



Depression, Anxiety and Suicidal Causes in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

1. Dr.P. Samuel., Assistant Professor of English, Government Arts and Science College, Arakkonam
2. Mrs.P.Hephzibah., Research Scholar, Bharathiar University

Abstract

It is universal to portray suicide in literature. Suicide, the act of intentionally killing oneself, is a worst action in countless significant works of literature. Authors use the suicide of a character to depict defiance, hopelessness, love, or credit. Ruth Wiedmann states that novelistic suicide types emerged in the 19th century. Even though it is written as the eventual act of commitment or the consequence of hopelessness, the act of suicide was and is a common action within the context of English literature. Realism and daydream are well-known themes in *Death of a Salesman*. Miller handles flashbacks to present Willy's reveries, but it is uncertain whether they are correct. He imagines and trusts and lies about his own career and Biff's success. Willy allows himself with the misapprehension, but he found it difficult to encounter incidents in real time. This paper attempts to analyze the suicidal causes and parental risks in Arther Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

Key words: American Drama, Suicidal Causes, Depression, Anxiety and Parental risks e

I. Introduction

Miller's *Death of a Salesman* depicts significant issues like depression, parental risks and suicide and its causes. Loman family comes across many storms faced by Willy and his children. Willy faces his life with an American dream and that is an illusion in his life. His unrealistic dreams and assumptions made his life poor and miserable and he realizes it only to some extent. Humiliated by people around him, his family expected a tremendous out in his endeavours but everything turned out to be futile. The play highlights the family relationships and failures of Willy and his children. An American Dream is only a dream in their life. They strive their level best to have a financial well-being and failed in every attempt. Being a father, Willy risks himself to commit suicide and believes that the family will get insurance coverage. He innocently believed that all his dreams will pave a way to success and his children will live a luxury life. He considers himself a good father and a successful husband but in reality, he achieves his wife Linda's moral support which is helpless. Reveries of Willy are past centers around from his days alive and his last day. They depict the causes of his continuous failures and causes of his suicide. His career is a failure, obstacles in life made him to lose hopes and decides to end his life which is a common cause we see in much of the literature.

II. Background of the play *Death of a Salesman*

Arther Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is a 1949 stage play premiered 742 shows on Broadway in February of 1949. Willy Loman, the protagonist is presented as a travelling salesman who is downhearted with his life and appears to be falling into mental infirmity. The play indirectly addresses the suicidal causes and parental

risks in lower middle class families. Miller portrays the life of his salesman uncle with colorful incidents of financial struggles. Brooklyn house is the house where Miller grew up from his childhood which stimulated the incidents, events and setting of *Death of a Salesman*. Miller had been considering on a play about a salesman for many years. He also had new attention in the past and present that was obvious at their meeting, as it was simple that he and his cousins were viewed by Manny his relative when they were adolescents. Miller's intention to do a play devoid of any changes which would merely bound perfectly.

III. Depression

Willy the protagonist's memories are the prominent keys to learn about his character. He cautiously chooses his reveries or re-creates past events in order to work out circumstances in which he is successful or to justify his current lack of prosperity. Such reverie allows Willy to contradict the fact and its consequences — facing Linda and the boys after being fired — and to institute momentary order in his disrupted life. Also, Willy proudly recalls memories of Biff's last football game because it is more pleasant to re-create the past in which Biff adored him and wanted to score a touchdown in his name, rather than face the present where he is at odds with his own son. His regular association from the present to the past results in his conflicting nature. Many a times, he fondly remembers Biff as a teenager; he is unable to exchange a few words with Biff in the present. Moreover, he praises Biff in one breath, while criticizing him in the next. Willy retreats into the past and chooses to relive past memories and events in which he is perceived as successful. Rejection, disagreement, and the pursuit for order versus disorder comprise the three major aspects of depression in *Death of a Salesman*. The

play continues to affect audiences because it allows them to reflect up to themselves. Willy's self-deprecation, sense of failure, and devastating regret are emotions that an audience can relate to because everyone has experienced them at one time or another. He commits mistakes which mistakes permanently changed his relationship with the people he loves most.

IV. Anxiety

Willy Loman is unable to accept the fact that he is an average salesman. Instead of acknowledging that he is a poor performer, Willy can only just wait to put in the picture of the story to his buyers. Innocently, he imagines himself popular and his sons adopt Willy's habit of denying or manipulating actuality and perform it all of their lives, much to their detriment. It is only at the end of the play that Biff admits he has been a "phony" too, just like Willy. Linda is the only character that recognizes the Loman family lives in denial; however, she goes along with Willy's fantasies in order to protect his weak condition. He labels Biff a "lazy bum" but then contradicts himself two lines later when he states, "And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff — he's not lazy." Willy's contradictions often mystify audiences at the beginning of the play; however, they soon become a trademark of his character. Willy's inconsistent behavior is the result of his inability to accept reality and his tendency to manipulate or re-create the past in an attempt to escape the present. Willy withdraw himself more and more from the present as his harms become too many to deal with.

V. Suicidal Causes in *Death of a Salesman*

Willy Loman has two sons namely Biff and Happy. Being a salesman, Willy returns after a cancelled business trip to Boaton. Worried over Willy's state of mind and recent car accident, his wife Linda suggests that he should ask his boss to permit

him to work in home city. Both husband and wife worries about their sons. Willy blames Biff who is 35 years old and has yet to do something with his life. Despite Biff having a promising football career in high school, he failed in mathematics and was therefore unable to enter a university. Happy, who is temporarily staying with Willy and Linda after Biff's unexpected return from the West, reminisce about their childhood together. They talk about their father's mental disintegration, which they have witnessed in the form of his constant dithering and distraction about the boys' high school years. Willy gets angry that the two boys have always attempting useless efforts.

Willy tries to go to Howard's office for a job in town while Biff goes to make a business proposition, but they both fail. Moreover, Willy loses his temper and ends up by getting punishment from his boss Howard. Biff's efforts to see his former employer to get a help turned out to be a failure. On the other hand, Biff waits hours to see a former employer who does not remember him and turns him down. Also, Biff steals a fountain pen. Willy then tries to go to his neighbor Charley. Charley's son a successful lawyer was a class mate of Biff. When others are performing well and successful in their career, Willy's sons are damaging their every possibility of securing a job. Charley offers Willy a job, but dejected Willy fervently refuses despite losing his job. Charley, who feels insulted, reluctantly gives the now-unemployed Willy money to pay off his life-insurance premium, and Willy

shocks Charley by remarking that ultimately, a man is "worth more dead than alive."

As a matter of fact, Willy relives several scenes from his past, including the time when, during high school, Biff confirms to stealing a football and assures to throw a pass for Willy during the game. In one of his reverie, he relives the time that Bernard, son of the next-door neighbor Charley, informs Willy that Biff is failing math and will not graduate unless his scores improve. In this last scene, Willy listens but dismisses the important news because Biff is "well-liked," and Bernard is not.

Willy always remembers certain things then and there what he discussed with Linda in which he inflates his salary but is then enforced to admit he overstated when Linda calculates his commission. Willy recalls complaining about his appearance and remembers Linda assuring him that he is attractive. Moreover, Willy's memories begin to blend together. While he is reliving his conversation with Linda, he begins to remember his discussion with the lady with whom he had an affair earlier. Poor Willy is incapable to separate recollections of Linda from the lady.

VI. Conclusion

Willy Loman An aging salesman suffers from depression and anxiety as a result of his dissipating career, his alienated relationship with his oldest son, Biff, and his guilt over an extramarital affair. As the play progresses, Willy loses the ability to distinguish between the present and his memories of the past. Willy finally achieves a sense of peace and order in Scene 14 because he knows Biff loves him. He is overwhelmed by the fact that his estranged son wept for him. For the first time in the play, Willy

has received the attention and respect that he desires. But, even though Biff cries to his father because he can no longer pretend, Willy still tries to manipulate reality. Biff's reaction gives Willy the order he has been seeking, but it also compels him to create an even more desirable future, he sacrifice his own life and through that leaving him the insurance money.

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