

Lost between Illusion and Reality: A study of the American Dream Concept in Death of a Salesman

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Abstract

Since literature's objective is to synthesize and harmonize the individuals within the society, focusing on man and the society is the solid concern of the authors all over the world. Arthur Miller, like other pioneers, uses man as a focal point around which all events revolve in order to build a realistic drama. Apparently, when a man belongs to a middle or lower class as is the case with Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman. It becomes ordinary to anticipate change that may impact man's life in a community that is determined by economic factors and ventures policy. Yet, when such coping with the pressing currents becomes rather abstruse, man resorts to dreams and fancy world to avoid any collision with reality. His attempt to avert clash becomes rather tragic only when he realizes that all his dreams and fancies are but illusions that are conducive to more loss, more crush of personality and more pushing of individuals towards the brink of either madness or mental collapse or to suicide. Willy Loman's dreams are rather reflected on his character as a typical ordinary lower-mid-class member who attempts to achieve success in a failing society. His hopes are motivated by a strong belief in the American Dream's dictates that lead him to face the harsh reality of his real identity like other characters in the play

Keywords:- Idealism, American Dream, Identity, Tragedy, Individualism in American Drama

I- Introduction

Power, authority, wealth, freedom, love, and (or) any earthly pleasure represent the main dreams of every man. These dreams must not be achieved by breaking rules or harming others. While man is busy in achieving these dreams man faces two acute turns in his life in which he either wins, loses or dies searching for his identity and that depends on the way that he selects to achieve his dream.

Many modern artists focus on man and consider him the essential core of their works because they believe that man in literary works represents the society. Focusing on the man's lifestyle, dreams, relationships, careers, problems he faces, makes the literary work of art more realistic. Hence, criticizing ordinary man represents criticizing the whole society in which he lives.

II- Idealism Heading Nowhere

Being exhausted of too long routes of travel to New England County every week, Willy Loman develops some hyper sensitivity towards the system injustice. His gradual disclosure of this malcontent on the one hand and his resentment against the unfair treatment he receives from his employer has apparently created a yawning gap between what he wants to be and he really is. This feeling is taken to the edge as a result of the economic or financial increasing demand on Willy. This pressure has frequently driven Willy to search for temporary solutions that might placate the deeply embedded discontent with the

adaptation to the new life and system. Willy is first introduced to the reader as a man whose “*exhaustion is apparent*” and he has “*massive dreams*” that he relies on in his life (Miller, DOS, 1998: 2). Part of his dreams is his fondness of nature and the agrarian life, a fact he often revealed to Linda when he says, “it’s so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me” (DOS, 1998: 3) but still he lives in New York in his house with his wife and his sons Biff and Happy surrounded by huge buildings which symbolize the social pressing forces that suffocate the Lomans life. Despite his travel fatigue, Willy sees himself as vital to the trade of New England. He considers it as his territory of selling and any devotion or move can occur will be a kind of insult to his pride. Willy says, “Figure it out. Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there’s nobody to live in it”. (DOS, 1998: 6) Here he anticipates his close end, and at the same time he feels upset because he spent all his life working hard and getting nothing in return.

Meanwhile, Willy’s outlook changes in the light of his way of looking at America first and his family second. That is the reason living in the “greatest country in the world” and that you get “lost” is incomprehensible to him. His balance of belonging is upset; hectically then he tries to correct it or set it right. Willy first calls Biff a “a lazy bum!” (DOS, 1998: 5) then he contradicts himself saying that:

“Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such—personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There’s one thing about Biff—he’s not lazy [...] I’ll see him in the morning; I’ll have a nice talk with him. I’ll get him a job selling. He could be big in no time. My God!

Remember how they used to follow him around in high school? When he smiled at one of them their faces lit up. When walked down the street” (DOS, 1998: 6)

Willy is inconsistent, he contradicts himself from time to time. He has a strong belief in the American Dream stating that America is the greatest country in the world thus, he blames Biff for being a jobless man in America. However, this contradiction is natural result of the power of change that had befallen Willy whose race with time is rather lost even in the first pace. Being involved in the entanglement of the American new life, Willy has been unable to understand the core of change that needs a youthful momentum to cope with. He does not own this, rather he strongly, deeply and staunchly believes in the classical idealism which now is conducive to nowhere. His recognition of this gap between what he thinks and what he is has given him no opportunity to reset his life specially now he has run short of any spare power to get along with McCarthyist style or conduct.

Willy lives in another dream, he thinks that Biff will be a star in business forgetting that Biff is in his thirty years of age without getting a regular work. He is unable to see the reality that his son will not be successful in any time. Moreover, Willy feels astonished because his attractive son is not employed yet. Apparently critics agree that Willy’s corpus of belief mainly relies on physical appearance: a rule of the past. Yet the virtual fact requires more talents and sometimes “dirty work” that Willy is unable to grasp. He considers that to “be well-liked” is sufficient tool to success. The connection between the attractiveness and achieving the American dream is inherent in Willy’s ideals. Willy used to depict himself as a famous well-like man and he has a strong belief that he will be important

person someday as we perceive in his chat with his sons in (DOS, 1998: 18)

Biff: Where'd you go this time, Dad?

Gee, we were lonesome for you.

Willy [*pleased, puts an arm around each boy and they come down to the apron*]: Lonesome, heh?

Biff: Missed you every minute.

Willy: Don't say? Tell you a secret, boys. Don't breathe it to a soul. Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more.

Happy: Like Uncle Charley, heh?

Willy: Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not—liked. He's liked, but he's not—well liked.

Biff: Where'd you go this time, Dad?

Willy: Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the Mayor.

Biff: The Mayor of Providence!

Willy: He was sitting in the hotel lobby.

Biff: What'd he say?

Willy: He said, "Morning!" And I said, "You got a fine city here, Mayor." And then he had coffee with me. And then I went to Waterbury

Willy defines one of his basic beliefs of success that depends on attractiveness in achieving success. Willy considers himself an important man and people like him and that what he thinks will make him self-esteemed and successful business man. He believes that the strong personality will enable him to convince clients to buy anything he sells. Fifteen years ago, Willy applied the idea of being "well-liked" in order to let Biff achieve success as he anticipated that Charley's son 'Bernard' will succeed in high school but as for him this is not the real success. According to Willy's beliefs, appearance is the most requested qualification that bosses need, and his sons

are handsome so they have a bright future ahead on the contrary to Bernard who is well educated but he is not well-liked. Willy says:

"Willy: That's just what I mean, Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. "Willy Loman is here!" That's all they have to know, and I go right through" (DOS, 1998:20)

He insists that he is well-liked and very important person. He exposes himself as the role model that his sons must be guided by. Willy's adoption of wrong beliefs makes him unable to differentiate between illusion and reality. Willy here plants the seeds of the misleading doctrine of the American dream that he already has, in his sons. He brings them up believing in a dream that he has never achieved but many people he knows have already achieved it. Meanwhile, Willy admits that he is not the great salesman that he used to pretend, saying:

"But I gotta be at it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men—I don't know—they do it easier. I don't know why—I can't stop myself—I talk too much. A man oughta come in with a few words. One thing about Charley. He's a man of few words, and they respect him" (DOS, 1998: 24)

Willy's mental disorder becomes clear to the spectator, when he contradicts

himself from time to time. Before that he says he is well-liked and he is very important salesman then he does not know how to be respected. He does not know how Charley could succeed in his life while his (Willy's) own formula is threatened to be broken down under the comparison he makes between himself and Charley to discover that Charley is respected self-made man while he is a traveling salesman who earns on straight commission. Willy has three contradictory role-models for success in his life: his father, his brother Ben and Dave Singleman. However, despite the fact that these three have affected his career, neither of them could change his heading towards his inevitable end which delineates the awkward understanding of the crooked entanglements of the new life. His models are merely life models whose success depends on their personal career rather than on a fixed format that is applicable to anyone anywhere in America. Perhaps that is the tragic error Willy has committed and insisted on no matter how many times his sons or wife warns him against. His sense of superiority which by time alters into a mania has given no clue to him to listen to others except to himself.

Willy tells Howard that his father (Willy's) "lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family." (DOS, 1998: 60). Willy's first role model is his father who used to travel among territories selling flutes he himself makes. Willy and his elder brother Ben had been traveling with their father in a wagon. Willy's father was a salesman from whom Willy inherited the love for salesmanship. He was able to make money in one day more than what Willy makes in a week. The difference between the father and the son is, the father sells what he makes while the son sells what others make. Willy does not remember lots of things about his father but

he has been told everything about his father from his brother Ben. However, he admires the frontier's spirit his father has.

The second role-model is his brother Ben, who frequently visits Willy in his daydreams. Ben has often advised Willy to go to Alaska but Willy's strong belief in the American dream projected for him that a big city like New York definitely will provide him with the golden chances to be a rich, specially he is well-liked salesman. After that, he feels regretful that he did not listen to Ben's advice saying, "I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man" (ibid). Ben is a successful adventurer who could achieve success out of America. He went to Africa and worked in diamond mining "and by God I [Ben] was rich" (DOS, 1998: 33). Miller severely criticizes the American capitalistic society, symbolizing it, in Ben's words, to "Jungle" which is "dark" in which the man must struggle to survive. Therefore, Ben advises Biff to "Never fight fair with a stranger," in that way he "ll never get out of the jungle that way." (DOS, 1998: 34). Ben's actions in achieving success were risky, adventurous, and competency-based, in refereeing to the basic pillars of achieving the American dream. In DOS (1998: 107)

Ben indirectly refers to Willy's death saying, "Not like an appointment at all. A diamond is rough and hard to the touch". However, Miller does lean on symbolism as a way to point out to many issues that seem to be blurred to him. His use of this symbolism reflects his ability to waver between schools of thought that enable him to deliver his message to his audience. No doubt, American people during the 40s were abundantly absorbed in Americanism which could not leave them easily especially after US came out along with other Allies as triumphant from WWII. Yet, the huge space of delusion, uncertainty,

skepticism and shaken belief in the established entities have found their ways into Miller's thinking, then reflected into *Death of a Salesman*. Ronald Haymann (1977: 89) asserts that Ben's journey to the Jungle symbolizes discovering the reality of America because he realizes that America is not a country of dreams rather it is a country of struggling for survival morally in which success needs strength, individuality and evasion.

Dave Singleman is Willy's third role-model and the most admired. Willy first met him "in the Parker House" and he was "eighty-four years old" salesman. He had distributed his merchandises on "thirty-one states". Old Dave did not have to travel across different far states, rather he "picks up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room" that what makes Willy consider the salesmanship as "the greatest career a man could want". Willy thinks that such career makes one "remembered and loved and helped by so many different people" (DOS, 1998: 61). Willy describes Dave's celebrated death saying:

"when he died—and by the way he died the death of a salesman, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford, going into Boston —when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after that" (ibid)

Willy's speech about Dave's funeral expresses Willy's wishes to be rich and well-liked. Perhaps this is how Willy adopts the "well-like" format that he has ever applied to himself. The only problem he faces is that one man's pie is not necessarily his. Dave Singleman's success has participated in magnifying the tragic error Willy committed against himself. His model

of success is truthful yet the application of such model is improper due to so many variables such as time. However, some critics reveal that for Willy, time has frozen to the past and any attempt to break the ice and to melt down into the present reality has not been made. Therefore, the more he thinks of the past, the more he feels lost; it is the alienation effect he becomes a prey to. This indeed interprets the misunderstanding gap between him and almost everything around him. Probably, this is the reason that made a critic like Ronald Haymann respond to a question "what's wrong with Willy Loman?" he said "America is what's wrong with him." (1977: 91)

In the light of Maslow and Adler's theories, Willy's lack of love, respect and achievement has generated some inferiority complex that he suffers from because he is not self-esteemed. He thinks that money can solve the problem, so he starts chasing money and the only way to be wealthy as he believes is to follow the American Dream's guidelines: to work hard and be liked. Following the American Dream dictates, without getting respect nor wealth, some sort of schizophrenia that makes him contradictive especially when he talks about his car saying it "is the greatest car ever built" thereupon in the same scene he contradicts himself saying "That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car!" (DOS, 1998:21-23). Willy admits that the virtues he seeks are no longer available; "In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it." (DOS, 1998: 61). Willy realized that "Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear —or personality. You see what I mean? They don't know me any more." (ibid). It is significant to understand that Willy knows very well that all what had taken place in those days could not make him give up

searching for better alternatives. Yet he never, as well, gives up complaining for being lonely. Once when he was on the road he says he needs Linda and that might have thought to lead him to the affair with the woman in the hotel. Unlucky he was, yet Biff discovered him red-handed though he justifies this by saying, “She’s nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely” (DOS, 1998: 95). In fact, Willy is not lonely but he is always absent minded, he is indulged in his daydreams, he cannot feel the company. Thus, Willy resorts to satisfy his need of being wanted, loved and well liked through having an affair with woman who made him a “wonderful man” as he thinks (DOS, 1998: 25). The woman made him feel as though he was the salesman that he imagines himself. Willy’s dream to be seen as beloved successful salesman overcomes his loyalty for Linda. Willy’s betrayal of Linda is a common behavior from a person who was betrayed twice, first by his father who deserted his two sons, and second by his brother Ben who deserted him to search for his father. His affair with the woman is a flight of fancy that drops Willy’s image as a faithful father from Biff’s consideration. That makes Biff blame his father for his failure. When Willy loses his job, Charley offers him a new job in New York but he rejects Charley’s offer because he thinks that he is a well-liked successful man and his pride prevents him from working for a man, who is always seen by the Lomans as a meek man and they think they are better than him. Accepting Charley’s loan and refusing the job represents another contradiction in Willy’s personality. Charley keeps helping Willy, first by giving him money, second by offering him a job, third by giving him money again and fourth by trying to let Willy give up his belief that to be well-liked is the basic pillar in achieving his dream. That is clear in his talk to Willy (DOS, 1998: 75)

charley: Willy, when’re you gonna realize that them things don’t mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can’t sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you’re a salesman, and you don’t know that.

willy: I’ve always tried to think otherwise, I guess. I always felt that if a man was impressive, and well liked, that nothing—

charley: Why must everybody like you? Who liked J. P. Morgan? Was he impressive? In a Turkish bath he’d look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was very well liked. Now listen, Willy, I know you don’t like me, and nobody can say I’m in love with you, but I’ll give you a job because—just for the hell of it, put it that way. Now what do you say?

Charley’s advice went in vain, Willy has a high blind trust in his obsolete ideals, but Willy is unable to listen or to see the reality. His stubborn nature makes him hold up his beliefs and tries to feed it to his son Willy talks to Biff saying (DOS, 65 – 66):

“that’s the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked! [*He turns to Biff.*] And that’s why when you get out on that field today it’s important. Because thousands of people will be rooting for you and loving you. [*To Ben, who has again begun to leave*] And Ben! when he walks into a business office his name will sound out like a bell and all the doors will open to him! I’ve seen it, Ben, I’ve seen it a thousand times! You can’t feel it with your hand like timber, but it’s there!”

Willy insists on his beliefs that America is wonderful and to “be liked” must lead to success so he tries to convince his son Biff to follow his dictates. Willy cannot face the reality of his son’s failure, he does not listen to Biff who wants to persuade him to give up his dreams. Biff, in fact, has brought Willy to a point where he faces the harsh reality; he tells his father that he could not get a job in Oliver’s company. This unexpected shock has awakened a desperate feeling of deterioration, degrading and downgrading of his talents. They are worth “a dime a dozen”. the truth that Willy does not want to recognize, therefore he insists that he is “not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!” (DOS, 1998: 105”. Although, he is jobless now, he is still convinced that he can provide his family with a decent living standard, and the only way to provide them is to be dead to let them enjoy the money of his life insurance. Even when he commits suicide, he does so to improve that he is a successful man whose staunch belief in America is only frustrated.

It is true to say that Willy believes that personality and money make a successful salesman, faithful husband, and well-liked father. Willy’s funeral is unlike Singleman’s, because no one outside of his family has attended except his only friend Charley. The message revealed to Biff after the uncelebrated funeral of his father is quite conspicuous: Willy’s dreams are false, his American ideals are betraying, his love to “the greatest country in the world” is rather frustrated. Perhaps, the only true thing in his death is his devotion to his family as he adopts a high sense of self-denial to procure another chance for his family. He chose death because it was the only option he has to generate money. Critics, in this respect are rather embedded with a dual-faceted opinion: his death was

somehow heroic because it involves sacrifice; and his death was great loss as it admits defeat. However, in both cases critics like Ronald Hayman do not go far from the entire outcry of Miller against the new American manipulative community. Yet, one may even sometimes go further to say that this tragic end is rather a pseudo-death to close up the non-ending state of affair in the US. And this has absolutely disclosed Miller’s intention to magnify the personal distress so as to engulf the over-all value collapse in America which is heading quickly towards total capitalism, market economy, privatization and the free-world horizons. Biff has immediately realized this fact so Willy in his grave is told his reality by Biff says, “He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.” Then he adds “He never knew who he was.” (DOS, 1998: 111). It is time to say that Willy’s real failure is not his futile attempt to be a rich or successful salesman but, his real failure is embodied in his inability to recognize his real identity as a father, husband, and individual within a consumer society.

To sum up, Willy’s high blind confidence has been misguided by obsolete ideals and his reliance on personality. He does not recognize the rapid change in America and believes in the ideals of the old version of the American Dream in which the people were anticipating some golden age. Old version of the American dream is completely different from the new one, which requires all ingredients of the market economy. Willy’s old-fashioned ways to achieve his dreams are inapplicable anymore in a ruthless community that celebrates the winner because the always takes it all.

III- Integration in Search of Unity

Linda Loman, like any other female character in Miller’s plays, is but one of the

most controversial figures in *Death of a Salesman*. She is described as:

“Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to Willy’s behavior she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end” (DOS, 1998: 2)

Linda cares more about her husband, she feels upset for the decline that happens to Willy’s work opportunities. She always supports Willy and encourages him whenever he fails to sell. She is the basic compassionate pillar of the Lomans house. She absolutely is supportive and the sole positive figure in the household as she attempts to help find out some solutions for the looping dilemmas of her family. Linda tells her husband “Willy, darling, you’re the handsomest man in the world” whenever she sees him upset trying to relieve his depression (DOS, 1998: 25). Linda is the only self-actualized character in the Lomans’ house as her thinking is remarkably on holding her family tight. The spectators cannot shun her being Mother America who is kept aside yet she is in the mind of the sons and husband. Therefore, she is the only one who knows the inner feelings of her spouse and she attempts hard to let everybody understand what was wrong with Willy. No doubt that her guidance to pay the last installment of the flat was rather wise to secure the first step of stability to her family despite the fact this step came only in retard of a very short time before her husband’s death.

She rejects Biff’s hostility toward his father and she tries to reconcile him with his father whenever they quarrel, and this is clearly shown in her speech to Biff in (DOS, 1998:

“Then make Charley your father, Biff. You can’t do that, can you? I don’t say he’s a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He’s not the finest character that ever lived. But he’s a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He’s not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy”

Linda sums up her speech with very effective words “So attention must be paid.” That line has traditionally been held up as a social signpost, a cry to heed the plight of an ageing, insignificant man seduced and abandoned by a capitalist system that promised unattainable glory” (Brantley, *The New York Times*, February 11, 1999). It is a fully dramatic situation when the son calls his father “crazy”, but such a clever compassionate Linda, of course can renovate the crack in such a father-son relationship. In such a situation, Linda rebukes her son for insulting his father then she tries to make him humanly treat well his father who is psychologically sick. Linda appreciates what Willy tries to do in order to enjoy them. She reminds her sons of the difficulties their father faces to earn money. She never forgets to scold her sons whenever they make fool of their father. Linda effectively tells her sons that Willy “put his whole life into you and you’ve turned your backs on him. [*She is bent over in the chair, weeping, her face in her hands.*] Biff, I swear to God! Biff, his life is in your hands!” (DOS, 1998: 43).

Linda succeeds in persuading Biff to come to term with Willy when she begs Biff to show some sympathy to his father who was planting seeds in the dark alone then Biff decides to help him. Linda pays special attention to Willy's pride, she never exposes to him that she knows when he borrows money from Charley and he pretends that he has earned it himself, in order to avoid injuring his pride. At the same time she turns to Willy trying to justify Biff's anger and apologizes for him on Biff's behalf. She believes in the Loman's family, so she grieves silently for the decline in the relationship between Willy and Biff. This way she keeps the family unified. Besides, Linda's loyalty to her husband is a trait that cannot be over-emphasized, at the same time she takes care of her domestic budget, she used to weigh their income against the expenditure, she does so in order to avoid pushing Willy to do more because she knows that he does his best. She is smiling, mothering, hard worked, good wife: the victim of her husband's budget. Linda is a woman strong enough to remain cool usually that what enables her overcomes difficulties. Her main purpose is to hold up her house unified. Linda is the conjunction pieces of the Lomans. She is in the home and everybody loves to come to her at home where they meet each other.

IV- Frustration Incarnate

Biff is the young boy who is brought up to respecting, loving and being devoted to his father, till his father's reality is disclosed to be fake. Biff as a result revolts against his father and his beliefs. Biff's rejection of his father's coated reality is based on their malfunctioned relation. But his grasp of the parental model is rather inspired by the numbing words his father used to recur throughout all the past time. In other words, Willy successfully managed to build a sandy castle off shore in a desperate

attempt to reincarnate the past that has already gone. It is, therefore, thought that Willy is always looked at by Biff as a "terrible" nostalgic character who is unable to leave off his dream of the glorious past. Any meeting between them leads to a confrontation that dismantles the nostalgic attire. Perhaps, this explains the reason why Willy and Biff are always on feud and tense with each other. On the other hand, Biff, unlike his father, has not completely been the drive of the past, attempts to stop and reconsider his status yet still his father pulls him back to the "fake" glory of the past of Dave Singleman.

At the beginning of the play the spectators are informed that Biff and his brother Happy are at their father's house after a pre-specified date. Then they realize that Biff lives outside New York at the countryside and he is planning to return to the city. When Willy recalls the past times 15 years ago, he is depicted as a nimble footballer in his high school. He is preparing himself to join the college. He likes his father, he is ready to do anything in order to please his father whom he tells that:

Biff [*taking Willy's hand*]: This Saturday, Pop, this Saturday—just for you, I'm going to break through for a touchdown.

Happy: You're supposed to pass

Biff: I'm takin' one play for Pop. You watch me, Pop, and when I take off my helmet, that means I'm breakin' out. Then you watch me crash through that line!

Willy [*kisses Biff*]: Oh, wait'll I tell this in Boston!

Bernard: Biff, where are you? You're supposed to study with me today. (DOS, 1998: 19-20).

This conversation reveals a lot about the characters' personalities but the most

impressive revelation is that all the Lomans share the same dream. Biff asserts to Willy that he has absorbed the dream of success, and Happy agrees with them about the importance to be successful. Biff in this situation is motivated by the love he has for his father and by the dream he has to be successful, therefore he tries to make Willy happy and proud of him. Instead of advising Biff to focus on his study, Willy persuades him to keep training to be a successful footballer and enables him to be well known. At that, Biff fails in math exam and the only one who can persuade Mr. Birnbaum to change the marks is his father the successful, well known, beloved salesman, thus Biff decides to go to Boston to seek his father's help.

The attempt to help Biff be successful in math exam has ironically led to his future destruction. Biff is shocked and frustrated when he discovers his father betrayal to his mother with a woman who works with him at the same company. The image Biff has about his father as faithful, well-liked, successful father has been destroyed and from then he begins to create another image as unfaithful, lying, failing fake father. Biff at this time feels frustrated, he refuses to retake math exam missing his chance to enter the college. The frustration he suffers makes him unable to accept Willy as a father anymore, so he decides to go to the countryside seeking for new identity.

However, the play has set from the very beginning that Loman's house is the haven where Biff returns from the countryside after 10 years of hard work. Biff suffers from his inability to settle long in any job. Willy blames Biff saying, "it's more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week!" compassionate Linda to him exposing to the spectator that "He's finding himself, Willy"

then she adds "I think he's still lost, Willy. I think he's very lost" (DOS, 1998:6). Willy returns to his obsolete ideals saying "Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such—personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff—he's not lazy." (DOS, 1998:6). Biff's shock makes him stronger, it makes him see the reality of his father's faulty ideals so he keeps searching for his own identity that he could not attain in the west. It makes his dream stronger as Miller depicts in his description of Biff. Miller describes Biff as, "*well built, but in these days bears a worn air and seems less self-assured. He has succeeded less, and his dreams are stronger and less acceptable than happy's*" (DOS, 1998: 8). Biff suffers from the aftermath of the shock, he has less confidence, less humor because Willy used to mock him often. Biff narrates his suffering to attain his dream which he could not fulfill saying:

"Well, I spent six or seven years after high school trying to work myself up. Shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. And it's a measly manner of existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And always to have to get ahead of the next fella. And still—that's how you build a future"

Thus, he decides to go to his ex-employer, to convince him to work for him. Willy enthusiastically welcomes the idea then he supports Biff and Happy to start again with Bill Oliver in selling sport goods. Biff assures that Bill "did like [him]. Always liked [him]." (DOS, 1998: 47). Biff relies on Bill's admiration towards him as

Willy taught him to be well-like in order to attain success. All the Lomans' expectations are hopeful, they are assured that Biff will succeed in borrowing some money and start his own business because "Oliver always thought the highest of [Biff]" (DOS, 1998: 48). Unlike the Lomas' expectation, Oliver does not listen to Biff and even does not remember Biff. Biff knows the reason because he "was a shipping clerk." (DOS, 1998: 83) and realizes his real identity as a "Dime Doze" (DOS, 1998: 105) a reality that Willy denies saying "I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!" (ibid). Biff feels frustrated and incapable of manipulating the reality. This points out that Biff's frustration is rather inherited from the candid hopelessness of his father despite the fact that Willy has affected his son's destiny. Biff says "And I never got anywhere because you [refers to Willy] blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!" (ibid). Biff first refused to retake the math exam because he was suffering the aftershock and fallout that what led him to lose the chance to cope with Bernard who, on the contrary, manages to achieve success and pursues his study to become a lawyer later. : And secondly, because his father all the time mocks him for being a farmhand, he does not compromise to adjust to the new models of life since the shackles of the past created by his father recurrently begin to influence him; he says

"I saw—the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute

I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy." (ibid)

V- American New Spirit

A careless, womanizer, tough, handsome younger Happy Loman is a different model that represents a new current. As a Loman, Happy definitely has dreams that he is longing to fulfill. Happy is first introduced to the spectator as:

"happy is tall, powerfully made. Sexuality is like a visible color on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way, for he has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seemingly more content." (DOS, 1998: 8)

Happy's speech with Biff in their room at the beginning of the play exposes his dreams that all revolves around money and women. A womanizer Happy dates his friends' women, and that shows his betraying nature, he never misses a chance to date a woman. Happy is not the favorite son to Willy, they pay little attention to him because unlike Biff he can handle responsibility. He can live within the "jungle" of the American society because he has the same nature that the others have. Happy's failure in the school did not hinder him from finding a job in the city. He works in New York, he has his own apartment where he dates women. Surprisingly, Happy was bashful and Biff was his Godfather, he "taught [him] everything [he] knows about women. Don't forget that." (DOS, 1998: 9).

Happy, in other words, has mysteriously worked hard to develop a character that was rather far off from that of his father. He was closer to his uncle than to his father. His preference to the pleasure

represented by money and women is at the expense of distress which is left to Biff. He never thinks to pursue the same framework of his father's failing dream. Rather he has jumped into the jungle and, though limitedly, he managed to achieve some success. His intimate tie with his brother Biff was not enough to save Biff from the entanglement of the father who is leading him to where he would end. Happy is quite attentive to his own whims. Happy's attitude toward women gives him the power to feel self-esteem, therefore he shows very much more self-confidence than Biff. His robust corpus of attention does not pay attention to defeat; he has moderate success but he always exaggerates and introduces himself as assistant buyer while the reality is exposed by Biff as he is "one of the two assistants to the assistant" (DOS, 1998: 104). Happy lacks the self-knowledge, unlike Biff who discovers what he actually is. He reveals more about his personality in his speech to Biff, in (DOS, 1998: 12)

"All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to die. And suppose I get to be merchandise manager? He's a good friend of mine, and he just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he's building another one. He can't enjoy it once it's finished. And I know that's just what I would do. I don't know what the hell I'm workin' for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment—all alone. And I think of the rent I'm paying. And it's crazy. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I'm lonely."

Happy's concept of the American Dream differs drastically from that of his father as he deeply believes in the venturesome manipulation of opportunities. Yet the stagnant situation he finds himself in is

partly attributed to applying the concept of his father. Therefore, he attempts, like his uncle Ben before, to set himself free from the illusion that engulfs the household. His abilities are not indeed better than those of his brother, Biff, yet he has managed to change the course of his life even a little. He in other words is rather cognizant that his better chances lie in his disillusionment and alienation from the Lomans despite his allegiance to his family.

Happy is somehow better than Biff financially as he owns an apartment and he has a job. Happy has a practical mind as he thinks economically. His financial initiatives represent his creative attempts to save the family's image from the collapse. Therefore, he originally presents the idea of selling sporting goods. Happy's practical opportunity is embodied in his manipulation of what is possible regardless of the ethical classical standard that might impede his progress or his capitalist opportunities in life. He accordingly suggests to Biff to lie to his father concerning Bill Oliver's interview; he advises him to tell his father that the meeting had been delayed to some other day. Happy, Miller shows, reveals a dim image of capitalism which might lead to demolition of the business ethical standards and therefore illuminate the "well-like" motto of his father altogether. In this way, practically enough, Happy could earn his little fortune and live frivolous life while his brother Biff wallows in the "one dollar an hour" life (DOS, 1998: 106).

In the requiem, Happy stands on his father's grave and says:

"All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have—to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is

where I'm gonna win it for him"
(DOS, 1998: 111)

Happy takes it upon himself to achieve what his father could not achieve and he promises everybody to fight ferociously to attain success.

VI- The New Trend of the New World.

Miller has revealed that The wind of change is inevitably taking place along with the new mass-production trends, technological advancement, new economic theories, market-economy among other decisive factors that have altered the existing American way of life. Miller describes Ben as "*a stolid man, in his sixties, utterly certain of his destiny, and there is an aura of far places about him.*" (DOS, 1998: 30), while Willy describes him as "a great man!" (DOS, 1998: 33), "a Genuine" and a "success incarnate" (DOS, 1998: 27). Ben is the ruthless successful man who had made himself through his adventurous, brave spirit. Unlike his brother Willy, Ben did look forward to the new world that is never discovered yet. Ben tells his success story to his nephews saying "when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. [*He laughs.*] And by God I was rich." (DOS, 1998: 33). He is introduced as a successful example, similar to that of Dave Singleman. His belief in the American Dream is revealed in his adventurous visit to Africa to work in the diamond mines where he came from quite rich. Ben's outlook is rather enhanced by his lucrative business which has on the other hand deepened Willy's sense of failure, an image that is copied by the two Loman brothers, Biff and Happy.

Ben's realistic vision of life makes him rich, He attempts to convey this new spirit to his brother who seems to be staunch enough not to change. Therefore his

suggestion to him to go to virgin land of Alaska fell on deaf ears. All Ben's advice is honest and clever : "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way." He refers to America as a wild place in which the survival is for the fittest.

VII- American Dream and After

The American Dream is surely based on the concept of "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" but it is above all, a matter of ambition. James Truslow Adams, an American writer and historian, in 1931 states: "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement", which not only points towards a better standard of living for Americans but also denounces a degree of greed in the US society. Ambition not only "killed the cat" but killed relationships as well in texts like.... *Death of a Salesman*. Similarly, Luther S Luedtke says

"the popular metaphor, American Dream, which reads thus : A popular metaphor in writing about life and aspiration in the United States, the American Dream usually implies social mobility and material success: a rise from rags to riches through sacrifice, hard work, perseverance, and luck. One also finds the term associated with democratic self-government, religion, freedom, racial equality, educational opportunity, home ownership, quality of life, and a variety of sensual indulgences. The motto came into currency in the early 1930s, when the nation was sliding into the Great Depression, and has maintained an undercurrent of false expectations, illusion, betrayal, especially in literary

representations.” (Reader’s Guide, 1998: 85)

The American Dream, then, is not only a way of life but also a pattern of thinking mode that spread out in the US and formed a programmed route for the venturous people to pursue. Critics, scholars, dramatists and thinkers all agree that the American Dream has been emptied of its intrinsic content when applied to the community. Its ideals which had triggered the anxiety of pioneers were tested by time and disclosed unexpectedly the nightmarish consequences whose impact was only felt on a personal basis. Miller does not go far from this conception in almost all his plays, yet in *Death of a Salesman*, he emphatically declares the passive consequences of this dream, which is rather luring people into the whirlpool of fiasco.

Miller asserts, “The thing you’ve got to understand about my plays is that the background is the American dream and the foreground the American nightmare.” (quoted in Bigsby 2005: 60), in *Death of a Salesman*, Miller depicts the American Dream in many different forms such as the pursuit for wealth, being well-liked and success. Metaphorically, the American Dream in *Death of a Salesman* is declared to be an obsessive trauma that has already controlled the destiny of people. Any disillusionment may cause loss of almost everything, even one’s life. Successful character are: Ben who could attain success in Africa by discovering the diamond mines; Bernard could attain success being a successful lawyer assisted by his education while Howard Wagner who inherited his fortune from his father’s company. Willy Loman is a representative of the hard American man who spent thirty six years working for the Wagner company without attaining any success. Willy’s American

Dream represents the bad faith in the superiority of the materialism over the spiritualism. Willy blindly believed in the American Dream and its values that let him down, the American Dream assisted the company in consuming Willy’s youth and throwing him out as an exhausted old man who cannot provide his family. Miller depicts the main character Willy Loman as representative for every American dreamer who believes that success is nowhere but in America. Willy has been misguided by the dictates of the American Dream that led him to identity crisis and left him dead body in his Chevy that he loves. His identity being based on the social acceptance and his endeavor to be well-liked led him to suffer all his life in order to get self-esteemed. With the end of the play, Willy commits suicide, convinced that the payment of his life insurance will provide his son Biff with the wealth that had eluded Willy himself; however, the same forces that destroyed his father, have already tarnished Biff’s ideals.

Biff “Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man [...] gets lost. And such a hard worker” (DOS, 1998: 6), Biff Loman is another failure man who spent his youth without getting married nor settled in any kind of job. Biff is victimized by his father’s doctrine, the same doctrine that victimized his father. Biff the man who is fond of nature and outdoor work did not find himself in the countryside. Happy could not achieve the American dream being a successful man but he promised at the end of the play to fulfill his father dreams.

The American Dream in the play is not a dream of success but it is a dream of ownership that could not be attained by Willy who spent his life paying off the installments for his belongings to own them and when he finished paying them off he found that they are all used up as he says:

“Whoever heard of a Hastings refrigerator? Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it’s broken! I’m always in a race with the junkyard! I just finished paying for the car and it’s on its last legs. The refrigerator consumes belts like a goddam maniac. They time those things. They time them so when you finally paid for them, they’re used up.”

Willy bought his house when Biff was a child and kept paying off the house installments for so many years while the last pay was in his funeral day, ironically at the time he can own the house he rested in a grave as his wife says “Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there’ll be nobody home. We’re and clear. We’re free” (DOS, 1998: 109). What happened exactly in the play that the RISA (Repressive Ideological State Apparatus) represented by the Wagner company exploited Willy Loman for thirty six years then discarded him and led him to decline physically and psychologically. Thus, the main reason behind Willy’s psychological and physical rapid decline at the end of the play is his frustrated faith in the American dream.

Conclusion

In *Death of a Salesman*, the perspective of his dramatic thought was the same towards the idea of the American Dream. This staunch belief in the passive consequences left very little to ponder on the possibility of solution and to the natural consent of the tragic ending of his characters. However, a major part of his contribution in *Death of a Salesman* was rather given to the modern meaning of tragedy which has motivated audience and critics to elaborate more on the dramatic value of the play. This therefore has

undermined the desperate attempts of Willy Loman to search for some glory, yet in American and sometimes in a cowboy style. Motivated by this promise, Willy Loman worked hard for thirty-six years roaming among different states in order to be self-esteemed by attaining the American Dream. Willy’s continuous attempts to be self-esteemed man cannot be considered as a personality flaw. He rather chooses to depict Americanism as a way of life. He thinks that money can make him well-liked and respected, as the American dream dictates. Sixty- one years passed in pursuing the American Dream of success and be liked, without fulfilling anything. His sons, on the other hand, were also unable to awaken his “guts” to stand up against the illusion that he is taking himself and his family to. Furthermore, Biff, his older son, is been taken by the charismatic figure his “Dad” has drawn to him yet at a certain time he recovers from the hypnotization his father led him to have. Yet, Biff was not capable of stopping his father’s obsession with his tremendous belief in the American Dream. Willy is shocked by losing his “fake” identity as a successful salesman that generates the identity crisis in him which he cannot endure then he commits suicide. It is clear that Miller in this play does not go against the individual’s need to be self-esteemed or successful rather he objects the ways an individual may take to achieve esteems. Miller in fact presents many models of successful men who could achieve success by taking the right ways without holding obsolete ideals nor harming other members of the society. It is concluded that Miller does not object Jefferson’s version of the American Dream which insists on the individual freedom and right of choice, but he objects the new version of the American Dream which turns the society into a “jungle” ruled atrociously by a single maxim of “the survival for the fittest”.



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