



**“A Comparative Study of Marxist Alienation in Willy Loman
and Gregor Samsa.”**

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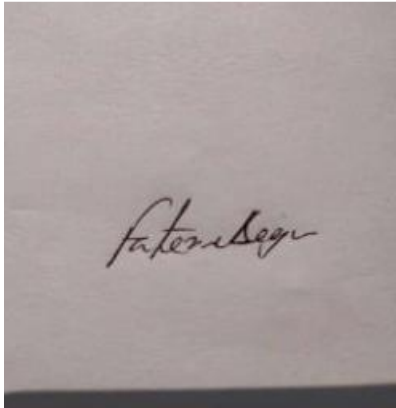
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partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English**

Letter of Approval

I assure you that the thesis titled “A Comparative Study of Marxist Alienation in Willy Loman and Gregor Samsa” is completed by Shifatul Islam, ID:- 211-10-2346 a Department of English, Daffodil International University student. He has completed his research work under my supervision. He kept in touch with me during his thesis period and ask for assistance when needed. During this period, he worked hard and I found him sincere. He gave his best effort to complete this thesis. I wish him the best in life.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Fatema Begum'.

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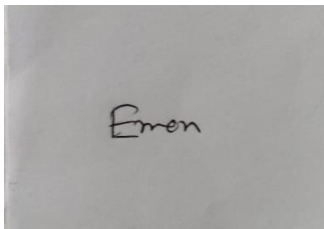
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Declaration

I, Shifatul Islam, affirm that I had spent enough time adequately reviewing the research paper guidelines set by the Department of English held at Daffodil International University. I am committed to being bound by all the policy's particulars, complete rules, and regulations. My original scholarly contribution to English literature is a thesis titled "A Comparative Study of Marxist Alienation in Willy Loman and Gregor Samsa". During my research, I have carefully examined all relevant resources and adequately cited and mentioned each one.

The research paper was conducted during the Fall 2024 semester under the supervision of Ms. Fatema Begum Laboni, Assistant Professor in the Department of English. The project significantly contributed to my English Honors degree. I endorse that this document, or any part, has never been submitted to anything similar, like scholarship, degree, publication, or others. I guarantee that the text of this particular piece is the result of my efforts.

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Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to Almighty Allah for the strength and willpower I possessed, which enabled me to finish my thesis. I am deeply grateful to the many individuals who have provided me with support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the course of my thesis, I extend my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor, whose invaluable insights, expertise, and constructive feedback have been instrumental in shaping this research. Their dedication and patience have been a guiding light throughout this academic journey.

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Thank you all for your contributions to this academic milestone.

Abstract

This thesis compares Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* to Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in order to examine the theme of alienation. Willy Loman's relentless pursuit of the American Dream reflects the commodification of identity, while Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect symbolizes the alienation caused by industrial bureaucracy. Through a comparative lens, the study examines cultural and historical influences, literary techniques, and universal themes, revealing how both texts critique capitalism's psychological and relational tolls. Despite differing contexts—post-war America and early 20th-century Europe—both works converge in their powerful depiction of alienation and human worth in modern society.

Keywords: Marxist alienation, capitalist critique, American Dream, dehumanization, comparative literature, Death of a Salesman, The Metamorphosis.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Alienation, which is a very critical concept in modern literature, delves into the isolation individuals face in societal, familial, and personal realms. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* present two distinct yet intertwined narratives of alienation, shaped by capitalist ideologies and human relationships. In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Loman's relentless pursuit of the American Dream underscores the alienation fostered by a materialistic society. His life becomes a tragic testament to how self-worth, tied to economic success, erodes familial bonds and personal identity.

Conversely, Kafka's Gregor Samsa, trapped in a monotonous existence, embodies the alienation wrought by mechanized labor and familial dependence. His transformation into an insect becomes a grotesque metaphor for his loss of humanity and his family's shifting perceptions of his worth.

This thesis explores how these texts reflect Marxist concepts of alienation, contrasting the destructive allure of the American Dream with the dehumanizing effects of financial dependence. Through a comparative lens, the study emphasizes the universal and timeless struggle for self-worth in oppressive societal structures.

1.1 Background and Context

The concept of Marxist alienation, derived from Karl Marx's critique of capitalist systems, highlights how economic structures lead to individuals becoming estranged from their labor, relationships, and self-identity. This theoretical framework offers a profound lens to analyze Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915). Both texts serve as incisive critiques of capitalism and its dehumanizing effects, encapsulating the plight of individuals trapped within oppressive systems.

Set in post-World War II America, *Death of a Salesman* reflects the optimism of the American Dream and its accompanying disillusionment. During this period, rapid economic growth fostered a consumer-driven culture, placing immense pressure on individuals to

achieve material success. Willy Loman, the play's tragic protagonist, embodies this struggle as he ties his self-worth to societal measures of success. According to Marx, under capitalism, "labor becomes external to the worker" and alienates them from their human essence (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 74). Willy's relentless pursuit of the American Dream demonstrates this alienation as his fixation on sales and financial achievement isolates him from his family and true desires.

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka, written in early 20th-century Europe, reflects a period marked by industrialization, burgeoning capitalist economies, and significant socio-political changes. The rapid growth of industrial capitalism reshaped societal structures, creating rigid hierarchies and depersonalized systems of labor that often reduced workers to mere instruments of productivity. This period also saw the rise of bureaucracies, which Kafka himself experienced as a clerk, shaping his critique of dehumanization and alienation.

Historically, this was also a time of shifting family dynamics, where traditional patriarchal roles were challenged by economic pressures. These transformations highlight the tensions between individual identity and societal expectations, which Kafka critiques through Gregor's tragic disconnection from his family and humanity.

1.2 Limitations of the Study

This thesis primarily focuses on *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis*, limiting its scope to two specific texts and their interpretations of Marxist alienation. Broader perspectives on alienation across other literary works or cultural contexts are not explored. Additionally, the subjective analysis of themes like the American Dream and familial bonds may omit alternative readings or socio-political nuances, constraining the discussion to specific interpretations rather than a more comprehensive examination of the concept.

1.3 Research Question

1. How do *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis* depict Marxist alienation through their protagonists' struggles with labor, family, and self-worth?

2. In what ways do the cultural and societal contexts of mid-20th-century America and early 20th-century Europe shape the portrayal of alienation in *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis*?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The theme of alienation in *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka has been widely discussed, particularly through a Marxist lens that examines how capitalist structures can strip individuals of their identity and self-worth. Foundationally, Terry Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* provides a basis for understanding Marxist theories of alienation and commodification, highlighting how individuals within capitalist societies become estranged from themselves and others. This theoretical approach illuminates the struggles of both Willy Loman and Gregor Samsa, whose lives are marked by alienation as they grapple with societal pressures that ultimately lead to their tragic ends.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Loman's alienation is deeply tied to his pursuit of the American Dream—a capitalist ideal that promises fulfillment through financial success but frequently results in disillusionment. Eric J. Sigg's essay "The American Dream and the Crisis of Reality in *Death of a Salesman*" discusses how Willy's relentless drive for economic success leads to a fracture between his aspirations and his reality, ultimately alienating him from his own family and sense of self. This theme of conflict between individual identity and societal expectations is further explored in Helene Wickham Koon's *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Death of a Salesman*, which presents a range of critical perspectives on how Willy's struggle to achieve financial success ultimately destroys his personal relationships and sense of worth. As John L. Greenfield argues in "Death of a Salesman and the Poetics of Alienation," Willy's self-worth is bound to his role as a salesman. This commodification of his identity intensifies his alienation, as he views himself solely in terms of his economic productivity—a tragic byproduct of the capitalist system he inhabits.

In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's alienation is similarly profound, albeit manifested through Kafka's use of surrealism to convey the dehumanizing effects of labor under

capitalism. Stanley Corngold's article "Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*: Dehumanization and Alienation in the Modern World" interprets Gregor's transformation into a monstrous insect as a symbolic reflection of his estrangement, particularly as he becomes unable to fulfill his role as the family's provider. This inability to work distances Gregor from his family, who increasingly reject and isolate him, highlighting the harsh consequences of a society that values individuals only for their economic contributions. Walter H. Sokel, in *The Myth of Power and the Self*, further explores Kafka's critique of capitalist exploitation, arguing that Gregor's sense of self deteriorates as he is treated as a burden rather than a family member. Sokel's earlier work, "Kafka's *Metamorphosis*: Rebellion and Punishment," takes this analysis further by suggesting that Gregor's transformation is an unconscious rejection of capitalist values. Yet this "rebellion" does not bring freedom; rather, it intensifies Gregor's alienation, as his family now regards him as an outcast, reducing him to an object of repulsion rather than affection.

Comparing these works, both Willy and Gregor emerge as tragic figures who are deeply alienated from their families and their own identities due to the dehumanizing forces of capitalism. Each character's struggles underscore Marx's theory that in a capitalist society, individuals' intrinsic worth is undermined by their perceived economic value. Terry Eagleton's analysis in "Death of a Salesman: Commodity and Alienation" emphasizes that capitalist pressures devalue human life by commodifying individuals, a theme visible in both protagonists' stories as their lives disintegrate under economic and social strain. Ultimately, both *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis* serve as critical examinations of alienation, reflecting the devastating psychological toll of capitalist values on individuals' lives and relationships.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This thesis employs a qualitative, comparative analysis grounded in Marxist theory to examine the concept of alienation in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Drawing on Karl Marx's theory of alienation, as discussed in *Economic*

and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, this study will explore how capitalist structures fragment individual identity, relationships, and autonomy in each text.

The analysis will involve close reading of both texts, focusing on characters, settings, and events that exemplify economic and social pressures. In *Death of a Salesman*, specific attention will be given to Willy Loman's pursuit of the American Dream and his internal conflict as a laborer defined by his economic productivity. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's transformation and subsequent rejection by his family will be analyzed as symbolic of the alienation experienced by workers whose worth is defined solely by their ability to contribute economically.

Secondary sources, including scholarly articles and interpretations of Marxist criticism, will also be consulted to support the analysis. By applying this comparative approach, this thesis will aim to demonstrate how both protagonists embody different aspects of Marxist alienation under capitalist systems, ultimately revealing the dehumanizing effects of economic structures that value profit over human connection.

Chapter 4

Discussion and Analysis

Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* exemplifies alienation from the product of labor. As a salesman, his work is intangible; he sells promises and dreams rather than creating something tangible. Willy laments to Linda, "You work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it" (Miller, Act 2, p. 76). This statement captures the futility of his labor and the disconnection from its outcome. His inability to see the fruits of his work alienates him from a sense of accomplishment, emphasizing Marx's assertion that under capitalism, the worker becomes estranged from the object of their production.

Miller's narrative innovatively shifts the focus of tragedy to the common man, challenging Aristotelian notions of noble protagonists. This shift emphasizes the universality of alienation in capitalist societies. Helene Wickham Koon's collection of essays highlights that Willy's tragedy lies in his commodification—valuing himself only as an economic asset rather than a person (Twentieth Century Interpretations of *Death of a Salesman*, p. 43). Willy's identity as a salesman further underscores Marx's concept of alienation from the labor process, where

individuals are estranged from the very work that defines them (Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Act 1, p. 32).

In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's alienation manifests in his monotonous work as a traveling salesman. Gregor reflects on his grueling job: "If I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would have quit long ago" (Kafka, Part 1, p. 4). His labor, performed solely to support his family, is devoid of personal fulfillment, reducing him to a machine-like existence. The physical transformation into an insect symbolizes his reduced humanity—a grotesque manifestation of his alienation from the product and process of his labor.

The novella captures the existential anxieties of a world grappling with mechanization and the alienating effects of modern labor systems. Gregor Samsa's transformation into a monstrous insect can be interpreted as a grotesque symbol of how industrial capitalism strips individuals of their humanity. As Karl Marx observed, capitalist systems lead to "the alienation of man from himself" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 76). Kafka weaves these realities into his work, portraying a protagonist who, once a valued breadwinner, becomes an outcast when he is no longer economically useful.

Gregor's role as the family's sole provider exemplifies his alienation from his labor. He sees his work as a meaningless obligation, saying, "If I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would have quit long ago" (Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, Part 1, p. 9). His transformation strips him of his economic utility, causing his family to reject and isolate him. Walter H. Sokel observes that Gregor's dehumanization reflects how capitalism reduces individuals to their economic roles (*The Myth of Power and the Self*, p. 72).

Both characters are estranged from the process of their work. Willy's labor is dictated by the capitalist system, which values profit over human well-being. His frustration is palpable when he says, "The competition is maddening! Smiling faces, pushing buyers, everybody lined up for the kill" (Miller, Act 1, p. 37). Here, the exploitative nature of sales culture dehumanizes him, reducing him to a cog in the capitalist machine. Gregor's experience is similarly dehumanizing. He is trapped in a repetitive cycle where his physical and emotional well-being is secondary to his family's financial needs. His boss's dismissive letter after his absence highlights this alienation: "Your recent performance has been unsatisfactory, and

such behavior cannot be tolerated” (Kafka, Part 1, p. 9). The labor process, governed by external demands, renders Gregor expendable, deepening his isolation.

Marx argues that capitalism alienates individuals from others, a theme explored in both texts. Willy’s alienation from his family, particularly Biff, stems from his materialistic values. Biff accuses Willy of living in delusion: “You blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody!” (Miller, Act 2, p. 85). This confrontation highlights the generational and emotional rift caused by Willy’s adherence to capitalist ideals. Gregor’s family, initially dependent on his income, grows resentful after his transformation. His father’s violent reaction—throwing apples at Gregor and wounding him—epitomizes their rejection (Kafka, Part 2, p. 37). This act symbolizes Gregor’s alienation from familial affection, as his economic utility determines his worth to his family.

Marx identifies the ultimate form of alienation as estrangement from one’s essence. Willy’s self-worth is entirely tied to his role as a salesman. In a moment of despair, he confesses to Linda, “I’m worth more dead than alive” (Miller, Act 2, p. 98). This tragic realization underscores how capitalism reduces human life to economic value, leading to Willy’s ultimate act of self-destruction. Similarly, Gregor’s transformation strips him of his humanity, leaving him isolated and despondent. He reflects, “Was he an animal, that music moved him so?” (Kafka, Part 3, p. 48). This moment encapsulates Gregor’s internal conflict as he struggles to reconcile his lingering human emotions with his insect form, a potent metaphor for his alienation from his own identity.

Marx’s theory of alienation forms the conceptual bridge between these two texts. He identifies four forms of alienation: from the product of labor, the labor process, other humans, and one’s own essence (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 67-68). In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy’s alienation manifests vividly in his deteriorating relationship with his son, Biff. Willy’s obsession with material success and societal approval blinds him to the importance of authentic familial connections. This is particularly evident when Willy declares, “I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!” (Miller, Act 2, p. 74), revealing his desperate need to affirm his worth and impose his aspirations onto Biff. His philosophy, rooted in the belief that personal charm guarantees success, further distances him from his son: “Be liked, and you will never want.” (Miller, Act 1, p. 33). Biff’s

own frustration with these imposed ideals becomes apparent when he confronts Willy, exclaiming, “We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!” (Miller, Act 2, p. 77). This rupture highlights the emotional toll of Willy’s alienation from his true self and his family.

Similarly, in *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor’s alienation crescendos as his family shifts from dependence on him as their provider to perceiving him as an unbearable burden. Initially, Gregor is dehumanized by his own labor, as he reflects bitterly, “He was a tool of the boss, without brains or backbone.” (Kafka, Part 1, p. 5), encapsulating his estrangement from both his work and personal identity. Following his transformation, his family’s growing rejection of him is palpable. His sister coldly suggests, “We have to try to get rid of it. It’ll be the death of you both, I can see it coming.” (Kafka, Part 3, p. 49). This moment signifies Gregor’s ultimate alienation, as his inability to work renders him worthless in their eyes. The chilling absence of warmth in his familial relationships is underscored earlier, when it is noted, “The money was received with thanks and given with pleasure, but no special feeling of warmth went with it anymore.” (Kafka, Part 1, p. 14). Gregor’s dehumanization and isolation embody Marx’s theory of alienation, whereby individuals are valued solely for their economic contributions.

While *Death of a Salesman* critiques the specific cultural myth of the American Dream, *The Metamorphosis* offers a broader examination of alienation within bureaucratic and capitalist structures along with existential crisis. Together, these works illustrate the psychological and relational costs of a system that prioritizes economic output over human well-being. As Terry Eagleton notes, capitalist ideologies often commodify human lives, reducing identity to mere functionality (*Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 34). Both Willy and Gregor represent individuals who are crushed under such systems, making their stories timeless and universally resonant.

4.1 Comparative Insights

Death of a Salesman (1949) by Arthur Miller and *The Metamorphosis* (1915) by Franz Kafka originate from distinct cultural and geographical contexts. Miller’s play reflects mid-20th-century America, a society deeply entrenched in the ideals of the American Dream, emphasizing material success and personal achievement. Willy Loman, as the protagonist,

represents the average American struggling to fulfill these societal expectations. His failure critiques the capitalist obsession with productivity and economic success. In contrast, Kafka's novella is rooted in early 20th-century Europe, particularly industrialized Austria-Hungary. The bureaucratic and industrial systems of this era reduced individuals to cogs in a machine, a reality vividly portrayed through Gregor Samsa's transformation. While Miller's work critiques the promise of prosperity within a capitalist system, Kafka's text highlights the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism in a bureaucratic society.

Despite their different contexts, both texts explore alienation as a universal theme, aligning closely with Karl Marx's theory of estrangement. In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Loman is alienated from himself, his labor, and his family. His relentless pursuit of the American Dream blinds him to the importance of meaningful relationships. For instance, his strained relationship with his son Biff reflects his inability to reconcile his dreams with reality, creating emotional distance within the family (Miller, Act 2, p. 74). Similarly, in *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's alienation is literalized through his transformation into a monstrous insect. Once the primary breadwinner, Gregor's inability to work renders him worthless in his family's eyes. His isolation and eventual death symbolize the capitalist reduction of human value to economic utility (Kafka, Part 3, p. 49). Both protagonists' struggles highlight the psychological toll of alienation, making it a poignant critique of capitalist systems.

The historical backdrop of each text shapes its portrayal of alienation. In Miller's America, post-war optimism fostered a belief in upward mobility through hard work. Willy's tragic downfall critiques the unattainability of this ideal for many working-class individuals, revealing the systemic inequities of capitalist society. His commodification as a salesman where his value is tied to his productivity underscores Marxist critiques of labor alienation. Kafka's Europe, on the other hand, was marked by industrialization and rigid bureaucratic systems. Gregor's dehumanization reflects the alienation of workers reduced to mere functions within these systems. His transformation can be seen as a grotesque metaphor for the loss of individuality and humanity in a mechanized world.

Miller employs realism and the structure of domestic tragedy to bring Willy's struggles into sharp focus. The use of flashbacks and dream sequences blurs the lines between past and

present, reflecting Willy's fragmented psyche. His dialogue reveals his inner turmoil and inability to confront reality, emphasizing the psychological depth of his alienation. Kafka, in contrast, employs surrealism and absurdism. Gregor's transformation into an insect is both literal and metaphorical, allowing Kafka to externalize Gregor's alienation. The detached, clinical tone of the narration mirrors Gregor's emotional disconnection from his family and self. Kafka's use of grotesque imagery further highlights the dehumanizing effects of labor and societal expectations.

Willy's alienation stems from his internalization of societal ideals. His relentless pursuit of success and validation blinds him to his family's needs and his own emotional well-being. This psychological struggle is evident in his delusions and ultimate decision to end his life, believing his death will provide financial security for his family. Gregor's alienation, however, is externally imposed. His transformation renders him physically repulsive and economically useless, leading to his rejection by his family. This external alienation exacerbates Gregor's internal despair, culminating in his quiet, unnoticed death. Unlike Willy, Gregor's alienation is more passive, highlighting the oppressive forces of his environment rather than internal conflicts.

Although *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis* arise from different cultural and historical contexts, they converge on universal themes of alienation and critique of capitalist systems. Through their distinct literary techniques and psychological portrayals, Miller and Kafka illuminate the profound impact of societal and economic pressures on individuals. Together, these works underscore the enduring relevance of alienation as a literary and philosophical theme, transcending time and geography.

Willy Loman's entire life revolves around the pursuit of the American Dream, equating his self-worth solely with financial success. Despite his wife Linda's unwavering support and Charley's genuine offers of help, Willy is consumed by the belief that material achievement is the only way to prove his value, even in death. His decision to commit suicide for life insurance money underlines his tragic delusion: he prioritizes monetary legacy over emotional connections. In Willy's case, the American Dream is indeed blinding and

dehumanizing. It creates a singular focus on material success, eroding his relationships, self-esteem, and mental health. This dream demands constant striving and, in Willy's case, leads to an empty, tragic end. His life becomes a cautionary tale about how such an ideology can reduce a person's existence to a mere economic transaction.

Gregor Samsa, on the other hand, begins as a self-sacrificing figure, enduring a job he despises to support his family. Unlike Willy, Gregor is introspective, contemplating the meaning of his life and existence. His transformation into an insect intensifies his existential alienation, as he realizes his family valued him only for his ability to provide financially.

Even in his grotesque, dehumanized state, Gregor tries to adapt, showing a deep desire to maintain familial bonds. However, the family's growing hostility and eventual rejection shatter his hope. His quiet, self-imposed starvation is a form of silent protest—a resignation to the realization that his existence no longer holds meaning for those he loved. In Gregor's world, self-worth is tied to relationships and emotional bonds, but once those bonds are severed, he succumbs to despair.

The American Dream being "far more dangerous" than financial Marxist alienation is thought provoking. Both systems dehumanize individuals, but the American Dream's unique danger lies in its seductive illusion of self-determination. It promises success through hard work, blinding people like Willy to the systemic obstacles and societal pressures that often render this dream unattainable. This illusion can lead to self-destruction, as people internalize failure and lose sight of other sources of meaning, such as relationships or personal fulfillment.

In contrast, Gregor's Marxist alienation highlights how people are reduced to mere tools for production. However, his tragedy stems less from an ideology like the American Dream and more from the cold, transactional nature of his family. While his death is heartbreaking, it is also quieter and less psychologically torturous than Willy's active self-destruction.

The American Dream blinds individuals, making them prioritize wealth over mental and

emotional well-being. It fosters a toxic culture of competition and unattainable ideals, as seen in Willy. Gregor's plight, on the other hand, serves as a critique of the dehumanization caused by capitalism, where worth is tied to utility rather than intrinsic value.

Both texts ultimately reveal the dangers of equating self-worth with external measures—be it money, status, or productivity. Yet, Willy's blindness to the emotional cost of his dream and Gregor's quiet resignation to alienation present two distinct yet equally poignant warnings about the systems that govern our lives.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

The findings reveal that both *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis* explore the theme of alienation through different perspectives. Willy Loman's alienation stems from the destructive pursuit of the American Dream, equating self-worth to financial success. Conversely, Gregor Samsa faces familial rejection and existential alienation, highlighting the dehumanizing effects of capitalist systems. While Willy internalizes societal expectations, Gregor's alienation is externally imposed. The discussion underscores how capitalist ideologies reduce individuals to economic utility, eroding both identity and relationships.

5.1 Key Findings

This thesis identifies key similarities and differences in the portrayal of alienation in *Death of a Salesman* and *The Metamorphosis*. Both works critique capitalist systems that reduce individuals to economic roles, leading to emotional and existential isolation. Willy Loman embodies the destructive pursuit of the American Dream, prioritizing financial success over meaningful connections. In contrast, Gregor Samsa represents the dehumanizing effects of mechanized labor and familial rejection, as his self-worth is tied to financial contributions. While Willy's alienation is driven by internalized societal ideals, Gregor's is imposed by external circumstances. Both narratives highlight the human cost of capitalism and alienation.

5.2 Scope for Further Research

This thesis opens avenues for further research into the broader implications of capitalist alienation in literature. Future studies could explore how alienation is represented in diverse cultural contexts or different literary genres. Comparative analyses of alienation in contemporary works could reveal how these themes evolve with modern economic systems. Additionally, investigating female characters' experiences of alienation under patriarchal capitalism, often overlooked, could provide fresh perspectives. Finally, exploring the intersection of Marxist alienation with existentialism in literature might deepen the understanding of individual struggles in capitalist societies.

5.3 Conclusion

This thesis explores the portrayal of Marxist alienation in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, analyzing the protagonists' struggles within capitalist systems. Both Willy Loman and Gregor Samsa represent individuals who are dehumanized by societal and economic forces. Willy's obsession with the American Dream blinds him to authentic relationships, reducing his self-worth to material success. His tragic end, marked by a self-inflicted death for monetary gain, reflects the psychological toll of capitalist ideologies that prioritize wealth over well-being.

Gregor, on the other hand, embodies existential alienation. His transformation into an insect serves as a grotesque metaphor for the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism. While his initial sacrifices were driven by familial love, his family's eventual rejection highlights how capitalist values prioritize economic utility over human connection. Gregor's silent protest and death reveal the devastating effects of being reduced to one's labor.

Though both characters experience alienation, their narratives underscore different dangers: Willy's plight critiques the blinding lure of the American Dream, while Gregor's story critiques the transactional relationships fostered by capitalism. Together, these texts demonstrate how capitalist systems erode self-worth, relationships, and individuality.

This thesis ultimately argues that alienation remains a universal and enduring theme in literature, resonating across different contexts and eras. By examining these narratives, readers gain a deeper understanding of the profound human costs of systems that prioritize profit over people.

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Chapter 7

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