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Title:

***Memory, Social Oppression and Psychological Disorder in
Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Arthur
Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949)***

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Dedication

To the soul of my mother who balanced my life with her affection and love.

May God have mercy on her and reward her with paradise

To all my family members and my friends especially Karim and Asma

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Enclosed Declaration

I, Miss Selmani Souhila declare on my honor to have written this work without any external help nor to have taken it from any other resource than those cited within. All the texts published or not, including the electronic versions, are referred to as such. This work is not submitted to any other board of exam in a similar form, whether in Algeria or abroad, at the university or at another institution, by myself or by another.

Date: 15/09/2014

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Abstract

*Borrowing concepts from Henri Bergson's theory Matter and Memory (1896) and Freire Paulo's theory of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1981) this paper examines and discusses Anton Chekhov and Arthur Miller's depiction of “**past reemergence**” and “**Social oppression**” in their well-known works The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Death of a Salesman (1949). Indeed, past is deeply expressed through stream of consciousness that comes back from time to time to disturb and punish the characters. Both Anton Chekhov and Arthur Miller illustrate the past reemergence and self punishment through depicting the enigma and complexity of their characters' thoughts and inner feelings in addition, to social oppression which threatened their previous serenity this what may illustrate the deterioration of characters psychological states. By referring to some themes like: fanatic struggle and failure, betrayal and destruction, which led the characters either to compromise or commit suicide as final solution to rest in peace.*

I. Introduction

During late nineteenth century, Russia and America have known great political, social and economic crises, nevertheless the arts flourished during the 1800s and many writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and many others penned great works of literature. Then the twentieth century came with its enormous changes. New theories, such as Darwinism, Marxism and the relativity theory were becoming more and more notorious and contributed to weaken the old certainties and bury definitely the notion of absolute truth. In the middle of these changes added to immigration waves and increasing urbanization, a group of writers developed new ways of writing which created an innovative literature known as the modern literature.

Modernist writers shifted their focus from the realist tradition which focuses on the external and objective world to the experimental tradition which emphasizes the personal experience and individual's life. The issues of **past reemergence** and **Social Oppression** may seem like old-fashioned topics, but it is worth mentioning that are still relevant since many thinkers, politicians, philosophers have been engaged in explaining these terms. The present study proposes to deal with themes of **memory** and **Social oppression** which can lead to **psychological decline** and **suicide** in Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949).

The subjects of **Psychological decline** and **Suicide** have recently become an important area of research within Modern Literature. **Past Reemergence** and **Social Oppression** for example have spread across the world and continue to remold human societies. In literature, , many writers such as Anton Chekhov and Arthur Miller devoted their writings to express their political opinions and to denounce the different aggressive ways used by the upper class in capitalist societies. The two theorist's works *Matter and Memory* by Henry Bergson from

France and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Freire Paulo from Brazil investigate the issues of **Past Reemergence** and **Social Oppression** in a deeper manner and approach them from different angles. So, *memory* and *social oppression* are directly present in the form of personal recollections of the two plays' characters, in addition to the *psychological disorder* from which most of them suffer what led them at the end either to compromise or to suicide.

Before setting our issue, we shall review what other writers and critics have said about Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949).

a. The Review of the Literature

At their publication, Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949) were perceived as two of the most significant literary masterpieces. It elicits a number of interesting critical responses. The Cherry Orchard (1904) for instance, is considered as the master piece of the nineteenth centuries Russian literature. Anais Nin affirms the presence of **memory** in Chekhov's work and the great impact of the **past** on present in The Cherry Orchard (1904), where he says "we don't see things as they are. We see them as we are"¹ He adds that everyone associated different things in a different manner according to everyone's past, pains and hopes². It is the case in The Cherry Orchard (1904), where the inanimate objects can reflect the character's inner state. Ranevsky, for example, perceives her dead mother walking through the orchard in Act One. For her, the orchard is a personal relic of her childhood.³

Moreover, other critics argue that The Cherry Orchard (1904) portrays the Russian society in state of flux which witnessed the down fall of the Aristocratic class and the rise of the Bourgeois class, Brown R D and Gupta S assert that the sale of the Cherry Orchard demonstrates the old order giving way to the new⁴ Besides, they add that the play portrays

the social, political and historical context in which the play performed and viewed ⁵. Hence, Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard (1904) is an “**allegory of class struggle**” which reflects **social oppression**; a society filled with crimes and injustice and most Russians were poor farmers ⁶.

For its part, Arthur Miller's play has received some other critical attention. Indeed, it is said that Miller addresses his themes but in an indirect way by selecting an appropriate mode of writing which is allusive, allegorical and far from being clear and direct. Thus, Arthur Miller can be considered as one of the most prolific playwright. Indeed, Christopher Bigsby in his Arthur Miller: A Critical Study contends that theatre for Miller was a way of expressing the struggle by individuals to protect themselves against **social changes** and the threat of total destruction ⁷. Bigsby wants to show the connection between individuals and society and the struggle they lead in their everyday life ⁸. **Social Oppression** has always existed in America.

b. Issue and working Hypothesis

From this review of literature about Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949), one can notice that many studies have previously dealt with the two plays. However, little attention has been devoted to the analysis of the themes of **oppression, memory** and **psychological decline**. This work attempts to add a new perspective in the analysis of the two plays. It approaches them from both sociological and psychological perspectives. Indeed, it analyses the notions of **social oppression** and **memory** as they are articulated in the plays. Our intention throughout this dissertation is to demonstrate intend to show how the state of experiencing harmful memories prevents **past remembrance** from being separate from the present ones. In this analysis, we will show how the **power of memory** keeps both past and present experiences intermingled within an individual's psyche

and hones over his/her stability. In this analysis, we will concentrate on the study of three main ideas. First, we will consider the idea of **past perception** through **images, remembrance** and **memory**. Second, we move to analyze the plays from **a sociological viewpoint** by clarifying the position of **characters** and their everyday struggle within the **oppressing society**. To end with **Psychological Disorder** from which most character suffer what pushes him either to compromise or commits suicide.

Endnotes

¹ Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi, “Multiplicity of meanings in Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard” in *a Journal Lapis Lazuli -An International Literary* (Vol.3, No.1, Spring 2013), 2

² Ibid

³ Ibid, 5

⁴ Brown R. D. and Gupta, S. “Aestheticism and Modernism: Debates in Twentieth Century Literature”: Routledge (London, 2005), 59

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Christopher Bigsby, “Arthur Miller: A Critical Study” in *Theatre Journal* : Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2005), 210

⁸ Ibid, 210

II- Methods and materials

a. Methodological Outline

It is our intention to undertake the study of the two plays The Cherry Orchard (1904) by Anton Chekhov and Death of a Salesman (1949) by Arthur Miller following the IMRAD method. First, the topic is introduced. Then, the review of some of the literature written on both the plays has helped us to set problematic and expose our hypothesis. In the Methods section, we display the outline to follow for the fulfillment of this dissertation while in the Materials a Historical account of Social Changes in both America and Russia is given. Furthermore, we present Henry Bergson's theory of *Matter and Memory* (1896) together with Freire Paulo's theory *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. All in all, we will discuss the themes of **Past reemergence and memory**, **Social Oppression**, and **Psychological decline** under the light of the two theories.

b. Materials

Because Chekhov's play The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949) deal primarily and importantly with the issue of Past Reemergence and Social oppression, I find that is more relevant for my research to make an appeal to Henry Bergson's theory *Matter and Memory* and to Freire Paulo's theory on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

1- Henry Bergson's Theory: Matter and Memory.

Bergson defines **Memory** as:

*“ . . . **memory**, laden with the whole of **the past**, responds to the appeal of the present state by two simultaneous movements, one of translation, by which it moves in its entirety to meet experience, thus contracting more or less, though without dividing, with a view to action; and the other of rotation upon itself, by which it turns toward the situation*

of the moment, presenting to it that side of itself which may prove to be the most useful”¹.

Bergson asserts that though the characters escape their memory, the past is always here because the past is the active agent which comes out to meet the present. For Bergson, **The memory images** and their implied possible worlds have their own rhythm, their own movements and logic since they are moving towards a decision. Bergson calls this movement of the past towards the present “**contraction**”² from the point of view of present perception. However, there is an expansion of memory images in consciousness since a region of the past is becoming available to it. Bergson claims that there are two major types of memories:

“Those that become available during the generation process (internally generated forms) and those that are linked with the amplification process (forms that are triggered by an environmental stimulus)”³

In addition, Bergson claims that some innate memories constitute all of the memories we ever have; however, only few of it can be selected to become our remembered histories. Just as every person carries within him a set of antibodies that can anticipate and ‘recognize’⁴. He adds that, *“any person can carry on a complete set of memories which can anticipate or characterize every possible world for that person. Environmental stimuli serve only to activate various portions of the innate repertoire”⁵* Bergson goes on explaining the concept of **traditional memory** which is a memory based on an external stimulus which registered in the brain and then leaves a kind of mental representation called a *trace* from which **something** like the original stimulus **can be reconstructed**⁶.

Bergson moves on to clarify how does only few memories could come back to the present, so he claims that what we need to discover is how a choice is affected among an infinite number of recollections which all resemble in some way the present perception⁷,

Bergson goes far in his explanations; when **remembering** is caused by *current perception* or *reminder*, then a series of images and past perceptions become accessible to the rememberer. These **memory images** must be related to the existing perception, they must be similar or equivalent to the current cue ⁸. Henri Bergson's theory *Matter and Memory* describes how past can come back at any moment and memories are not only reemerged when characters need that but also when they escape it. The past comes back through an act called; **Remembering** ⁹ which is an act that led any person to recover his past whether he wants that or it is an external thing that makes him do that. Bergson, therefore, focuses more on *the concept of Images* where he relates this word Image to the senses ¹⁰. He goes further in the distinction he makes between **soul** and **body**. So, the body is a performer which responds to the influence of the objects by which it is surrounded. It obtains actions from the outside world, and transmits them to internal motor mechanisms. So, the body is just a simple image among other images which exist in the universe. Nevertheless, the only difference between the body and other images is the ability to react upon the external stimulus.

In addition, Bergson gave an alternative meaning to memory. He argued that memory is not only a faculty of repetition or reproduction of what had occurred. Accordingly, he suggested that the past reemerges under two distinct forms: in motor mechanisms and in independent recollections ¹¹. The first suggests that the identification of a past action lies in the action itself. It is related to a certain kind of mechanical behavior that people get through repetition. It will be stored on the memory after passing through different successive segments, like a habit for instance which is learned through repeating the same action and this kind of memory it depends on our will to remember it or not. Yet, the personal memory is spontaneous and natural. It records images and events of the previous experiences as they occur in time and space without missing any event matter ¹².

Bergson adds that any person can identify the experienced perception through the combination of the past with the present action. Indeed, **the previous image** stored in the brain tends frequently **to connect the past with the present perception** ¹³ by adding that memory accumulates within the body a certain type of mechanism which stands it ready to react to external present objects. So, the practical function of memory is the use of past experience for present action.

Paulo Freire's Theory: Pedagogy of the Oppressed

As a field of academic specialization, sociology is a field of research which deals with techniques of discourse that analyze, explain, and respond to the cultural questions of oppression. Indeed, in this stream of thinking, the Dictionary of Sociology provides a detailed definition of social oppression:

*Social oppression is a concept that describes a relationship between groups or categories of people in which **a dominant group benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward a subordinate group**. The relationship between whites and blacks in the United States and South Africa, between social classes in many industrial societies, between men and women in most societies, between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland - all have **elements of social oppression** in that the organization of social life enables those who dominate to oppress others. Relationships between groups and relationships between groups and social categories, it should not be confused with the oppressive behavior of individuals* ¹⁴.

In the first chapter of Paulo Freire's theory ***Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1994)*** is an insight into **the inner disorder** that **an oppressed man** is experiencing. It portrays his recognition and awareness of his otherness. It explains his trouble in trying to locate his identity in a society shaped with injustice and domination. The work includes Freire's anti-oppression ideology. Freire Paulo claims that **oppression is a man-made law**; it is a historical fact which makes somebody less human by taking away his individuality as a human being ¹⁵.

Oppression is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed ¹⁶. **Society became a jungle ruled by the most powerful**; the oppressor objectively exploits the oppressed or hinders his/her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when softened by fake kindness ¹⁷.

Freire, therefore, in his theory focuses on the relationships existing between the so-called oppressed or those who belong to the lower class in society and the oppressor who took the monopoly and exploit them. To explain these relationships, Freire Paulo uses many inherent and consistent concepts like **“Human beings”** which refers to **the oppressor** and **“Others”** referring to **the oppressed**. Indeed, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he investigates the new climate of egoism that characterizes different classes of a society where the oppressors do not recognize their domination on having more as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves ¹⁸. Their greed for having more and belonging to the possessing class blinds them from the fact that they exploit others thus, creates a new belief which is having more is an inalienable right, a right they acquired through their own “effort”, with their "courage to take risks." ¹⁹.

Freire goes on by explaining the concept of the **sadistic drive** which is **a pleasure in complete domination over others**. So, the aim of sadism is to transform a “man” into a “thing”, something “animate” into something “inanimate” ²⁰. Freire Paulo explains that the oppressor cannot recognize that having is a condition of being, and this condition is necessary for all women and men ²¹. The landscape of oppression transforms everything into objects; “earth”, “property”, “people themselves”, “time” everything is reduced to the status of objects, as well as humanity that was transformed to a thing ²². Further, after the oppressed’ long suffrance and the harsh endurance they witnessed; the oppressed feel an overwhelming

attraction toward the oppressors and their way of life ²³, Freire adds that being as the oppressor became an oppressed dream; the oppressed do his impossible, to imitate them ²⁴ and this phenomenon spreads more in the middle classes where women and men of the middle class try hardly to taste and be among the upper class members. ²⁵.

After the preceding explanations given by Freire Paulo about the feeling of **hatred** between the oppressed and the oppressor, Freire illustrates with peasants when he said: “*The peasant feels inferior to the boss because the boss seems to be the only one who knows things and is able to run things*” ²⁶. The peasants find themselves dependent to their superior because they were marginalized for a long time thus, make them accept to live under the power of their bosses because they are poor and not because they are weak or lazy as the oppressor claims and this emotion of despair led the oppressed to what Fromm calls “**necrophilic behavior**” which is the destruction of life; their own or that of their oppressed fellows ²⁷; the oppressed becomes violent expressing his feeling of sufferance by drinking and beating his wife and children ²⁸.

Paulo Freire’s essay entitled ***Pedagogy of the Oppressed*** describes what really means to be **poor** and **inferior**. Poor people were judged not only on their **character** but also on their **possession**. Not only they must be poor to please the rich, but they must be inferior in relation to the oppressor. Thus, it is a constant burden to carry around, forever fixed in an unequal relation to the world of oppression.

The relevance of Freire Paulo theory of ***Pedagogy of the Oppressed*** and Bergson’s ***Matter and Memory*** on the following research is based on different points. On the one hand, the theory of oppression offers the possibility of identifying and analyzing the theme of Oppression within the two plays Anton Chekhov’s the Cherry Orchard (1904) and Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman (1949). This echoes the main subject of the two plays which

center upon the terrific experiences witnessed by characters in a society driven by changes and oppression. To illustrate this view, we shall refer to the two plays' characters that are witnessing distressful moments of misery and despair in Russia as well as in America. On the other hand, we will explain how past reemergence and social oppression can lead to psychological decline which may end by suicide.

We will divide the work into three chapters. In the first chapter, we will deal with the theme of **memory and past reemergence** by referring to the theory of memory as articulated in Henri Bergson's writings. Within the second chapter, we will discuss the idea of **social oppression** in the two plays by making appeal to Freire Paulo's theory *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In the last chapter we will relate the discussed themes Memory and Social Oppression to explain how can the two factors led to a **psychological decline** which may push the victims to commit suicide. We will close our dissertation with a conclusion that will provide a condensed restatement of the ideas developed throughout this research paper.

Endnotes

¹ McNamara, Patrick. *Bergson's Matter and Memory and the Modern Selectionist Theories of Memory*, 215-231. Massachusetts: Academic Press, Inc, 1996, 168

² Ibid, 221

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid, 219

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid, 227

⁸ Ibid, 221

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 1896. Trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: Allen and Unwin, 1911), 1

¹² Ibid, 92

¹³ Ibid, 93

¹⁴ Johnson, A. G. *Privilege, power and difference*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 39

¹⁵ Freire Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: The penguin Group, 1996, 44

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid, 55

¹⁸ Ibid, 57

¹⁹ Ibid, 59

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid, 58

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid, 62

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid, 63

²⁷ Ibid, 65

²⁸ Ibid

2- Materials

a. Historical Background (Capitalism in Russia)

Russia is a very large land of a great natural beauty. Its strategic position provided her a fertile land, thus gave birth to some rich landowners that used the serfs' hands to cultivate the land. Serfdom evolved from agricultural slavery of the Roman Empire and spread through Europe around the 10th century and the origins of serfdom in Russia are traced to Kievan Rus in the 11th century. A Serf is a laborer who is bound to the land, serfs differed from slaves in that serfs were not property themselves and could not be sold apart from the land on which they worked. Russia was ruined by the system of serfdom, a system which prevailed until 1861. It was unlike the institution of American slavery ¹. The people, still living in their communes, clung to the figment of their freedom, not really understanding that they were slaves, but feeling rather that they were freemen whose sacred rights had been cruelly invaded. That they were giving to hard masters the fruit of their toil on their own lands ².

It was the peasants who bore the weight of an expanded civilization which they did not share. In the 13th to 15th centuries, feudal dependency applied to a significant number of peasants, but serfdom as we know it was still not a widespread phenomenon. The expected increase in prosperity from the new system did not immediately come. The revenues were less than before. Bands of fugitive serfs were fleeing from their masters and joining the community of free Cossacks on the Don. Lands were untilled, there was misery, and at last there was famine, and then discontent and demoralization extending to the upper classes, and a diminished income which finally bore upon the Tsar himself.

In the mid 15th century, the right of certain categories of peasants in some votchinas to leave their master was limited to a period of one week before and after the so called "Yuri's Day" November 26. The Sudebnik of 1497 officially confirmed this time limit as universal

for everybody and also established the amount of the "break-away" called "pozhiloye". The legal code of Ivan III of Russia.

From 1721 to 1816, Russia knew a great increase in the number of serfs. Bourgeois were allowed to own serfs this was to encourage industrialization. They received no land in the emancipation. Landlords deliberately increased the number of domestic serfs when they anticipated serfdom's demise. In 1798, Ukrainian landlords were banned from selling serfs apart from land³. From 1861 some Emancipation Manifestos proclaimed the emancipation of the serfs on private estates and of the domestic serfs. By this edict more than 23 million people received their liberty. Serfs were granted the full rights of free citizens, gaining the rights to marry without having to gain consent, to own property and to own a business. The Manifesto prescribed that peasants would be able to buy the land from the landlords⁴.

b. Historical Background (The Failure of the American Dream)

The United State of America is also a vast continent, well blessed with abundance of natural resources. In addition, its strategic geographical location gives it a good climate. For many immigrants, the United States of America signifies paradise on earth, where anyone can be free and rich and this idea go back to the period of puritans. So, the old American Dream was the dream of the Puritans, men and women contend to accumulate their modest fortunes, a little at a time. Year by year the **American Dream** became a national ethos of the United States, a set of ideals in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility achieved through hard work. In the definition of the American Dream by James Truslow Adams in 1931, *"life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement"*⁵ regardless of **social class** or circumstances of birth the idea of the American Dream is rooted in the United States Declaration of Independence which proclaims that "all men are created equal"

Historically, the Dream originated in the mystique regarding *frontier life* and the Americans started to imagine the Lands further off are still better than those upon which they already settled ⁶. Nevertheless, the meaning of the American Dream has changed over the course of history, and includes both personal components such as: home ownership and upward mobility. For example in the 19th century, many Germans fled the failed 1848 Revolution and they welcomed the political freedoms in the New World, those German emigrants come into a country free from the despotism, privileged orders and monopolies, intolerable taxes, and constraints in matters of belief and conscience. However, the late nineteenth century was a period of tremendous change; America had known great political and economic crises due to the industrial rapid growth, in addition to society which was filled with crimes and injustice.

As far as the authors were concerned, they always tried present to report the events in a form of novels, poems and plays as Anthon Chekhov and Arthur Miller did. They were like translators of all the oppressions people have witnessed. Anton Chekhov for instance, throughout The cherry Orchard (1949) succeeded to portray the bad conditions where the Russian citizens were living during the mid 18th and 19th centuries and pushed the Russian citizens to improve their situations. Arthur Miller is confirmed through his play Death of a Salesman (1949) the failure of the American Dream by shedding light on the landscape of oppression where most Americans were living.

Endnotes

¹ *Emancipation reform of 1861*, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

² Ibid

³ History of Russia, from Wikipedia, free encyclopedia

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Adams, James Truslow. (1931). *The Epic of America* (Little, Brown, and Co. 1931)

⁶ John, Brueggemann. *Rich, Free, and Miserable: The Failure of Success in America*": Rowman & Littlefield; 2010, 233

III. Results

In this part of our research paper, we intend to present the findings reached after the discussion section of the issue that we have raised in the introduction. Our work takes into account the notion of Memory and Social Oppression in The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Death of the Salesman (1949) in relation to Freire Paulo's theory *Psychological of the Oppressed*, and the idea of **memory** as it is explained by the philosopher Henri Bergson in his book *Matter and Memory*.

In the first chapter of our discussion, we came to the following results. The characters of Chekov's The Cherry Orchard and Miller's Death of a Salesman live in state of paradox: either to forget or to remember their heavy past that comes repeatedly to hunt them. The past according to Bergson is not recalled according to the rules of logical time, but psychologically where past, present and future tenses mixed into one single whole. In our analysis of memory, we came to same result that the characters of the two plays are prisoners of their past. They live a timeless present through the power of memory which joins their present and past times into single moments.

In addition, in our analysis of Social Oppression in the second chapter, we came to some results that the characters of both plays are victims of a tyrannical social system. Oppression according to Freire Paulo is not a natural rule, yet it is a man-made law which tends to exploit and dehumanizes weak people in a society shaped with disorder. These characters suffered from *social changes* which define the character's state of psychological disturbance as an outcome of a sudden confrontation with unusual shocking changes that turned their life upside down.

In the last chapter we came to the subsequent findings. Characters in both plays; Chekov's The Cherry Orchard and Miller's Death of a Salesman are suffering from some

psychological troubles because of their painful past which returns frequently to destabilize their steadiness, adding up the oppressive society which oppresses the character's liberty and kills their identity as human beings. To illustrate the psychological decline we explained some factors in relation to every character in the play like; Betrayal, Obsession, Fanatic Struggle and Failure, Destruction and Theft.

At the end of our discussion, we have concluded that the two plays Anton Chekov's The Cherry Orchard and Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman are a reflection of the chaos of the modern world in period of flux and great changes. In addition, the substantial past which came back frequently to punish and hones the character's present life from one hand and the Psychological decline most of the characters suffer from, on the other to everyone's reaction, either to compromise or death.

IV. Discussion

1- Chapter One: Past Reemergence and Memory

A) In *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)

Chekhov is concerned with the sense of the past, which is brought back to the present to destabilize the character and justify the punishment undergone. He wants to explore the emotional resonance of the past of his characters. Bergson for instance asserts that:

*The past is important, the way it constitutes the present (and hence both prepare for the future, but also allows for the future to be open and creative). The future is open and creative because **the past** changes with each passing present: there is a new condition for each new action¹*

Though the past is hurtful and shameful, it remains an important period that can come back to the present at any moment. In *The Cherry Orchard* for instance, the past hones the present and the characters' choices and actions. Bergson defines the **past** as being "*a cloud, a "nebulous mass" that condenses into water droplets. As it moves closer into focus, it tends to "imitate perception," but it retains something of its virtuality*"². This means that it takes on an image, but can still be transformed into other images. In *The Cherry Orchard*, **past** is always present either consciously or not. To speak about the past is to speak about **memory** so, in this play "*Memory is seen both as a source of **personal identity** and as a **burden** preventing the attainment of happiness*"³; some characters struggle to remember their glorious past, instead others deny their past and struggle to forget it.

One of the most aims of Anton Chekhov through writing his play *The Cherry Orchard* is to demonstrate **the place of individuals** within the sense of past; a past which is brought back to the present to threaten the characters. In this play Chekhov shows the struggle that characters lead either to go back to their glorious past fleeing from their disastrous

present or a struggle to forget their painful memories by moving forward toward a beautiful future. For **Mrs. Ranevsky**, the past represents both her beautiful childhood that she likes always to remember and a burden from which she runs away in order to forget. The Cherry Orchard symbolizes the happy youth of Mrs. Ranevsky where she has the best memories being a child of an Aristocratic family when she said:

*Oh my childhood, my innocent childhood! This is the nursery where I slept and I used to look out at the orchard from here. When I wake up every morning happiness awoke with me*⁴

Nevertheless, the loss of her husband and her little boy makes her change her view and past became like a ghost that follows her wherever she goes, and the weighty burden of her sad memories becomes much heavier than before, this what pushed Mrs. Ranevsky to moan by saying: *“if I could only shake off the heavy burden that weights me down, if only I could forget my past”*⁵ and the only way she chooses to escape her sad memories was her flight to Paris where she spent all her money on food and clothes believing that by leaving the cherry orchard estate she would succeed to clean her brain from all the painful memories that she already experienced. Mrs. Ranevsky believes that what was gone could never come back again, for her to be far from the estate and the river where she lost her son would be the best solution to forget and to be happy when she said: *“... In the river here my little boy was drowned and I went abroad, went right away, never meaning to return or see the river again. I shut my eyes and run away, not knowing what I was doing”*⁶ However, both Chekhov and Bergson proves that past can come back at any moment and memories are not only reemerged when characters need that, but also when they escape it⁷

Furthermore, the past comes back through an act called **Remembering** which is an act that led any person to recover his past whether he wants that or it is an external stimulus which may make him do that. After the bad experiences that Mrs. Ranevsky got in Paris, she changes her view about the past then escapes her present to take refuge in her past forgetting

that in the cherry orchard itself as it symbolizes her beautiful childhood but every corner of that estate contains memories of her dead boy. As Bergson went deeper in explaining the concept of **traditional memory** which is a memory based on an external stimulus stored in the brain leaving a kind of mental representation called a *trace* from which something like the original stimulus can be renovated ⁸. According to Bergson the recognition of a present perception must be first situated in its past context. The sitting which surrounds the present perception is then not a present sitting but a past one. It is only through this process that an individual draws the connection between what he perceives in the present with his past memories. In fact, what happens for Mrs. Ranevsky since her arrival to the estate where her daughter expects that before they arrived by saying:

*Anya [thoughtfully]. It's **six years** since father died. And a month after that our brother Grisha was drowned in the river. He was a lovely little boy, only seven years old. It was too much for mother, she went away, just dropped everything and went. [Shudders.] How well I understand her, if only she knew. [Pause.] Pitter Trofimov was Grisha's tutor, he might bring back **memories***⁹

For **Lopakhin**, memories are oppressive and harmful, for they are memories of brutal, uncultured peasant upbringing. They conflict with his present identity as a well-heeled businessman. He is always in struggle to forget his painful past and turn a white page for a prosperous future, he feels ashamed about his family's past when he says:

*To be honest, the life we lead is preposterous. My father was a **peasant**, an **idiot** who **understood nothing**, taught me **nothing** and just beat me when he was drunk, with a stick too. As a matter of fact I'm just as big a numskull and idiot myself. I never learned anything and handwriting's awful. A pig could write as well as I do, I'm ashamed to let anyone see it*¹⁰

He is the character more than any other, constantly in charge of driving the play forward; he is its source of energy and action. For past is something that passed. He is a character full of

details, plans and actions; he was the one who offered Ranevsky a loan in order to save The Cherry Orchard, however after her refusal Lopakhin ends up by buying the estate.

In addition to Ranevsky and Lopakhin, **Trofimov** is concerned more with Russia's historical memory. A past which he views as oppressive and needing an explicit renunciation if Russia is to move forward. He is an "Eternal student" as Lopakhin liked to call him. He provided most of the explicit **ideological discussion** in the play. He is someone who idealizes work, as well as the search for truth, decrying the poor living conditions in which most Russians peasants live. And he tries to pay homage to all the serfs that scarified their youths, families, and their souls in the orchard. He even believes that to live in peace everyone in the orchard should redeem;

*All Russia is our orchard. The earth is so wide, so beautiful, so full of wonderful places. [Pause.] think, Anya. Your grandfather, your great grandfather and all your ancestors owned serfs, they owned human souls. Don't you see that from every cherry tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every trunk, men and women are gazing at you? Don't you hear their voices? Owning living souls, that's what has changed you all so completely, those who went before and those alive today, so that your mother, you yourself your uncle_ you don't realize that you're actually living on credit. You're living on other people, the very people you won't even let inside your own front door. We're at least a couple of hundred years behind the times. So far we haven't got anywhere at all and we've no real sense of the past. We just talk in airy generalizations, complain of boredom or drink vodka. But if we're to start living in the present isn't it abundantly clear that we've first got to redeem our past and make a clean break with it? And we can only redeem it by suffering and getting down to some real work for a change. You must understand that Anya*¹¹

For his part, **Firs** lives solely in memory, since most of his speeches in the play relate to what life was like before the serfs got their freedom. He is someone closely connected to the old days where he expressed his great regret for the change that took place in Russia when he said: "yes, those were the days. The serfs had their masters and the masters had their serfs,

but now everything at sixes and sevens and you can't make head or tail of it" ¹². Though the serfs get their freedom, Firs remains always the faithful servant of Mrs. Ranevsky even he regrets strongly the changes happened in Russia after the serfs were freed through saying: *"...when the serfs were freed I was already head valet. But I wouldn't have any of their freedom; I stayed with the master and the mistress"* ¹³. Despite the estate's sale, Firs is still dependent to the family where he was working for a long time.

While each character has his own perspective, there is a rough division between the old and the young. The young tend to view the orchard in a negative light and the old view it more positively. This strengthened the orchard's symbolic identification with the past. For Mrs. Ranevsky, the cherry orchard represents her identity, her childhood a part of herself that she could not leave and forget. Instead, for Lopakhin the cherry orchard means poverty, oppression that he always wishes to erase from his memory and start a new life as a business man. Trofimov, on the other hand, he always perceives in the orchard the faces of the serfs who lived and died in slavery in Ranevsky's estate.

B) In Death of a Salesman (1949)

Very similar to Anthon Chekhov's aim, Arthur Miller's play Death of a Salesman (1946) intends to clarify the idea of **past** and **memories** which hone the present and the character's choices and actions, causing ruin, pain and despair to their lives. Henri Bergson's theory is concerned with individual's place within the perception of the **Past** through **Images**, **Memory** and **Remembrance**. Miller's characters corroborate with much of Henri Bergson writings, for it is difficult to live in peace in a landscape of memories where characters find themselves struggling either to remember or to forget.

Death of a Salesman (1949) depicts the characters' minds which progressively wander back to the past. Through the characters' life, Miller shows that nothing in life comes "next"

but that everything exists together and at the same time within us. Arthur Miller shares the same idea with Bergson on the fact that *“there is no past to be brought forward in a human being, but that **he is his past at every moment** and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to”*¹⁴ That is why there is no linearity in the play’s time; it is rather full of leaps further back and then returning to the present and even speculating about the future.

The importance of memory in Arthur Miller’s play lies in its suggestive descriptions of the inner life of the characters, their thoughts, feelings, and dreams. Through an act of remembrance, in Death of a Salesman memories are recalled to the present according to the interaction between external and internal images as Bergson clarified it in his theory. Indeed, Miller’s reflection of the characters’ internal conflicts stands as a metaphor of the external chaos of their childhood. In relation to Henri Bergson’s theory, Death of a salesman is concerned with actions and reaction between feelings and bodies. It portrays an interaction between the inner and the outside worlds of its character. It is through **memory images** which must be related to the existing perception they must be similar or equivalent to the current cue. Therefore, the characters’ bodies and what they perceive are forms of images. What distinguishes them from other external images is the fact that they are aware of their internal feelings through their senses, while they come to know about the images outside their bodies through perception ¹⁵.

Death of a salesman is a story of images about past experiences that the characters perceive. The play shows how the close relation and interaction of the inner and external worlds lasts in time through the power of memory. For that reason, one can say that Death of a Salesman is all about **Willy Loman**’s memories. It is a vivid representation of his past in the form of reconstructed experiences through the act of **remembrance**. Memory is present in the

form of personal recollections in the play. **To remember means to recover the past.** So, when an individual tries to recollect past memories, he removes himself from his present in order to situate himself within his memories. Besides, he will focus and select the memories which are according to him the most useful. In **Willy's** memories for instance, the past is as alive as what is happening at the moment, sometimes even crashing in to completely overwhelm his mind, like remembering his successful brother Ben; “ *...Boys! Boys! (Young Biff and Happy appear) Listen to this. This is your uncle Ben, a **great man!** Tell my boys, Ben!*” ¹⁶.

Death of a Salesman could now be seen as an “*Alzheimer's play*” ¹⁷ because of its complicated plot. It movingly depicts a man whose mind is progressively wandering back to the past, and its very form is dictated by that journey. Willy wants to seek refuge in the past from the despair of his present life. While, **Biff** memorizes currently when his father betrayed his wife with a woman in Boston through the **act of remembering** with a help of an **environment stimuli**; Biff links his father to his hurtful past after he witnessed the betrayal what gave birth to Biff's hatred for his father and make him fights. Biff is a frail person and to witness a betrayal in childhood led to his imprisonment between the walls of a shameful past, Bergson insists on the idea that none could live out from his memories and past, because some motivating factors make him remember and be always in touch with the memories he rejects and this is well shown in the conversation between Biff and his mother

Biff: he threw me out of this house remember that.

Linda: why did he do that? I never knew why

Biff: because I know he's fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows!

Linda: why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

Biff: just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him that's all I have to say ¹⁸

These **images** are psychologically recalled; they are felt and relieved again once they are remembered. They are not perceived according to the rule of chronological time, but according to the psychological one. Death of a Salesman is a play of a heavy past, which is brought back to the present to threaten the serenity of characters and justify the punishment undergone. Arthur Miller wants to explore the emotional resonance of the past of his characters where he illustrates: “ *I am intrigued by the possibility of handling the scenes from the past not as flashbacks with wigs and costumes that fully suggest another time but as voices and images in Willy’s head that temporarily take him and us somewhere else*” ¹⁹.

Endnotes

¹ John, Protevi. Chapter 3 of Matter and Memory: “*On the survival of images*”

² Ibid

³ The Cherry Orchard Study Guide Artists Repertory Theatre April 22, 2011 – May 22, 201
By Anton Chekhov, Adapted by Richard Kramer Directed by Jon Kretzu

⁴ Chekhov Anton, *Five Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 253

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid, 263

⁷ Bergson, H. *Matter and memory*. Transl. by N. M. Paul & W. S. Palmer: New York, 1988,
221

⁸ Ibid, 219

⁹ Chekhov Anton, *Five Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 247

¹⁰ Ibid, 263

¹¹ Ibid, 269

¹² Ibid, 264

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ “*DEATH OF A SALESMAN Study Guide for Teachers*”: The Weston Playhouse Theatre
Company. 703 Main Street, Weston, V T 05161 www.westonplayhouse.org, 9

¹⁵ MC Namara, Patrick. Bergson's "Matter and Memory and Modern Selectionist Theories of Memory" Vision House, Tewksbury, Massachusetts, 221

¹⁶ Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949, 37

¹⁷ "DEATH OF A SALESMAN Study Guide for Teachers". Weston: The Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, V T 05161

¹⁸ Ibid, 6

2- Chapter Two: Individual vs. Oppressing Society

A) In The Cherry Orchard (1904)

Freire Paulo through his theory *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* tries to clarify the position of characters and their everyday struggle within the oppressing society. As far as The Cherry Orchard (1904) is concerned the majority of the characters struggle to get freedom and reach comfort. Johnson A.G recognizes that oppression is;

*The concept of oppression points to social forces that tend to press upon people and hold them down, to hem them in and block their pursuits of a good life. Just as privilege tends to open doors of opportunity, oppression tends to slam them shut.*¹

According to Eisenstein, **Oppression** refers to women and minorities defined within the *patriarchal*, *racist* and *capitalist* relations, by adding that **oppression** derives from sex, race and class and it is manifested through both the material and ideological dimensions of patriarchy, racism and materialism². For Mrs. Ranevsky as a woman, her youth was as bad as her old age. When she was young, she suffered so much from her husband who was drunk all the time and neglects his family. Thus, Mrs. Ranevsky finds herself divided between two responsibilities to perform; to be both the father and the mother of her kids. After her husband passed away and also her little son, Mrs. Ranevsky chooses to leave the Orchard estate hoping to forget and start a new life. Unfortunately, **oppression** is everywhere. Though she turns a new page, the shadow of oppression follows her always. In Paris, she lost all her money that she spent like water, for her that was the best solution to feel happy and forget her sorrows. Mrs. Ranevsky was totally harmed after her husband betrayal. Mrs. Ranevsky never gives up, after her big lose; she decides to come back and carry on her life in her mother land, but the symbol of her family's pride is being auctioned and at a point to be sold.

For **Firs**, life is as cruel as it is for Lopakhin since both of them are alienated and marginalized from society; their only function is to satisfy the greed of the Ranevsky family where they consecrated their childhood and youth. Sometimes, oppression in society made people revolt against the tyranny; at other times, the characters choose to accept their present life and the conditions they grew up in as with Firs. Freire Paulo asserts that some oppressed are:

*dominated by the fear of freedom they refuse to appeal to others, or to listen to the appeals of others, or even to the appeals of their own conscience. They prefer gregariousness to authentic comrade-ship; they prefer the security of conformity with their state of unfree-dom to the creative communion produced by freedom and even the very pursuit of freedom*³.

Accordingly, the system of serfdom in Russia has built the passive personality of Firs which makes him satisfied to remain a servant in order to comfort and please his masters.

For **Lopakhin** too, life was unjust and cruel, he was raised in a poor family where he has found himself a slave from the first day he opened his eyes in the estate. Poverty and the corrupted system in Russia at that time prevented him from school and being an educated and independent man. In addition, his unfair father slugs him all the time. As Freire Paulo confirms that;

*The peasant is a dependent. He cant say what he wants. Before he discovers his dependence, he suffers. He lets off steam **at home**, where he **shouts** at his children, **beats** them, and **despairs**. He complains about his wife and thinks everything is dreadful. He doesn't let off steam with the boss because he thinks the boss is a superior being. Lots of times, the peasant gives vent to his sorrows by drinking*⁴

Because oppression leads always to an explosion, all the injustice and brutality which Lopakhin witnessed in his youth has made of him an egoist and a materialist person.

Trofimove likes to criticize him by saying that;

*My opinion of you is simply this, Lopakhin , you're a rich man. You'll soon be a millionaire. Now, as part of the process whereby one form of matter is converted into another, **nature needs beasts of prey which devour everything in their path. You fulfill that need***⁵

Lopakhin is just a victim of an oppressed society and the bad condition created his personality and made him prefer money than human beings.

For **Trofimov**, life is not bad with him as it was with Lopakhin and Firs. He is an educated man who provides most of the explicit ideological discussion in the play. He is always searching for truth, decrying the poor living conditions in which most Russian peasants live. He criticizes the Russian Intellectuals whom he deems responsible for these conditions when he claims;

*...In Russia very few people do work at present. The kind of intellectuals I know, far and away **the greater part of them anyway, aren't looking for anything.** They don't do anything. They still don't have the meaning of hard work. They call themselves an intelligentsia, but they speak to their servants as inferiors and treat the peasants like animals, they don't study properly, they never read anything at all. Science is something they just talked about and they know precious little about art. Oh they're all earnest. They all go around looking extremely solemn. They talk of nothing but weighty issues and they discuss abstract problems, while all the time everyone knows the workers are abominably fed and sleep without proper bedding, thirty or forty a room_ with bed bags everywhere, to say nothing of the stench the damp, the moral degradation. **And clearly all our fine talk is just to pull wool over our own eyes and other people's too.** Tell me where are those children's crèches that there's all this talk about? Where are the libraries? They're just things people write novels about, we haven't actually got any of them. What we have to get dirt, vulgarity and squalor. I loathe all these earnest faces. They scare me and so do earnest conversations. **Why can't we keep quit for a change?***⁶

Chekhov represents the cherry orchard as symbol of the Russian oppressive society and the dehumanization caused by rich families like the Ranevsky's family did through the institution of serfdom.

All in all, Class instability is **the driving circumstance** in The Cherry Orchard. Chekhov portrays Russia after the emancipation of the serfs. While the society used to be well-stratified, now everything is changed. There are servants who want to stay servants like, Firs who became like a machine so, his passive personality makes him satisfied to remain a servant in order to comfort and please his masters. While others dream to imitate their masters, like Lopakhin who became rich and seeks to be richer.

B) In Death of a Salesman (1949)

In the case of Arthur Miller, the dramatic experience became the starting point of his creative activity at the Great Depression period. From the play's publication Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949) remains a timeless masterpiece because of its ongoing impact on society. It was a hit right away and has remained one of the most popular plays of all time. Miller focuses Death of a Salesman on social changes and the oppression that the American citizens endured after the failure of the American Dream. The American Dream is the capitalist belief that if you work hard enough you can be a success in America. Whereas, Centola Steven. R in her article "*Family Values in Death of a Salesman*" claims that Death of a Salesman is a play which denounces social injustice in the United States of America.

Social Oppression is expressed by Miller as well in Freire Paulo's theory ***Pedagogy of the oppressed***. Through Death of a Salesman, Miller points to the fact that American citizens live in poverty then, translates the social depravation of his characters to accuse the authorities of being the first responsible of this deficiency. When considering the cultural context of the play, it is that much clearer to see the impact that society had on **Willy**, why he made choices and how he tried to fulfill the American Dream. Willy is a passive character since his mind is still linked with the idea of being "well-liked" instead of working hard to get money in a society shaped with injustice and life is based on **money** and **power** not in being well liked.

Gil goes deeper in his explanation of oppression which refers to relations of domination and exploitation, economic, social and psychological between individuals; between social groups and classes within and beyond societies globally, between entire societies imposed by oppressors upon dominated and exploited individuals. These conditions will often cause people to turn to social services for help. Gil adds that oppression seems motivated by intent to exploit which is the excessively benefit from the resources, capacities, and productivity of others. It serves as a means to enforce exploitation toward the goal of securing advantageous conditions of living for its perpetrators and this is shown ⁷

Besides, Freire Paulo goes on by explaining the concept of the **sadistic drive** which is a **pleasure in complete domination over others**. So, the aim of sadism is to transform a “man” into a “thing”, something “animate” into something “inanimate” ⁸. Freire Paulo explains that the oppressor cannot recognize that having is a condition of being, and this condition it is a necessary for all women and men ⁹. The landscape of oppression transformed everything into objects like in Howard’s treatment of Willy shows how destructive the pursuit of this dream can be. He lays Willy off when he can no longer generate money for the company which enrages Willy: “*You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away a man is not a piece of fruit*” ¹⁰. For Freire Paulo the oppressors do not perceive their monopoly on having more as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves.

According to Eisenstein, **Oppression** refers to women and minorities defined within the **patriarchal**, **racist** and **capitalist** relations, by adding that the derivation of **oppression** was from sex, race and class and it is manifested through both the material and ideological dimensions of patriarchy, racism and materialism ¹¹. Linda Loman for instance, though she is probably the most enigmatic and complex character in Death of a Salesman who serves as a force of reason throughout the play, she remains among the characters who are

humiliated in the play. Though, the long years of Linda's marriage with Willy she still fails to convince and change his mind because she is silenced every time she expresses her opinion and this is well shown in this conversation between Linda and her husband

Linda: Oliver always thought the highest of him....

Willy: will you let me talk?

Biff: don't yell at her pop, will ya?

Willy: I was talking, wasn't I? ¹²

Nevertheless, Linda is the most realistic and most levelheaded character in the play. Linda is the voice of rational reason with mature defense mechanisms. Linda still not respected from her family especially her husband who treats her badly every time she expresses herself as it is shown in this quotation "*Linda: I'm just wondering if Oliver will remember him, you think he might? And Willy answers her: remember him? What's the matter with you, you crazy?*" ¹³

Along with his notion of oppression, Freire Paulo introduces the concept of *Sadistic love* which is a distorted love, a love of death, not of life ¹⁴. One of the characteristics of the oppressor consciousness and its necrophilic view of the world is thus *sadism*. Like what happens for Willy after crashing his car several times to get read of his life that is no more than a **failure**. In addition, Erich Fromm in his book *The Heart of Mangoes* claims that in order to dominate, **the oppressor tries to frighten the creative power which characterizes life**, it destructs life ¹⁵. More and more, the oppressor uses dominant instruments for their purpose to get the monopoly; the maintenance of the oppressive order through manipulation and repression. This total emotional dependence can lead the oppressed to what Fromm calls *necrophilic behavior* which is **the destruction of life; their own or that of their oppressed fellows** ¹⁶. When, the oppressed finds himself struggling alone in a society shaped with self-

indulgence and greed thus, makes express his anger on his family's members. This idea is well illustrated in *Death of a Salesman* mainly in Miller's character through fighting with his two sons and wife.

Endnotes

¹ Johnson A. G. *Privilege, power and difference*. (Boston: McGraw-Hill. 2000).

² Eisenstein Z, *Developing a theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism*, in: *Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism*, quoted in journal *The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a social Theory of Disability*, (Vol. 2, No. 1, 1987), 10

³ Freire Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: (The penguin Group, 1996), 65

⁴ Ibid, 66

⁵ Chekhov Anton, *Five Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 265

⁶ Ibid, 266

⁷(Gil, 1994, p. 233).

⁸ Freire Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: The penguin Group, 1996, 59

⁹ (Ibid), 58

¹⁰ Arthur, Miller. *Death of a Salesman*: ,64

¹¹ (Ibid), 51

¹²(Ibid),

¹³(Ibid),

¹⁴ Freire Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: The penguin Group, 1996, 56

¹⁵ (Ibid)

3) Chapter Three: Psychological Disorder

We notice from the two plays Anton Chekov's The Cherry Orchard and Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman that most of the characters endure some psychological troubles. In reference to the definition of Psychological disorder as it is quoted in Linda's article *Ape Fact Sheet*; Psychological disorder is

*A clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress (i.e., a **painful symptom**) or disability (i.e., an impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, **pain**, disability, or an **important loss of freedom**. The syndrome or pattern must not be merely an expectable and culturally sanctioned response to a particular event. It must currently be considered a manifestation of a behavioral, psychological, or biological dysfunction in the individual.¹*

Psychological decline is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. These distressing events involve a single experience, or an enduring or repeating events, that completely overpower the individual's ability to integrate with the ideas and emotions involved with that experience. Psychological decline may accompany physical disorder or exist independently of it ². Dangers of psychological decline are harassment, sexual abuse, domestic violence, being the victim of an alcoholic parent and lack of affection ². So, the threat of either or the witnessing of either, mainly in childhood may lead to psychological problems which manifest either after a short period or after several years. Furthermore, enduring exposures to situation such as extreme poverty or forms of abuse, such as verbal abuse can give birth to psychological troubles.

Though, the distressing events are similar people react differently, some of them try to escape the feelings by drinking to forget the pains as well others surrender and be passive characters, even this could drive them to self destruction. As Bergson has already explained the act of remembering in his theory *Matter and Memory* that some cues act as reminders of

what has been already experienced such as **images**, **thoughts**, or **flashbacks** may haunt the person what make the wonders open for a long time ³. For that reason, characters of the two plays suffer from these problems what is seen in through their abnormal behaviors such as: **betrayal**, **stealing**, **fanatic struggle** and **failure**, and **obsession**, which may push any character either to compromise and cooperate with his new life or chooses suicide to rest forever in peace.

a) In The Cherry Orchard (1904)

1- Betrayal

Family is the driving force, for it can lead man to achieve whatever he dreams of. But it is the familial ties which destroyed Mrs. Ranevsky who suffered from betrayal because of the nearest persons to her. Though, Mrs. Ranevsky's kindness and sympathy other characters cheat her and betray her trust. At first, her husband robbed her, distorted her and took up with another woman ⁴. Thus, pushes Mrs. Ranevsky to come back to the orchard in hope to find serenity between the arms of her past. Unfortunately, unfaithful people are everywhere; she has been cheated for the second time in her mother land by someone whom she loved and raised like her child. Lopakhin; the son of an old serf deceived the woman who defends him every time his father beats him. Referring to Freire Paulo's, an oppressed dreams for struggling to get the monopoly and be an oppressor over others ⁵ because their harsh endures blind them with greed and pushes them to betray the nearest persons to their heart.

Lopakhin is someone who suffered from an oppressive childhood thus gave birth to revenge even he never mean that and it is well shown in the play when he was revealing for Mrs. Ranevsky the atmosphere when he bought the cherry orchard saying: "... *I saw how things were going up in tens, Anyway, it finished in the end. I bed ninety thousand roubles*

plus the areas. And I got it. And now the cherry orchard is mine. Mine! [Gives a loud laugh]

⁶, For Lopakhin thought, the orchard embodies the oppression suffered by his abusive father, and the tyrannical period before serfs get their freedom. Paradoxically, the orchard represents for him an economic treasure and an unmistakable business opportunity he can only ever dream of possessing. Accordingly, The repetition of the word “*Mine*” illustrates the great happiness Lopakhin has felt through his cheating for the woman who gave him kindness and affection when he was a child.

2- Obsession

In the cherry orchard both Mrs. Ranevsky and her old servant Firs were suffering from obsession; the idea of past and the old Russia occupies their minds. Firs, for instance, is affected by a lack of worth and his low position in society being a slave in Ranevsky’s family more than 87 years has made him think that society has changed and serfs get their freedom, Firs life and the lives of countless others have not progressed and this is well shown through revealing for Lopakhin his long career in the estate:

Well, I’ve been alive a long time. They were arranging my wedding before your Dad was so much as thought of. [Laughs.] And when the serfs were freed I was already head valet. But I wouldn’t have any of their freedom, I stayed on with the master and mistress. [Pause.] As I recall, everyone was very pleased, but what they were so pleased about they’d no idea themselves.⁷

Firs insinuate that emancipation is not enough to constitute progress. Firs is suffering from psychological disorder caused by his **long-term exposure** to extreme poverty and milder forms of abuse during his youth. *The Cherry Orchard’s* play demonstrates the theme of Obsession. Though Firs is free, he has not changed his position at all and is subject to whims of the family he serves. Mrs. Ranevsky too, is not free in a very different way, even she has enough assets to be able to control her destiny and decide her fate,

she has been a slave to her passions, moaning her memories and making poor decisions on romance.

3- Despair and Destruction

Mrs. Ranevsky's financial has ruined after the emancipation of serfs and the fall down of the Aristocratic family in Russia. Mrs. Ranevsky has experienced a series of failures; she has lost her son and husband at the same moment. Madame Ranevsky's real failure is not this one but what she has become. Though, she is a loving person, she is incapable of living within her means, or of making any decisions needed to save and retain her property. She spends most of her life running away from the despair of present through looking a refugee in her past. Mrs. Ranevsky has lost all her money in Paris. Her despair is accentuated after she lost the orchard estate which represents her identity, childhood and her family's pride. To conclude, the despair of Mrs. Ranevsky and her passivity on taking any decision to save the orchard has driven the whole family to a full destruction as well as, the destruction of the aristocrats who are on their way nowhere but down.

b) In The Death of a Salesman (1949)

1- Betrayal

Family is the essential unity which unifies the members under the roof of harmony and love. However, **Willy** has failed to recognize the anguished love offered to him by his family. In addition, Willy has betrayed the most giving person in the play. Willy is a victim of an abusive childhood who suffered from the absence of his father who left him alone, in addition to his brother Ben who followed him some years after. Willy's lack of affection during his childhood and being a salesman means to spend most of his lifetime alone what pushes him to through himself on another woman's arms searching for love, affection and support.

2- Obsession

Like in Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard, some characters are haunted by their ideas of an ideal society through denying social changes. Willy Loman for instance, suffers from uncontrollable persistence of ideas which are associated sometimes with psychiatric disorder. Willy's refusal of the present does not help him achieve the self-realization. While he achieves a professional understanding of himself and the fundamental nature of the sales profession, Willy fails to realize his personal failure and betrayal of his soul and family through the meticulously constructed artifice of his life. Instead of working hard to get money and to achieve the American Dream, Willy prefers to dream of a success that it is not possible for him to achieve. Willy's inability to face the truth of his situation pushes him to imprison himself in his world of lies that he built for himself. Bernard criticizing him when he said: "*you still with the old firm Willy?*"⁹

Moreover, Happy and Biff exaggerate how successful they are and Biff only realizes in Oliver's office that he has been lying to himself for years about his position in the company, and then he decides to tell his father the truth:

Biff: No, Dad, I was a shipping clerk

Willy: But you were practically....

Biff: (with determination): Dad, I don't know who said it first, but I was never a salesman for Bill Oliver

Willy: What're you talking about?

*Biff: let's hold on the facts tonight, Pop. We're not going to get anywhere bullin' around. I was a shipping clerk*¹⁰

3- Fanatic Struggle and Failure

Death of a salesman is a play which is turning around struggle to achieve stability and serenity that most of the characters have been searching for a long time. Willy Loman financial life has ruined after the failure of the American Dream and the rise of a capitalist system. Willy has experienced a succession of failures; Willy has failed to offer the adequate life that his family has expected from him. Willy forgets the great social change that has occurred in the United States, and the slogan of the capitalist system which is either to work or starve. Instead of working hard to get money, Willy was taken by his dreams to be a well liked man till he finds himself old and fired.

Willy: I will go to Boston

Howard: Willy, you can't go to Boston

Willy why can't I go

Howard: I don't want you to represent us, I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now.¹¹

4- Despair and Destruction

Death of a Salesman is a play despair and devastation of not only one character but of the whole family whenever the head of the family is lost in an atmosphere of lies and false dreams. Instead to, Biff and Happy who are living in a landscape of stagnation without achieving any success either at school or at work. Linda is the only resonating character in the play, yet she is lost between either to gratify her husband who suffers from inner conflicts and her sons who move from failure to another in addition to her incapacity to improve the situation.

In the play, each generation has a responsibility to the other that they cannot fulfill. Biff and Happy are shaped by Willy's sins. In Happy's case, he is destined to perpetuate Willy's values and strive for material success, where Biff has been destroyed totally by

Willy's betrayal of the family through the affair in Boston what led the entire family sinking in cycle of destruction.

5- Theft

As psychological disorder can be caused from an oppressive childhood mainly, lack of love and affection from which both Biff and Happy are suffering. As Psychological decline may accompany physical disorder or exist independently of it which can be seen in the character's behavior. In Death of a Salesman for instance, both Happy and Biff stole things to express their need for someone who cares for them and advises them especially the care of their father, who chooses the roads as a new home for him. And the fact that Willy never discouraged them from stealing. Biff became a thief who steals things and this is shown when Biff tells the truth for Willy: *"you know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in jail"*¹². Happy and Biff's thefts can be seen to represent the way their true identities have been stolen by lying and the pursuit of an unachievable dream like their father.

- **Compromise and Death in (*The Cherry Orchard*)**

Anton Chekhov in play The Cherry Orchard sheds light on two different cases; the first one is when characters feel ashamed about the harm they caused for others as a result they choose **suicide**, the other side is to **compromise** and this is either for the guilty people or those harmed by others, both will try to cooperate with their actual situation and try to forget the past.

For Mrs. Ranevsky's kindness never prevent others from harming her. Starting with her husband, he neglected his responsibilities toward his family. The first thing she did to forget was to accept the disaster and searching for happiness elsewhere. At Paris, she lost her money as well as her husband who robbed her and betrayed her with another woman. Then,

she tried to poison herself, but her faith on good was greater than her pains, and this is shown when she asked god's forgiveness;

*I tried to poison myself. It was all stupid and humiliating. Then I suddenly longed to be back in Russia, back in my own country with my little girl [Dries her eyes.] Lord, Lord, be merciful, forgive my sins, don't punish me anymore.*¹³

Mrs. Ranevsky's never stopped hoping about a beautiful future, thus made her come back to her mother land where she finds her estate auctioned, Ranevsky is shocked by the beginning then she accepts the big loss and she decides to go back with her family to Paris as her daughter Anya shares her mother's pains:

*The cherry orchard is sold, it's gone, that's true, quite true. But don't cry, mamma, you still got your life before you, you've still got your pure and lovely soul. Come with me, my darling, come with me from here. We'll plant a new orchard, even lovelier than this one. You will see it and understand, and joy, deep, tranquil joy will sink down upon your soul like a sunset, and you will smile, mamma.*¹⁴

For **Lopakhin**, life has started badly; he was raised as uneducated and poor serf. The brutality of his father and the harshness of life can made anyone **surrender** and chose **death** to rest forever. Nevertheless, this has made him stronger and hopeful. His great hope turned him a businessman and the owner of the great estate in Russia the cherry orchard. Instead, **Firs**, who is always a servant of the Ranevsky family, remains a submissive man for his existence has been destined to be a serf and serve others. Thus, he has made a **compromise** and accepts his destiny.

- **Compromise and Death in (*Death of a Salesman*)**

Arthur Miller asserts that the unalterable society is not the only scoundrel, for **self-love** or esteem can lead to **an unavoidable defeat** ¹⁵. Any human being has his own inner desires that could drive him either toward happiness or final destruction. Arthur Miller for instance shed light on some character reactions, mainly they find themselves lost between two ways so they either cooperate and carry on their life or choose to rest in peace in order to clean their title they already got dirty.

In correspondence to Durkheim's book untitled *Study of Suicide*, there are three types of suicide: Altruistic, Anomic, Egoistic and Fatalistic. And according to his definition he gave to the Anomic Suicide as being a "*suicide which took place in society where norms and values are disrupted by rapid social change leading to uncertainty, guidelines for behavior increasingly unclear, by adding that this kind of suicide increases during times of economic depression, boom, bus*" ¹⁶ After causes sited above in the definition, one can find that Miller's protagonist Willy has endured the same distressing events what led him not only to think about suicide, yet he tried several times to do it as Linda tells Biff about the woman who sees his father at point to commit suicide;

Linda: Well, it seems she was walking down the road and saw his car. She says that he wasn't driving fast at all, and that he didn't skid. She says he came to that little bridge and then deliberately smashed into the railing, and it was only the shallowness of the water that saved him ¹⁷

Because of Willy Loman suffering from uncontrollable persistence of ideas which are associated sometimes with psychiatric disorder does not help him achieve the self-realization.

Endnotes

- ¹ American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM IV). (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. This disability fact sheet was written by Linda C. Hilgenbrinck (1994).
- ² Torrey, Van De Vliet, Van Coppenolle, Knapen, Pieters, & Peuskens, 1995
- ³ Henri, Bergson. *Matter and Memory*.
- ⁴ Chekhov, Anton. *Five Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 263
- ⁵ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: The Penguin Group, 1996, 62
- ⁶ Chekhov, Anton. *Five Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 282
- ⁷ (Ibid)
- ⁸ (Ibid), 63
- ⁹ Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. London: Cresset Press, 1949, 73
- ¹⁰ (Ibid), 84
- ¹¹ (Ibid), 65
- ¹² (Ibid), 104
- ¹³ Chekhov, Anton. *Five Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 263
- ¹⁴ (Ibid), Act IV
- ¹⁵ Miller, Arthur. In Harold Bloom: Chelsea House, 1987, 19
- ¹⁶ Durkheim, Emile, *Study of Suicide*
- ¹⁷ Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. London: Cresset Press, 1949. 46

V. Conclusion

This memoir has allowed us to study the two plays; The Cherry Orchard (1904) by Anton Chekhov and Death of Salesman (1949) by Arthur Miller. In addition, this has permitted us to discover that the themes of Memory or Past Reemergence and Social Oppression share one idea which is to destabilize the serenity of characters. The study was carried out from two different perspectives. We have made appeal to Henri Bergson's theory of Memory to show how characters plunge into their memories they are either seen as burden from which they run away or as a personal identity where they take refuge from the despair of the present. Then, we have relied on Freire Paulo's Pedagogy of the Oppressed to discuss the endurance sudden changes occurred in society and its effect on the psychological consciousness of characters.

This work leads to the following conclusions. Both Anton Chekhov and Arthur Miller share the same idea about the past which can be brought back to the present at any moment through images, memory and remembrance. Indeed The cherry Orchard and Death of a Salesman draw, specifically, upon the memories of the characters. It is a literary representation image of the character's suffering during a period of harsh Capitalism. The two plays reflect a past perception in the form of collective images caused by interaction between the physical world of social changes and the spiritual feelings and thoughts of the oppressed. For this reason, one can notice the close relationship between the memories and external world which play the role of a stimulus which led the characters to remember. Because memory brings the past nearly in its exactness, the pain of years ago is felt like a nearby pain.

Moreover, it has been deduced that social changes led characters suffer from inner conflicts. It is for this reason that the characters in both plays The Cherry Orchard and Death of a Salesman face a failure of understanding and forgetting the oppression they witnessed in

a society shaped with self-indulgence and greed. The heavy impact of memories in shaping one's identity and the sudden changes in society led some characters to fall in Psychological disorder; some characters remain passive in front of the changes taking place in their society and turns their life upside down, while others try to cooperate with the new situation, in addition to group of characters who gave up to despair and commit suicide in order to rest in peace.

In the scope of this memoir we could not deal with all the themes Anton Chekov and Arthur Miller developed in their works; The Cherry Orchard (1904) and Death of a Salesman (1949). Therefore, we exhort other students interested in this kind of literature to explore and analyze the two plays further as it is pregnant with research issues that deserve to be explored.

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