lack of self-assertion and understanding. To him, rights and wrongs became deceitful and obscure that one is no more able to be unmistakable about them and that is exactly what confuses the two brothers. Victor behaves according to his emotion and heart when he says, "What about the inside of his head?" (Miller, 2008, II, p.430).

Then he meditates on the consequence and feels actual regret for wasting his facility on an immature motivation. Walter, in contrast, listens to the voice of the mind, finds his way in business, and achieves his dreams, but recently he contemplates the correctness of his behavior in the past. With this irresolute nature along with his hesitation to accept responsibility for his own fate, Victor can only avoid distressing realities by withdrawing into illusion. Therefore, Walter admits the urgent necessity to admit the existence of individual weaknesses and assume responsibility for one's actions. The emotional perspectives of the two brothers' conflict about the authentic personal damage to the father are clear in Victor's words:

**Victor:** "What are you trying to do, turn it into a dream? And perfectly fit! What about the inside of his death? The man was ashamed to go into the street! ... How can you say that to me? I could have left him with your five dollars a month? I'm sorry, you can't brainwash me-if you got a hook in your mouth don't try to stick it into mine. You want to make up for things; you don't come around to make fools out of people. I didn't invent my life ... You had a responsibility here and you walked on it... You can go. I'll send your half" (Miller, 2008, II, p.430).

Esther, Victor's wife, shares his skepticism and turmoil. She is married for 37 years since she was nineteen, and now, at the age of forty-six, she is dissatisfied with their life. She loves Victor but is disturbed by his uncertainty and frustration which caused the monotony of their life. She suffers from bouts of depression, which she seeks to alleviate by drinking. She is on the verge of a nervous breakdown and being under medical supervision. Esther has learned from experience when she remarks that her mother once told her that she can never believe what she sees. She is unlike her husband who sticks to his narrow-mindedness. Victor and Esther's relationship is now on collapsed. This difference resides in Esther's nature of requesting facts that alone can comfort the two.

Each of the brothers has proved to the other what he has known and dared not face. Victor survives with an assertive will, but Walter persists that Victor's efforts in the past were unnecessary. The separation of the two brothers is due to the different degrees of affection they gave and received from their father who is in need of his son's fidelity after the crash. All the characters are desperately shocked by the failure of love and are bewildered by the treachery and cruelty of human relationships. As a result, they take shelter in illusion and play the role of the victim as Victor does, or turns to alcohol as Esther does. Walter is the best, for he has learned from the mistakes of the past and of business and tries to establish genuine human relationships. Being all trapped in an illusory, deceptive world, none of them is able to discover or create any test of the bases on which his actions have been founded.

Walter endeavors to convey to Victor that human failure can be traced not to some indefinable animosity in the universe or to the disaster of a particular social system; rather, it is due to the individual's own failure to recognize and at the same time realize the significance of some kind of human relationship. Solomon underlines the message to accept the price long as one's life is in one's hands. These words emphasize the usefulness of speculating about the

past and the necessity of forgiving oneself as well as others. Miller asserts that, although Walter obviously understands reality and is committed to take responsibility for his conduct, he still lacks the moral sensibility of Victor.

Difficult circumstances define people as victims and oppressors because of human imperfection. The Price confirms the need to acknowledge man's freedom of action and at the same time displays the outcome of this action. Victor denies his freedom of choice; he tries in vain to justify his failure by referring to his effort as a personal and social necessity. But Walter's subsequent experimentation makes Victor's failure entirely his own personality. What interests Miller is how the public image is intended to reveal the inner reality of the personality. Miller attaches great importance to questions of identity. That is the reason behind Miller's attempt to seek moderate, unselfishness, and rational commitment rather than the frantic, egocentric, since success, like a failure, has its price "The tragedy of man is perhaps the only significant thing about him. What I am after is to get an audience leaving the theatre with an exultant feeling from seeing somebody on stage facing life, fighting against the eternal odds, not conquering, but perhaps inevitably being conquered. Individual life is made significant just by struggle". (Williams, 1966, p.116)

Tragically, the implication of these memories of the characters reveals their ongoing compassion for one another. Unfortunately, this affection has gone unspoken for a very long time. Both brothers fail to transcend and convince the other of their justification and eventually, Victor fails to find a way to love his brother since he is unable to pardon him, though Walter hopes for love which seems by now unattainable. The past which both had embroidered to suit their own purposes stands as a wall between them. As a result, the Franzes remain entrapped in their past. Walter's regret does not remark any sign of reconciliation with Victor, since he does not learn only a slightly more positive thing than despair. Therefore, there is a call to change such a society and the process of change starts with the man who must courageously face reality and react in a more responsible way.

Domestic memory exists within the core of *The Price* where the family is portrayed as a disordered or even collapsed institution of the American community. This theme is a recurring idea in Miller's play that is bridged between two generations: the old generation and the young generation. Miller's priority in this play is on revisiting the past, but still the memory is haunting, and its ghosts revive in the present. The ghosts of the past haunt the

brothers in this play, as the father becomes a symbol of the haunting past. The brothers' fatherly heritage runs deep in their blood, and the father's betrayal has returned to haunt them in the present. Therefore, Miller's setting of the problematic past, its shadows, and its implications in the present is the essence of the post-memory theory. Thus, Miller's use of memory as a motivating factor in the events of his drama is what makes him so close to the concepts of the post-memory theory.

Miller discusses the failure of being an idealist advocating a perfectionist idea of the man just like Victor who pay too much for his inability to compromise. He insists on bringing about the past that holds unbearable truth for the sake of a good change but things are being to be complicated to the worse. Despite the fact, that Walter has presented significant assistance to Victor in removing the illusions of the past, he has been unable to walk away triumphant from the confrontation. As the concluding words of Victor addressed towards Walter demonstrate his lack of "moral sensibility" both towards the father and towards Victor. (Bigsby, p.227)

**Victor:** "You came for the old handshake, didn't you? The okay! And you end up with the respect, the career, the money, and best of all, the thing that nobody else can tell you so you can believe it - that you're one hell of a guy and never harmed anybody in your life. Well, you won't get it, not till I get mine!" (Miller, 2008, II. p.113).

If Walter had cheated Victor in the past, Victor had also betrayed and deceived himself either by failing to catch the father's actual financial status or by blaming others for his own personal flaws. The best we can do is confront our destruction with courage. Miller uses the eternal need for conflict as a way of making things fall into their place. In other words, an approach to reach self-realization though too late, or to reveal things even though painful so man should be able to receive such shocks, otherwise, he would collapse. Generally, all of Miller's characters achieve self-realization and insight at the end of the play as the last lesson to be achieved.

Miller's drama asserts the unquestioning bottom of reality. He has a catastrophic perspective of "illusion," which causes the victim shock and pain. Victor's failure as a husband is shown in this first memory flashback. The second memory concerns Victor's failure to follow the quest for success when he lost the opportunity to go to college like his



brother Walter. Victor's delusions only serve to ruin him. And, while his efforts are not heroic, as he would have it, he fails to recognize himself as he actually is. Walter represents the success that Victor never attained and that he cannot attain. His confrontational behavior with his brother derives from the particulars of the defects of capitalism. Thus, the core motive of the play is the conflict between Victor's conscience and his success "We are dealing here with a bodily memory, an organic intelligence, whose applicability reaches far beyond the experiences of mutilation. We are dealing with a phenomenon akin to repression, in which a traumatic occurrence leaves the subject forever trapped in a past future which is no longer accessible to him/her". (Maude, 2002, p.111). Finally, the research asserts that trans-generational experiences and collective memories can impact the formation of the identity of the identity of second-generation. It argues that what occurred in the past will influence the subsequent generations, and they will be perpetually haunted by it.

### **Conclusion:**

Miller is a representative playwright and critic of twentieth-century American society who strives to properly deal with American life in his plays by bringing out the inherent struggle between the individual and society. The theme of confrontation is expressed between two generations in the play. Each generation thinks extremely in a way different from the others on. Naturally, the members of the young generation are more socially and morally conscious, they have a sense of brotherhood. They were unlike the old generation, who might have been exposed to the shocks of the first and second world wars and who are suffering so much that they saw wrong as right out of their perplexities. The younger ones are more able to contain the shocks and react sanely.

However, the study is beyond a simple reversal or re-problematization of human decisions. Miller deconstructs the apparent inequalities between both the brothers by delving into the depths of their moral decisions and the ambiguities within each individual's own attributes. Human nature and predicament studies, as well as the endeavor to define man's identity in the cosmos, are prominent issues in American literature. In this drama, the characters' stories were about suffering, doubt, and salvation. The confrontation between man and harsh memories became a devastating battle for the suffering individual. The play ultimately concludes with the characters should acknowledge that the ideal world they hoped to live in just didn't really exist. Victor and Walter are brothers who work to bury their pasts in order to

live script-free lives. Another important aspect is the juxtaposition between the past and present which is shown as an important component of comprehending his plays. Miller depicts man as a victim of his own conflicting desires and struggles for self-realization. Miller regards the lack of stability, the destruction of memory, and the conflict between reality and illusion as the main sources of modern-day sorrow.

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