

SELF-ANNIHILATION AS FINAL TESTIMONY: TRAUMA, WITNESSING, AND ECONOMIC DISPOSABILITY IN DEATH OF A SALESMAN

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes Death of a Salesman by looking at the interrelated structures of trauma, witnessing, and economic disposability to position that the process of self-destruction by Willy Loman is a product of psychological disintegration and structural marginalization. The analysis of the study is the qualitative thematic analysis of the primary text to establish internal conflict patterns, relational misrecognition, and socio-economic devaluation patterns that mutually build the tragic movement of the protagonist. The discussion shows that the psychological instability that occurred in the case of Willy is not a consequence of his personal flaws in solitude but of unfulfilled dreams, broken identity, and constant financial strain. Additionally, the paper demonstrates that the inability to maintain ethical witnessing in families and care is also a problem in the workplace since the lack of attention amplifies the feeling of isolation. Placing the decline of Willy in the context of a capitalistic economy that places the worth of humans at the same level as their productivity production, the research presents the importance of economic organization as the determinant of social self-worth and social currency. Finally, the paper follows that the last act of Willy is to be viewed as a socially predetermined testament of protest against the system that makes the identity a means of making money and dignity a means of making a fool. The thematic unity nature of the study provides an integrated interpretive model that cuts across psychological, relational, and structural aspects of the tragedy by Miller and thus reaffirms the relevance of the play in the current context of value, recognition, and modern identity discussion.

Keywords

Trauma; Witnessing; Economic Disposability; Self-Annihilation; Capitalism; Identity Crisis; Recognition; Arthur Miller; *Death of a Salesman*; Modern Tragedy

INTRODUCTION

Death of a Salesman (1949) by Arthur Miller is one of the most powerful critical plays about the capitalist modernity, revealing the psychological, economical and ideological stresses that define the American subject of the middle of the twentieth century. Set in the socio-economic context of the aftermath of the Great Depression and the emergence of corporate capitalism, the play is a dramatic way of showing the tragic decline of Willy Loman, the old salesman, whose sense of identity forms around productivity and market value, the American Dream, and its mythology. The dramaturgy by Miller turns the inner suffering into the outer statement whereby the breakdown and eventual suicide of Willy will not be his failure but a socio-economic record of violence of the system (Biggsby, 2005).

Willy Loman with his broken temporality, his hallucinations, and his obsessive compulsive repetition in time is a prime example of what is conceptualized by Cathy Caruth as the belated experience of trauma, an event that has not been completely absorbed in the present but will be reproduced by intrusive repetition (Caruth, 1996). The flashbacks, fragmented witnessing and time dislocation are arranged in the mental world of Willy, indicating that his consciousness functions as testimonial memory of raw economical and emotional traumas. His cyclic repetition of living with Ben and Biff is characteristic of the cyclic temporality of trauma

wherein memory breaks down at past and present forming a continuous location of psychic disinjurment.

Testimony theory also sheds more light on how Willy destroys himself as a way of communicative witnessing. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub hold that, testimony is born when trauma must be expressed before a group of audience able to listen ethically (Felman and Laub, 1992). In the dramatism, the family home has beheld, the family house is a witnessing room: Linda, Biff, and Happy are secondary observers of the crumbling psyche of Willy. The impossibility of meaningful listening, however, especially in the capitalist and patriarchal system, makes verbal testimony of Willy ineffective and pushes him into the so-called corporeal testimony: suicide as the ultimate undeniable act of speech.

The death of Willy cannot be separate economically, or his suitability within the late capitalism. Based on the Marxist discussions on alienation of labor, the play reveals how employees are appreciated based on their ability to produce (Marx, 1867/1976). The fact that Willy is fired by Howard Wagner tells us how an institution has been erasing the aging workforce in society, which serves as another proof to support the idea by David Harvey that capitalism always disposes those bodies that are no longer profitable (Harvey, 2010). Willy adopts this market logic and puts into equal consideration his life insurance value and human worth. His intended suicide is therefore turned into an economic business, making his death purchase value to the survival of his family.

Besides, Prospero in Willy is highly intertwined with productivity as a capitalist man and masculine breadwinner. The concept of hegemonic masculinity by R.W. Connell can serve to understand the mental crisis that Willy experiences because he is not able to fulfill dominant values of success, power, and support (Connell, 1995). His embarrassment, denial and acting optimism conceal heavy emasculation that occurs through structural economic failure. Therefore, his self destruction is an act of patriarchal restoration and testimonial protest simultaneously.

Theatrical trauma bearing is strengthened through expressionism in which Miller is taking place. The liquid phase, the intersecting time frames and ghostly hauntings blur the realist demarcations where the audience is moral observers to the psychic agony of Willy (Murphy, 1995). The audience is not just witnessing a tragedy, they are rectifying a testimonial experience with capitalist violence written upside down on human body and mind.

Hence in this paper Willy Loman suicide is conceptualized as a dead witness- a self-destructive pronouncement that was generated at the point of trauma, witness failure and economic irrelevance. Using theory of trauma, testimony and study of Marxist criticism as a synthesis, the study asserts that Willy did not die either out of extreme escapism but out of extreme sacrifice, but as a historically determined mode of being that reveals the dehumanizing calculus of capitalist modernity. Where language becomes inadequate to convey all, wreaking havoc of a personal tragedy, his annihilation remains, making a personal tragedy socio-economic testimony.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research paper explores the possibility of seeing the suicide of Willy Loman in the Death of salesman as an act of self-destruction that is end testament to psychological trauma, bad witnessing and economic irrelevance in the capitalist world. The issue revolves around whether his death is a personal or a societal psychological meltdown or a wider socio-economic crime against a system that commodifies human value, falsifies the groan and makes age-related labor redundant.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The play *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller has produced a rich literature of reviews as far back as 1949 when it first premiered as a play, with academics discussing its tragic form, social-

economic critique, psychological and ideological subjection to the American Dream. Although initial criticism placed the greatest emphasis on its status as a modern tragedy, more interdisciplinary approaches, especially trauma studies, testimony theory, and psychoanalysis, and Marxist critique have increased interpretive opportunities. This literature review is a survey of significant scholarly works that apply to the current study issue of the self-annihilation as testimonial expression as a result of trauma, unsuccessful witnessing, and economic disposability of the capitalist economy.

Critical discussions in the beginning placed the play by Miller in the genre of modern tragedy. In his argument, Christopher Bigsby (2005) did state that Willy Loman was a symbol of democratisation tragedy, in which tragedy arose not out of royal collapse but due to socio-economic factors that may affect anyone. In *Tragedy and the Common Man*, Miller himself claims the modern tragedy is a manifestation of the individual insisting on his dignity in crashing social systems (Miller, 1949/1996). Other academics like Raymond Williams (1966) also explain the play to be a work that criticizes the ideology of the capitalist system that values nothing except financial success.

The American Dream is functioning as the ideological machine that propels Willy and his dreams. As June Schlueter (1985) remarks, the promise of upward mobility to be achieved by the Dream turns out to be psychologically destructive in instances when one cannot obtain material success. Harold Bloom (2007) also remarks that what is tragic about Willy is that he is so wrong in thinking that being a likable person is the same as being economically viable because it shows how capitalist mythology takes the place of the real self with the show business aspect of success. The readings define socio-economic pressure as the general background of the moral collapse of Willy but succeed in theorising the death of Willy as testimonial communication partly.

The trauma literature gives a very important insight on the breakdown of Willy as a person. According to Cathy Caruth, traumas can be defined as overwhelming and when they cannot be instantly processed and instead re-emerging through the intrusive memory (Caruth, 1996). The examples of this belated organization of traumatic experience can be seen in terms of Willie, inescapable hallucinations, disjunctions along the time-line, and obsessive repetitions of the past experiences, in particular, with Ben and Biff.

Barry Gross (1984) states that the fluid temporality of the play makes psychic rupture dramatise, but not linear memory. Brenda Murphy (1995) also supports this idea with saying that, expressionistic staging by Miller reflects the traumatised consciousness of Willy, whereby past and present are merged in an endless psychological present. Such fragmentation correlates with the psychological evidence by Bessel van der Kolk that trauma breaks the uninterrupted narratives and self-coherence (van der Kolk, 2014).

The economical causes of the trauma in Willy have also been investigated by scholars. According to Stephen Marino (2015), competition, instability, and the fear of becoming obsolete are the reasons why corporate modernity generates chronic psychological stress. The trauma of Willy does not then stem out of some tragic event but rather as the result of the long-term exposure of Willy to capitalist precarity.

Testimony theory adds to the analysis of trauma because it foregrounds in a communicative aspect of trauma. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub theorize about the dialogic happening termed as testimony as one that needed both speaker and ethical listener (Felman & Laub, 1992). Trauma requires seeing, failure to which, pain increases.

In this context, the frequent retelling of the story, of his sales myths, paternal guidance, his nostalgic memories of the past by Willy, can be viewed as testimony attempts. Nevertheless, Enoch Brater (1994) is also wrong by saying that these narratives cannot work since they are

rooted in illusion and not the recognized pain. His family listens to him and does not really see him.

The role of Linda Loman has gathered a lot of feminist-testimonial interpretations. Deborah Geis (1995) informs us that Linda is a kind of a second witness who realizes the misery of Willy, but is structurally denied to express it in the patriarchy. Her renowned plea, which is in the form of an ethical imperative, Attention must be paid, is an area of witnessing which spans the domestic area to the viewer.

Theatrical spectators are the final watchers. According to Alice Rayner (1994), Miller creates an ethics of spectatorship in which viewers are forced to consider systemic violence that is instigated on everyday people. This death of Willy is therefore not a personal tragedy, but a witness of its own testimony.

Although a lot of critics interpret the suicide of Willy as the sign of hopelessness, or sacrifice, not many of them see it as a piece of evidence. In his work, J.L. Austin (1962) uses the speech-act theory in his arguments with the view that actions can be utterances. The planned car crash by Willy may therefore be interpreted as a performative gesture employed in sending value in an insurance payout.

The concept of grievability by Judith Butler is also educative. According to Butler (2004), social systems dictate whose lives should be respected and whose deaths legitimate. The ungrieved disposability is evident in the part of Willy as he fears dying the *Death of a Salesman*. His suicide plots are aimed at ensuring that he gets to be recognized after his death.

This economic intentionality of death On one side, Steven Centola (1993) observes the economic intentionality of this death: Willy puts the worth of his insurance at 20,000 dollars, and turns suicide into a means of earning money. In this economic rationalization, suicide has been restated as a commodification of testimony a body statement as a part of a capitalist exchange logic.

Salesman criticism has centered on the Marxist scholarship. It builds up on the theory of alienated labor introduced by Karl Marx, who creates a platform of alienation of Willy towards his job, himself, and social value (Marx, 1867/1976). Sales productivity is inseparable with his identity; once he is old-fashioned, there is no way to see him in the society.

According to Raymond Williams (1977), the play expresses the undermining of a human solidarity by capitalism. David Harvey (2010) pushes this argument further and maintains that it is in the order of late capitalism to dispose of surplus populations. Willy is a personification of this expendability- when he is no longer profitable he gets fired.

According to Michael Spindler (1998), the play reveals the falsehood that corporate paternalism betrays: the false impression of loyalty not stands the test of slumping economic utility. Institutional dehumanization in the case of Howard Wagner can be seen in his lack of concern.

Economic disposability is also an overlapping concept with biopolitics. The concept of a power that controls life value by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1978) throws light on the fact that capitalist apparatuses have a way of defining whose life is economically right. It is the logic of regulation that is made an internalization of Willy by his suicide.

Gender spheres further provide a background of the self-destruction of Willy. The theory of hegemonic masculinity introduced by R.W. Connell pinpoints the three masculine concepts, provision, authority and success (Connell, 1995). Failing to accomplish these roles by Willy creates emasculating shame.

According to Kaja Silverman (1992) recognition and productivity perpetuate the male identity in capitalist patriarchy. The loss of dominion and self is the result of fatherly failure and the bankruptcy of Willy. His suicide is therefore an act trying to reinstate a patriarchal honor by giving sacrifices.

Father-son witnessing is also studied by scholars. The fact that Biff can see through Willy made by him signifies traumatic bearing that shatters family mythology (Abbotson, 2007). This generational failure makes Willy psychologically grounded.

Officially, testimonial trauma is strengthened by the expressionist techniques, which are employed by Miller. The clear glass, moving lights, the overlapping of the time frames brings consciousness instead of exteriority. Robert A. Martin (1972) claims that the externalization of the mental testament of Willy was done through the form of the play.

This physical intrusion of the past towards the present dramatizes so-called sites of memory described by Pierre Nora (Nora, 1989). The house that Willy lives in turns out to be a museum of financial hope and mental failure.

There is scant research that integrates trauma theory, testimony studies, and economic disposability into one concept despite a substantial amount of research on the topic of tragedy, capitalism, and psychology. Suicide has been interpreted as either despair, sacrifice, or delusion yet not fully as a testimonial communication which is a product of structural violence.

This study addresses that gap by theorizing Willy's self-annihilation as:

- Trauma expression
- Failed witnessing outcome
- Economic exchange act
- Corporeal testimony against disposability

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research applies a qualitative research design based on a textual study to explore the self-destructive nature of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* as an expression of trauma, failed witnessing, and economic disposability. The study is interpretive and aims at comprehending the psychological, testimonial and socio-economic aspects of the play instead of determining variables at a quantitative level. The theoretical framework that will inform the study is a combination of trauma theory (Caruth, 1996) to discuss the memory dislocation, hallucinations, and recurring psychological injury, the other theory is the testimony studies (Felman and Laub, 1992) to examine the way of hearing or silencing the voice of Willy in terms of trying to communicate of his suffering and the last theory is the Marxist critique (Marx, 1867/1976; Harvey, 2010) to interpret the alienation of labor and the deval. The information is gathered intentionally in the main text (dialogues, stage directions, flashback sequences), showing the trauma of Willy, aspects of testimonials and economic fears, and added on by the secondary sources (scholarly books, journal articles, dissertations on the trauma in literature, testimony, and capitalism) with a focus on peer-reviewed and broadly used materials. This research uses the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) that is divided into three strands, which include trauma, discerning psychological breakdown, hallucinations, memory disruption, shame, and suicide ideation via flashback and communication involving figures like Ben; witnessing, studying testimonial communication and failures of ethical hearing in the family and through the role of the audience, as a meta-witness, including intercession by Linda and recognition of Willy illusion by Biff; and economic disposability, dissecting the structures of capitalism, labor alienation, firing. The analytical processes comprise a close reading in determining pertinent passages in the text, coding the passages in accordance with the three strands, grouping the codes to form a coherent theme, including but not limited to the Hallucinatory Trauma, Habeas Corpus in our Family and Economy of the Self, as well as the synthesis of the findings to reveal the intersection of trauma, failed witnessing and economic disposability in contributing to the ultimate testament of suicide by Willy. This combined approach provides the work with the understanding of self-annihilation of Willy Loman as the personal and historically determined gesture giving an interdisciplinary vision of tragedy that points to the causation of the system and not failure.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, the thematic analysis of *Death of a Salesman* is made in three interconnected conceptual strands: trauma, witnessing, and economic disposability. The discussion focuses on the ways of how these themes act not as independent motifs but as related structural forces that define the psychological state of Willy Loman, the conflicts in his relationships, and his position in the society. Upon close reading, this section recognizes the patterns of affective discontinuity, unsuccessful recognition, and institutional devaluation, which mutually combine to create the tragic course of the main character.

The trauma thematic strand is the first one that examines the inner breakdown of Willy expressed in the form of hallucinations, loss of time and identity crunch, and endless self-doubt. Instead of presenting trauma as a one-time event, the play shows that it is accrued, meaning that it comes out of decades of unfulfilled expectations, financial stress, and internalized discontent. The second theme, witnessing, explores how recognition works in the family and professional environments. It examines that, the desire of Willy who wants to be recognized as valuable, respected, and meaningful is not completely achieved and this enhances his isolation. His third strand, economic disposability, places his crisis in a wider context of both capitalism and makes it clear that capitalist formations devalue human value on the basis of productivity and profitability.

Combined, these themes highlight the structural and psychological aspects of the downfall of Willy. The storytelling shows that he can not be simply broken down to personal weakness or the wrongful ambition. Rather, it is led by the combination of emotional weakness, relational misidentification, and the economic constraints in the system. With these three thematic things used to arrange the textual evidence, this section tries to show how individual suffering in this play cannot be separated of larger social and economic facts. Life of Willy turns into a location where individual and societal constructions meet, and thematic structure is necessary to comprehend the richness and complexity of the tragedy.

Trauma

Death of a Salesman is a play where the sense of trauma is the theme that defines Willy Loman and his life, his relationship and his self destruction. His life may be characterized by cumulative psychological trauma, and not a momentary traumatic experience. The trauma suffered by Willy is the internalized shame, identity fracture, constant regret and hallucinations that pulls him back to the past. Such mental traumas are interwoven with social demands, family demands and never-ending chase after the American Dream, which causes the state of continuous emotional and mental discomfort.

An obvious manifestation of the inner battle and trauma to Willy is reflected in the words: **“Why am I trying to become what I don’t want to be ... when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am.”** This statement shows the conflict between what he truly wants and what the society wants him to do. The trauma experienced by Willy is heightened by the fact that he feels compelled to live up to the expectations of success and respectability in that he must be well-liked, he must attain economic success and it must be a respectable establishment and at the same time within himself, he desires his own freedom, fulfillment, and being genuine at the same time. This contradiction between the ideals of society and human desires leads to psychological mess and leaves Willy in self-accusation and unattainable dream.

History of trauma in the life of Willy is also disclosed in hallucinations and dislocation in time, which is a recurring theme of the past intruding on the present. The fact that he talks to his dead brother, Ben, and recalls occasions when he was successful leaves the distinction between memory and reality self-blurred. Through such interactions, his raw trauma is externalized, an aspect that explains why psychological wounds that have not been resolved, keep reoccurring

to renders the present unsettled. As Willy reflects: **“I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been.”** This conviction highlights the psychological cost of unfulfilled ambitions, the build-up cost of self-deception and haunting character of living a life of pursuing illusions. The trauma in this case is not merely emotional but existential that raises the question of the two or three of the existence of Willy himself and his own capacity to confront the reality.

The trauma that Willy experiences is also highly related to masculinity and social norms. His self-confidence is associated with his ability to support the family, achieve success in his career, and have the paternal control. The conflict of his failures and self image creates extreme shame and self-guilt. He laments, **“A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man,”** bringing to light the invisible burden of his every day difficult, draining work, and missed opportunities. This is an expression of the mental pressure on a man whose hard work and contribution go unnoticed and underestimated, and adds to the trauma within his mind.

Moreover, the excessive focus on the past achievements and perceived successes is an act of coping on the part of Willy and source of psychic pain. His memory of the simple pleasures of life highlights why his dreams were unattainable by the reality that he lived. He observes, **“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.”** His dull work is contrasted with the freedom he wants which shows the trauma of delayed gratification and psychological burden of a life that is secondary to the needs of capitalist society. These thoughts confirm that his suffering cannot be only personal but it is structurally predetermined.

The trauma and the existential despair become the most intense with the scene when Willy philosophizes about death and believes that the death will be his escape and his ultimate statement. His obsession with life insurance and the wish to leave a trace to the family members illustrates how psychological trauma and the perceived responsibility are coming together in the sense that the suicide is a solution to the psychic tension that cannot be endured anymore. In this regard, the trauma itself is internal and mediated by society Willy has personal failures and social institutions which exploit and circumscribe his mind.

Furthermore, the relationship aspect of trauma is reflected in his relationships with the family. The fact that Willy suffers in managing to reconcile with Biff and communicate well with Linda is adding to his isolation. When he reflects, **“Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all,”** it shows the generational and interpersonal effects of trauma: Willy is, and his children are, held captive by their own unfulfilled hopes and disappointed lives, and make them continue psychological suffering.

The illusion of success and gaining popularity is another source of trauma in Willy as it would be shown when he claims, **“The only thing you've got in this world is what you can sell.”** This vision turns the value of a human being into an exchange value, enhancing self-dislike and existential fear. The combination of these values within him adds psychological impact regarding failure and he becomes more susceptible to hallucinations, depression and obsessive rumination.

To sum up, the life of Willy Loman is multidimensional in the sense that it implies psychological, emotional and existential disorders. It presents itself in hallucinations, time displacement, self criticism and compulsive interest in the past. The pressures of the society, the ideals of capitalism, and failures in relationships only exacerbate his trauma, and it ends up being the driving factor behind guiding his mental path and causing himself to destroy. The events which the reader has to endure by Willy make it clear that trauma is not a mere inner psychological phenomenon but it is closely connected to structural, family, and social forces, and his suicide is a tragic result of a lack of relief and psychic and social pressure.

Witnessing

In *Death of a Salesman*, the witnessing theme acts as a significant emotional and moral aspect of a story. In addition to financial hardship and mental tension, the play anticipates deep need of human right to be acknowledged, justified and comprehended. It is not merely the unemployment in work or aging that adds to the despair of Willy Loman, since his inner conflict is not yet enough accepted. The play crisis is hence failure as well as failure of recognition- not only within family bonds, working organizations but in the larger social systems as well.

The main moral observer of the Willy situation is Linda who is at the centre of this dynamic. Her request to her sons is all about the need to be compassionate and recognized. She encourages them to know how hard his struggle is and not to make their verdict about him basing on outward achievements. The way Linda sees Willy is that he is no longer a failed salesman but a human being and must be treated with dignity. Her plea has an implication that one should have emotional recognition in order to maintain identity. However, as she tries to listen to the suffering of Willy, her support is not very good in terms of transformative power. She defends him but she is unable to practice the structural facts that have corroded his self-confidence. The witnessing in the domestic sphere is, therefore, there but does not suffice.

Willy himself complains on numerous occasions to be noticed and appreciated. This need to have social recognition is portrayed through his obsession with popularity and reputation. When he insists, **“Be liked and you will never want,”** he identifies individual value with approval in the society. Getting an appreciation is a replacement of deeper endorsement. This statement indicates that he believes that acknowledgment brings the feeling of security, belonging and stability. But, what makes the play ironical is the gradual realization of this assumption as incorrect. Popularity is short-lived, conditional and unreliable. The work place which used to be the symbol of chance turns out to be an indifferent place. The unreasonableness of social recognition in a competitive system is highlighted by the practical mindset of his employer who is not preoccupied with loyalty to the company.

The conflict of the appearance and acknowledgement is also noticed in the thoughts of Willy about himself and his personal significance. His assertion, **“The only thing you've got in this world is what you can sell,”** embodies a world in which identity is associated with marketability. In this kind of structure witnessing is transactional. An individual is only observed in the extent that he/she is economically viable. This commodification of value predisposes a state of affairs where getting older and lack of productivity appear invisibly. The problems worsen when Willy feels that he is becoming irrelevant in his profession. The loss of identity at the place of work diffuses directly upon his self.

In the family, it is not very straightforward to see as it is complicated in generation conflict. Biff and Willy have conflicts of being in two worlds, one being the truth and the other one being his dream. Their clashes reveal the inability of true understanding. When Biff declares, **“Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all,”** he tries to recycle identity without engaging in surrealistic hopes. This instance can be regarded as the changing point in the emotional background of the play. Biff is in search of an equality that is based on reality, but not fantasy. Willy however perceives the honesty of Biff as an enslavement and not emancipation. Their impossibility to be able to witness each other in their worlds adds to their alienation.

The theme of witnessing is another issue that is complicating with the repetitive nature of Willy going back to the memories of his brother Ben. Ben in his hypothetical negotiations is a sign of confirmation, confidence and decisive success. These imagined conversations act as a replacement of actual recognition. Given that he is not able to find confirmation in the present, he builds it using memory and imagination. His past emerges as an area when he is respected and appreciated. This dependence on fantasized approval indicates the lack of adequate

acknowledgment in his lived world. This witnessing instability is reflected in the structure of the play that is shifting between the past and present. Memory brings solace yet it cannot support identity in the present.

The theme of failed witnessing is heightened in the restaurant scene. Willy is hoping to find confirmation and companionship when he anticipates his sons to be with him in celebration. Rather, they get distracted and walk out on him leaving him emotionally vulnerable. The scene is highlighting the wretched disjuncture between anticipation and acknowledgment. The vulnerability of Willy is not very visible to others. The psychological loneliness that ensues is a depiction of how the lack of attentional presence may further exacerbate personal crisis. The act of witnessing in this regard does not pertain to hearing words but to the long, sympathetic involvement.

The inability of the individual to witness practically under structural constraints can be further shown by the fact that Linda remains loyal to Willy even after he was fired. She tries to comfort him, but she is not able to counteract economic realities, which destroy his confidence. She tries to save his face, signifying that she cares, but the larger structure does not provide any such recognition. This lack of balance in personal sympathy of the individual and the hard indifference of the institutions increases the invisibility of Willy.

The issue of witnessing is compounded by the end of the play. The funeral, which has fewer people present, is stark contrasting Willy who has always believed in his popularity as success level. The little attendance of people speaks volumes against his supposition of recognition. And it turns out that his expectations are not matched with public importance. Nevertheless, the scene also offers some time of reflection to Biff and Linda, who start expressing more understandable ideas of Willy struggles. In that regard, recognition comes too late and too ambiguously, as well, to change anything, but important in refitting his life.

Finally, the witnesses in *Death of a Salesman* are depicted as not only required but also delicate. The play implies that identity is based not on personal belief but it is also relational recognition. The degeneration of Willy can not be divided into the lack of continuous and genuine recognition. Most of his actions are motivated by his desire to be appreciated by his supervisor, his children and the society. But this validation that he desires is not absolute and definite. With this description, the play provides the timeless questions of how people are perceived, what value is based on and recognition defines human life. It is not ambition or economic burden against which one acts that brings tragedy but the gap between the requirement to be seen and the actuality of not witnessing.

Economic Disposability

The economic disposability becomes one of the key structural power in *Death of a Salesman*, which established a psychological decay and marginalization of Willy Loman. The play reveals an order where humanity is evaluated based on its productivity, profitability and marketability. In this context, aging workers will be more vulnerable as they will lose their value and its sales will decrease. The crisis that Willy is facing is thus not purely individual but has firm economic roots that have made his identity centred on his selling selling, travelling, providing, and as his selling selling, travelling, providing strengths are removed, he finds himself in a place where he is replaceable and expendable.

The fact that Willy himself speaks the language of the logic of economic value shows his full internalization. His statement, “**The only thing you've got in this world is what you can sell,**” summarizes the worldview according to which he makes decisions and perceives himself. Willy identifies identity with marketability in narrowing down existence to market exchange. The transaction is used to filter human relationships, reputation and even dignity. This ideology is not something which emerges solely out of him, but it is the general atmosphere of

Capitalism as he moves around. Nevertheless, this rational proceeds to the tragedy due to the fact that Willy believes this to be the ultimate truth and it is up to it to give him a sense of value. This disposability is clearly brought out by the scenes at the work place. Having been in service all his life, Willy wants to be recognized and to be accommodated in his old age. Rather he is faced with managerial apathy. His termination is not represented as an ethical error but a business accounting. It is a system which values productivity and tangible outcomes instead of loyalty or permanence. Willy is shaken by the emotional impetus of losing the payroll and that weakens his identity that is already weak. Work was not only a means of livelihood but it was his self-respect. After losing his work place definition, he finds it difficult to find something above the economic activity.

This crisis is aggravated by the fact Willy always tends to believe in security that comes with popularity. It conceals a greater panic of being replaced which is supported by his previous belief in being well liked. The illusion falls apart once professional relationships are transactional as opposed to lasting. The weakness of social capital in competitive systems is revealed in the play. The pride that Willy had earlier glorified in networking and personal magnetism is shown to be irrelevant in conditions of lower sales records. Perception is replaced by computation and individual history is faint, in contrast to today performance measures.

There is also a conflict of economic disposability and generational tension. Willy transfers his dreams onto Biff and Happy, and according to him, their success in life will revise his personal choice of life. The effort to invest in their success can be seen as a wish to save the declining career in an economic context. But this is put to the test by the unwillingness of Biff to become corporate. The need of authenticity instead of commercial progress of Biff shakes the worldview of Willy. The insistence by the father on material identification of success is incompatible with the denial of the transactional identity by the son. Such generation gap highlights the ideological catch of economic disposability: to Willy, market success is survival whereas to Biff it is more and more confinement.

The presence of material objects in the play also represents the symbol of disposability. Home appliances constantly become defective, and they need to be fixed and paid. The car, which is at the center of the aspiration of Willy in his career, turns both into an instrument and a weight. These items are reflections of the reasoning behind human work: utility is sanctioned. When something is no longer working efficiently it is replaced. This minor comparison of broken appliances and the aging and developing employees triggers the structural theme further. Willy finds that he is slowly viewing himself as yet another overworked cog in a machine where freshness and hurry count.

The mortgage theme provides a bitter irony of the economy. Long-term commitment and sacrifice can be seen in the continued payments of Willy. Paying off the house should be a sign of security and success when the house is eventually paid off. Rather, the scene is affected by a sense of spiritual barrenness. Ownership does not mean fulfillment and steadiness. The success comes late to renew diminished vitality or work reputation. The house is a science fiction of postponing pleasure, of being a promise that discipline of economics would bring honor. But the expected pleasure does not give existential satisfaction.

Disposability is also enhanced by the financial strains of city life. Often, Willy compares his oppressed life to dreams of the open country and handwork. His comment, To endure fifty weeks of the year to a two-week vacation, when you want nothing but to get out in the air, to take your shirt off, is the pressure of monotonous work with nothing essential to its own accomplishment, is summarizes the tension of being in the workroom with no more in sight than fresh air. Monotony of work, or that it is a cycle: endless travelling, commissions, and quotas, lessens individuality. The yearning towards the outdoor freedom is implying the desire to break commodified life. But, money has him bound to the same system he is doubting.

Another economic symbol that comes out is insurance. Willy quantifies his life in dollar but policy value is the last quantifiable output. This economic argument illustrates the level of economic internalization. Even when one is thinking of not being there, the value is in quantitative terms. The reasoning behind the compensation takes the place of emotional or personal considerations. His argument bears a sad assumption that money can replace experience. Career is not the limit of commodification of value, it spans into existential assessment.

Disposability is further strengthened with the funeral scene. The fact that Willy anticipates a lot of buyers is based on his perception that business alliances are equal to permanent recognition. The low attendance reveals the falsehood of having a permanent status in the commercial networks. After function is lost in economics, association is lost. The indifference of the system is subtly supported by the low turnout in attendance. Professional visibility is a transient phenomenon that is tied to usefulness but not lasting allegiance.

This repetition of identity to business performance goes through the entire play as language is used to put them at par. Internal breakdown of intrinsic worth is represented by saying that someone is worth more dead than alive. Monetary value prevails over human value. The superstructural commentary that runs through this story is that there is nothing coincidental that makes people disposable, but rather, it is systemic. Older workers are marginalized not due to their moral degradation but due to the economic driving forces of the egalitarian world that stresses newness and productivity. Willy turns out to be a symbol of people who are suspended in between dream and displacement.

The play however does not reflect the economic disposability as coming across as external. The belief that Willy has in market logic never gives up helps perpetuate the power of the system on Willy. What is tragic about him is that he failed to reconstruct his value beyond salesmanship. As Biff progresses on to self-understanding that is independent of the businessman label, Willy still struggles with the indices that kill him. This opposition brings out the chance of other structures though, they may be too late in influencing something transformative in his life.

Finally, economic disposability of *Death of a Salesman* works as context and driver. It influences the professional frameworks, family demands, as well as self-evaluation. This loss of value connected to the productivity brings Willy out of balance as he loses his identity and becomes even more marginalized. The play is a critique of a system where allegiance, old age and feelings of emotional commitment have become money-lite. The story reveals the human price of taking the market as the measure of life, using Willy as an example. The economic structures do not simply affect circumstance, they penetrate consciousness and redefine the concepts of dignity, relevance and belonging. The play is as eloquently meditative in describing this dynamic, the way in which societies quantify value, value, and what is lost when humanity is become transaction.

The thematic analysis *Death of a Salesman* shows that trauma witnessing, and economic disposability are integrated processes that influence the case of Willy Loman, concerning the psychological and societal breakdown. The analysis of the trauma shows the discontinuous identity characterized by a split personality, disillusionment, and continual assault of past on the present. The fact that Willy continually experiences hallucinations and is emotionally volatile, connotes cumulative strains and not some isolated eventualities, a process of long-term psychological conflict, instilled by impossible dreams and social expectations.

The observation of witnessing brings out the deep human desire in need of recognition and validation. The futile attempts by Willy to gain recognition, whether with his employer, his sons, or with the society in general, accentuate the importance of relational affirmation in terms



of preserving an identity. The lack of genuine recognition makes him even more alienated and illustrates that a lack of long-term ethical recognition would amplify feelings of vulnerability. The economic disposability is another contextualization of disintegration of Willy in terms of structural forces that place human value and productivity at the same level. The loss of his professional relevance disrupts his perception of value and the importance of money illustrates the values of economic systems about the self and status. The play has been revealing the insecurity of identity when founded on the performance about performance in the market and outward approval as the main sources.

Combined, these three thematic shreds come to show that the problem of Willy Loman is not personal, but systemic. His mental disorder and his disintegrations in relationships, as well as his marginalization due to economic factors are interwoven to create a pattern of weakening. The bringing together of internal trauma with failed witnessing alongside structural disposability proves that individual despair is rooted in bigger socio-economic contexts. In this thematic approach, the play comes out as a strong statement of the dignity, recognition and value in the contemporary society, which has timeless potential to provide clues on the human cost of placing the worth of humanity into transient and extrinsic measures.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored *Death of a Salesman* in terms of trauma, witnessing, and economic disposability to show that self-destruction as a form of testimony used by Willy Loman is an outcome of psychological fracturing, misrecognition of relations, and devaluation by the system. Instead of seeing his demise as the personal failure of a single kind or just the inevitable result of impractical aspiration, the study proves the fact that it is the result of the multifactorial collapse of emotional and structural forces.

The trauma analysis showed that the psychological decline of Willy is characterized by the loss of time, hallucination, disunity in his personality and the inability to escape the instability in his identity. His constant trips back in time are indicative of a disillusionment that was not resolved and the lack of opportunity to adjust aspiration to the reality of the lived. The trauma in the play, however, is not delivered immediately but it is a product of years of repressed discontent, economic pressure, broken perception of self. This bipolar mental pressure completely unsteady Willy in distinguishing illusion and reality and the feeling of purpose and coherence is slowly eroded.

Exploring seeing emphasized the imperative of the role of recognition in perpetuating human dignity. The fact that Willy never wants to be alone, combined with his constant urge to be well liked and respected shows that he needs validation in his life both in family and workplace. Nevertheless, the lack of true recognition makes him even lonelier. As Linda is trying to protect and hold him, and Biff is trying to have an honest moment, the larger social and economic systems are unable to see beyond his productivity capability to realize that he is a man. Lack of prolonged ethical witnessing is a factor that adds to his emotional alienation and supports the notion that identity is constructed in relationships and is subject to being overlooked.

This analysis of the economic disposability placed the crisis of Willy in the context of the process of capitalism that sees human value and market achievement as comparable. His perceived value decreases as his professional productivity decreases. The play reveals the weakness of dignity when it is bound to be exclusively economic. Willy takes this rationale so much further that he quantifies his existence in financial relations such that he eventually defines financial rewards as an aspect of taking the place of presence and acknowledgement. His disenfranchisement is how economic structures define self-concept and social usefulness, especially to the aging population whose work is not profitable anymore.

Combined, these thematic strands assist in the main argument that the last act of Willy Loman is a kind of testimony. It is not merely a plea of agony but a figurative expression of built up

strains- psychological, and interpersonal and structural. His killing is an assertion concerning value, recognition and worth in a transactional logic society. The tragedy is thus not only about a single individual; it is the manifestation of more cultural concerns about the Success, its productivity, and the place in the contemporary capitalistic context.

In the end, *Death of a Salesman* lives on since it reveals the human price of gauging identity based on unsteady outer parameters. The play questions the audience to redefine dignity and the way of making or denying recognition in the life of people and the effect of financial systems on individual meaning through the experience of Willy. This work is a contribution to the scholarship since the three issues of trauma, witnessing, and economic disposability are synthesized into one interpretive unit and are shown as structurally predetermined to hit highs of self-annihilation in Willy. By so doing, this research highlights the fact that Miller in the play remains relevant because its insight into the beauty of vulnerability, value and the weak construction of contemporary identity.

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