

## **‘MENTAL OTHERNESS’ OF WILLY LOMAN IN ARTHUR MILLER’S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN***

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This article approaches Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* as a realistic play to analyze the Mental Otherness of Willy Loman, the protagonist of the play. First, the article briefly defines Otherness and Mental Otherness besides providing the basis for studying the play in a realistic point of view. It primarily studies the factors that constitute Willy Loman’s Mental Otherness, such as his misconceived ideals, the Othering of his traditional profession and the Othering of the Absolute Other and then the effects of his Otherness namely the dichotomy between nature and technology, appeasement in a dream world, extra-marital relationship, vanity and remorse. Arthur Miller creates the character of Willy Loman with flesh and blood to represent the millions of the Americans who have become Mentally Other owing to their failures at work or/ and at home. This article aims to bring to the surface how many an issue connive together to leave a man like Willy, as Mentally Other. Willy survives pathetically as an amalgamation of doomed ambitions, shattered hopes, failed philosophies and crushed spirit. Condemning himself as a flop, he finally feels fit only to be lowered in the grave as a low man.

**Keywords:** Realism, mental otherness, Willy Loman, Miller

### **Introduction: Realism as a Literary Technique**

Literature is generally defined as a mirror of life and literary artist engages in reflecting the realities of his society through the means of any of the literary genres and by employing any of the techniques. As one of the methods, realism is the reproduction of social occurrences or interactions. According to Mario Klarer, “Realism is often described as the movement that tries to truthfully describe “reality” through language.” (71) Emphasizing the role of the artist, Peter Childs et al define it, “The writer may be said to imagine, to invent a fictional world which is more than a copy of the real one.” (199) Cuddon, on the other hand, describes psychological realism, an offshoot of realism as, “This denotes fidelity to the truth in depicting the inner workings of the mind, the analysis of thought and feeling, the presentation of the nature of personality and character.” (732) Talking about the difference between naturalism and realism, Bamber Gascoigne writes, “Naturalism reflects accurately the surface of life, whereas realism is concerned with the truth of the experience which it conveys.” (7) So, realism is understood to be the artist’s experiment of the truth of human experience. Talking about the American theater, Susan Abbotson discloses, “...realism was the dominant form of U.S. theater’s development in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” (258).

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### **Arthur Miller as a Realist**

Arthur Miller, one of the most celebrated American dramatists, has gifted the theater with his productions—his sketches of the lived experience as he perceives. His dramas are not merely the representation of the trivial and superficial episodes or events that happened in America. On the contrary, they are the depictions of the concrete life-experiences especially of the twentieth-century Americans. Pramila Singh quotes Miller, “I am trying to account as best I can for the realistic surface of life.” (180) Themes for his play are judiciously picked from the exhaustive store houses of familial and social dealings prevalent at his time and artistically presented to highlight the indispensable necessities of love, concern, consideration for a peaceful co-existence in a family or in a society. The understanding of Mathur also clarifies the position of Miller with regard to his technique. He writes, “Miller has been able to blend and fuse beautifully in his plays the realistic technique with the expressionistic method of flash-back, reminiscence and the intermingling of the past and the present....In his view a play cannot be called realistic or non-realistic on the basis of the language used, on the other hand, the important thing is the kind of questions posed and answered. Another important factor which determines whether the play is realistic or non-realistic, according to Miller, is the concept and treatment of time in it. Miller has not followed time in its chronological, linear movement – it is one after another kind of sequential arrangement. On the other hand, he makes use of the past and the present simultaneously”. Thus, Miller is able to merge realism and expressionism, so that his plays would be more effective and closer to the hearts of the theater-goers or the readers.

### **Realism in *Death of a Salesman***

In *Death of a Salesman* also, Miller mixes realism and expressionism. In the words of Abbotson, “*Death of a Salesman* was a new type of serious play that merged the forms of *Realism* and *Expressionism* to suggest new directions and possibilities for all of American drama.” (11) Expressionism is defined as a style in which the playwright seeks to express emotional experience through the work. Miller uses many motifs to show this. For example, in the very beginning of the play the flute is played. Though Willy hears it, he is unaware of the music.

It can be stated that *Death of a Salesman* is replete with the realistic description of Willy Loman, a common American, who aspires to become somebody adorable, solely on the qualification of his empty philosophy of life. His ambitions and attractions, toils and moils, deception and denouement are succinctly presented with a view to bringing home the truth that life would be pleasant and peaceful if one could derive contentment and find fulfillment with what one is blessed with. On the other hand, when he aims to have beyond his limitations and weaknesses, he is sure to be fooled and frustrated. This play is an excellent reproduction of the personality of Willy who takes pains for realizing his plans and thereby reaching

the coveted pinnacle of success and the prices he pays for it. This article analyses the play in a new perspective and brings to light the probable causes for his Mental Otherness and the subsequent consequences. What Willy does and what happens to him as a result is not something far-fetched. It is down to the earth, day-to-day affair and part and parcel of the ordinary life.

Critics differ in their approaches to the play on the basis of their considerations and reflections. Similarly, this article tries to analyze it from the realistic and expressionistic view in consonance with the dominant views. So, linking realism and expressionism, this article studies the Mental Otherness of Willy Loman. Generally speaking, the world witnesses numerous people with numerous differences. The world of humans cannot be imagined without the world of the Other. To say, even Plato accommodates otherness or difference among the five greatest kinds viz. being, change, rest, sameness, and difference. From this, it is clear that Otherness resides in man and in the mind of the artist, the Other is born, in his hand, he is shaped and finally, is staged in the theater. Similarly, Miller stages Willy Loman as a Mental Other.

### **The Concept of Otherness**

The concept of Otherness is not new and the element of Otherness that characterizes man is also not something new. Down through the ages, it is the factor that features man. This element of otherness is easily visible in some people and it is veiled in some other people. However, it gets exposed at the most opportune moment. The degree of Otherness also varies from person to person. This component of Otherness can be nullified and at some other times, it cannot be damaged. Apart from the well-established elements, there are various factors said to be at work in societies and individuals in the formation of Otherness. A person can be a different species mentally, socially, politically, morally, physically, culturally, medically and so forth. Certain traits in him or factors external to him brand him as an other. When his nature and nurture, ideology and physiology, and attitudes and actions are diagonally opposite to the rest in his society or home, he becomes an other.

### **The Concept of Mental Otherness**

Every man is the architect of his life and his destiny. However, the society he lives in shapes his mental make-up, personality traits, behavioral patterns and personal conduct. It can be held that one can wage a war against these dynamics and guard himself from being influenced or harmed if only he seeks to carry out the measures for self-protection. For such a thing, he must be self-willed and unyielding to the external pressures. To be accurate, a person's falsified view of life, faulty way of life, phony ideals, and flawed ideology act as the primary contributors for mental otherness. In addition, soaring ambition, unrealizable goals, seeking to be somebody/else, overestimation of one's worth, unsound practices are some of the components that convert an individual into the category of the Other.

When the Otherness of man is analyzed, it can be noted that at some point of time or at some place, something might have gone wrong in his life, as a result of his improper vision, misguidance, delayed execution of tasks, failure to fulfill certain demands and the like. It may also be due to his wishful thinking, conjectures, wrong decisions, wrong choices, under-performance, unhealthy feeling, imitation of some popular personality and so forth. Consequently, his concept of life, understanding of the way of the world and his mental process differ distinctly from the rest of the people in his society. His perception, imagination, concept formation will be slightly, marginally or totally different from the rest. So he is identified and segregated as Mental Other.

### **Mental Otherness in Willy Loman**

As stated, this article examines the Mental Otherness of Willy Loman. A closer look at his life reveals that just like in the other spheres of life, a person can be different in the mental behavior also. His concept of life, his understanding of the way of the world and his mental process may distinctly differ from all others in his society. His perception, imagination, concept formation will be slightly, marginally or totally different from the rest. So he is identified and segregated as Other. This is true in the life of Willy Loman. He swerves and commits himself with the tasks impossible for him to achieve. In this play, the mind of Miller has brought forth the character of Willy exquisitely. He has fashioned him to be a man who has developed mental otherness. Matthew C Roudane writes, "Willy Loman is...a neurotic malady...." (78) Miller has presented a number of factors stated to be primarily responsible for this development. This article tries to analyze them in order to show how these agencies have an extra-ordinary power to shape and stigmatize Willy as an other and make him experience the inferno in his life on earth.

Through Miller's effective orchestration of lighting, music, movement, speech, and action, the stage—and the stage apron in particular—become the mind of Willy Loman, and as Miller unravels this complex and disorderly mind before us, we see not only the unresolvable tensions and contradictory values that are in perpetual conflict inside Willy Loman, but also find echoes and remnants of the paradoxical, and oftentimes clashing ideological, political, economic, and social concepts and principles.... (Centola 8)

Surprisingly, this passage shows how Miller uses this orchestration to present the realistic picture through expressionism. After defining Otherness and Mental Otherness, this article now endeavors to enlist the factors that play a pivotal role in forming Willy as a Mental Other.

### **Causes of Willy's Mental Otherness**

**1. Misconceived ideology:** A man, if he wants to keep himself physically, mentally and socially healthy, he has to defend himself against the forces that assault, affect

and afflict these three domains. A mentally healthy person is the one who knows his capacities, who does not engage in overestimation or underestimation of himself. Instead, he knows how to judge his shortcomings and weaknesses. Unfortunately, Willy Loman is seen overtaken by his whims and fancies and accordingly devising his ideology. He fails terribly to have a sober estimate of himself and his sons and instead, he overestimates the faculties his own and his sons. Thanks to his ideology, he prepares a blueprint and tries to program his life accordingly. Moreover, he has certain elevated goals and these goals are believed to drive him to climb the stairs of popularity, power and prosperity. Moreover, his philosophy of life makes him venture into the unknown and unseen and to seize something uncommon and unheard of. However, his venture has proved unavailing and made his life woeful and wretched. Being a little man, the road that he has taken for realizing them is normally the 'road not taken' by sensible salesmen.

To say, man is blessed with the sense of reason: the faculty to ruminate about the course action or about the articulation of words or to discriminate between the right and the wrong, and then to choose the best thing to do or the best words to say. His failure and the subsequent desire to cling to the false and faulty become the harbingers of his downfall and death. His ideology becomes worthless, his search for success pointless, his conceit senseless and finally his whole life useless. All these emerge from his failure to separate and select the good. His American society presents to him many values – the real and the false, the ideal and the illusory. His failure to take a right decision in this matter pronounces his doom. "The root of evil was the false ideal." (Clurman 146) According to Miller, "The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendously powerful ideals ... if Willy Loman ... had not had a very profound sense that his life as lived had left him hollow, he would have died contentedly polishing his car on some Sunday afternoon at a ripe old age (Roudane 30).

**2. Willy's Milieu and Misconceptions:** Society is the perpetuator of virtues, values and vices. It has fixed precepts to follow and programs to participate in. It forces all the members who form such a set up to abide by them. The individual members, depending upon their upbringing and inclination prioritize the norms and programs and begin to stay closer to them. This is how individuals are shaped in their social milieu. "Literature is a rich form of social documentation." (Blumberg 291) So the social, psychological, political and cultural aspects of the characters can be studied only in relation to their locale. Finding the relevance of this truth to Miller's conception on this matter, Paul Blumberg quotes,

Miller expressed his basic attitude toward the role of social forces in drama...and it is that society is inside of man and man is inside society, and you cannot even create a truthfully drawn psychological entity on the stage until you understand his social relations and their power to make him what he is and to prevent him from being what he is not. The fish is in the water and the water is in the fish. Moreover, Miller has constantly reiterated his belief in

the futility of a playwright's attempting to explore the psychological side of man in vacuo, without recourse to his social milieu. (293)

Introspection into the early life of Willy makes it clear that this little man is tempted by the lures of monetary and material paybacks and therefore, he readily succumbs to them. The urges are so strong that he is not able to escape and he is entrapped eventually. On the other side of the view, all the forces are seen conspiring together so as to recreate him into a different sort of person by consuming all the similarities in him. As a result, all the elements that made him resemble everybody else have disappeared and he is made to stand alone and apart from the rest of the world around him. And his psyche is no more sane and sound. Thus, "Willy...represents all those Americans caught in the mesh of the myth and the moral pressures it generates. As a type, he is product of social and economic forces outside himself." (Porter 149).

**3. *The American Dream:*** Willy Loman is seen aspiring for a life of greatness and grandeur which is more than what he is endowed with. He prefers 'waiting for Godot' till towards the end of his life, being blinded of all his limits and limitations. His desired life and what he is actually fail to match. The reason for such a mistaken view of life is predictably the American Dream of success with its delectable philosophy—"from rags to riches." The American Dream has so blinded his eyes that he is not able to have a sober estimate himself and he dreams without realizing that it is a mere 'dream'. Critics of the American dream also point out that many versions of the dream equate prosperity with happiness, and that happiness may not always be that simple.

The historian, James Truslow Adams popularized the phrase "American Dream" in his 1931 book *Epic of America*: "... there has been also the American dream, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement. (?) In sharp contrast, the ideology of Willy Loman is different. To him, being well-liked is the mantra for success. To people like Willy, American dream means the dream of becoming rich overnight. The realization of the dream refers to the success of making money, owning a big house, having a costly car and possessing all the other material things that make life cozy and comfortable. Nobility, truth, honesty are pooh-poohed. Real values are recast through this dream. Hard work and skill are supplanted by personality and appearance in salesmanship. "In a parallel absence effected through fantasy, Willy figuratively becomes Dave. Willy's own identification with Dave leads him to take his leave from life...firmly convinced that his "death wish" will fulfill his ego's dream of initiating his son, Biff, as princely heir to Willy's kingly throne...." (Langto 20)

**4. *The Othring of the Traditional Profession:*** "Willy's romantic longing for the pastoral suggest his desire to live in the country where there are trees rather than cleared lots and buildings. His dream also involves carpentry, a longing to

work with his hands that re-appears throughout the play.” (Smith 80) Willy seems to be born as a simple and natural person without any airs and be built to become a carpenter in the footprints of his father. But he chooses to become a salesman. Anthony R. Collins writes, “It is made clear in the play that Willy would have been a first-rate carpenter, but as he says to Biff, “your grandfather was better than a carpenter.” (121) Because of the wrong choice that he has made, he has to suffer all through his life. He does away with carpentry disdaining it as manual. Thinking that in no way it would help him attain the life he aims at, he aspires to enjoy all that the material world would bless him with. The fact behind the choice of the profession is that he has witnessed the deference an elderly drummer was accorded with in a passenger train. It has inspired him to experiment it in his life.

Thus, being enthralled and enticed by this towering personality, Willy has made up his mind to follow his steps. Without studying about the factors that granted him that kind of image, the formulae for his influence, the secrets for his success and the like, he has blindly decided to become a salesman. As the Bible says, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” [Lk.14:28] Similarly, he has failed to have counted the cost before embarking on the salesmanship. So, he never encountered any such ovation, and his life more ordinarily comes to an end. From a close study of his life, one thing can be deciphered that his dream of becoming a successful salesman and the disposition to actually realizing it are inconsistent and incongruous. Thus, he tried to be what he is not—‘the other’ and therefore he finally ended up as an other.

**5. *The Othering of the Absolute Other:*** Modern man is presented as being devoid rather deprived of religious disposition. Because of the impact of science and technology, man has lost faith in God and it has deprived religion of its hold and role over man. Resultantly, his mental makeup and his social relationship are delinked from the purview of religion. His conduct and character are no more governed by religious teachings and he is freed from both the fear of the divine retribution and the prick of his conscience to an extent. He has come to the state of unrestricted and unlimited autonomy. It is really true in the case of Willy. He has no divine law to bind either his thinking or action. He is seen living with a total oblivion of God. He has seared his conscience. As *Death of a Salesman* depicts, Willy Loman or his wife, Linda or his sons, Happy and Biff are bereft of Faith. Anywhere in the play, none is shown praying or being interested in His. As Anthony R Collins observes, “In *Death of a Salesman* ... God is conspicuously absent....”(120) When Biff assails Willy for having no character like Charley, Linda cautions, “...a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He’s not allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog.” (*Death* 162) Even in this distressing situation, Linda never calls out to God. Instead, she asks Biff to be merciful to his father.

When Willy contemplates suicide feeling frustrated and foiled, he has no inkling to seek God's intervention. Even on his bereavement, no one seeks His solace. These instances speak of their loss of Faith and the resultant loss of enjoyment, contentment and fulfillment. The behavior of Willy, Linda, Happy and Biff speak volume of their frailties, failures and frustrations. Yet, they fail to express or exhibit 'the divine'. So their lives are laden with purposelessness and the course of their journey has taken them nowhere. At the age sixty three, Willy commits suicide and at thirty-five, Biff earns twenty eight dollars a week. Reliance on false ideals and on the American dream in replace of God proves to be catastrophic. "The dislocations of Willy's private life ... are equally those of a society chasing the chimera of material success as a substitute for spiritual fulfillment." (Bigsby 174) Their life validates the Biblical idea that the ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away. (Ps.1:4) "Willy was, indeed, riding out there on a smile and a shoeshine, without a spiritual insurance policy that would have allowed his dreams to exist in equipoise with reality." (Roudane 81).

**6. The Impact of Consumerism and Capitalism:** Consumerism refers to the craving of man to buy goods more than to his basic needs. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, products were produced in large quantities and sold at low prices. Consumerism refers to the inclination of people to be associated with brand names—the status-symbols. Willy is also mesmerized by consumerism. About it Robert W Corrigan writes, "He has completely embraced the American myth, born of advertisers, for this reason, the brand names that turn up in Willy's speeches are more than narrow realism. He regularly confuses labels with reality. [He says] that a punching bag is good because..."It's got Gene Tunney's signature on it" (133)

It is seen in the play that Willy buys a house on installment policy, paying for twenty-five years. Apart from the house, he owns a Chevrolet and calls it, "the greatest car ever built" (1973:147). He buys also a refrigerator on installment. Linda enlists the debts they incur, "Well, there's nine-sixty for the washing machine. And for the vacuum cleaner there's three and a half due on the fifteenth. Then the roof, you got twenty-one dollars remaining" (*Death* 148) It shows that even the ordinary family like Willy's falls a prey to consumerism. Speaking about it, Benjamin Nelson writes, "... his obsession is concretized not only in the profession he has chosen but in his adoration of all the household gods of commercialism" (121). Thus, Willy's craving to possess material things leave him incredibly mad. Pramila Singh points out, "Miller is... concerned with the theme of man being a victim of the evils of a commercial society." (213).

Besides the American Dream and consumerism, Willy is tortured by capitalism. In a capitalist society, companies are highly profit-oriented. In this play, Howard, the son of Wagner represents capitalism. Willy has worked 34 years in his company. When Howard feels Willy is of no more use, Willy fires? at him. Losing the regular income, Linda laments, "He works...thirty-six years... opens up unheard-of



territories...and now in his old age they take his salary away” (*Death* 163) Willy is rejected being unmindful of his tireless service. It lays bare the Capitalistic attitude. When Willy pleads Howard for 40 dollars a week, Howard replies, “Kid, I can’t take blood from a stone ....” (*Death* 181). For this Willy retorts, “You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away — a man is not a piece of fruit! (**Death**) On their part, consumerism and capitalism plot together and leave him dying.

### **Effects of His Mental Otherness**

#### *Dichotomy between Nature and Technology*

The nature of Nature and the logic of technology are in conflict with each other. Technology is designed to control, subdue, and restructure the laws, course and sovereignty of Nature. But, in contrast, the natural calamities that happen always prove the nothingness and incompetence of technology before the supremacy of Nature. Similarly, Willy, the agrarian and the technology he is surrounded with, are in sharp contrast. The life of Willy testifies that he sinks into the laps of Nature while driving long distances. It seems to be lending a priceless company to the spiritless Willy. To him, Nature is a kind of intoxicant that makes him slip into oblivion. The enchanting beauty of nature provides him with an escape, thus relieving him from the sense of ‘the world is too much with him’. As a result, he forgets that he is driving his car and is about to smash it. For, Willy reminisces, “I was driving along.... And I was fine. I was even observing the scenery...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. And then all of a sudden I’m goin’ off the road!” (*Death*) It indicates that his mind is more inclined towards Wordsworthian delight and is in the flight of imagination in direct dissociation with technology. The accidents imminent as a result, can be viewed as a collision between the stillness of nature and the kinesis of technology.

The interesting fact is that the world along with nature rotates but it does not seem so, whereas the technology moves for Willy but commands no growth. This incongruity reflected in Willy can be called his otherness. For, the ‘nature’ in Willy is in clash with the technology outside. His life seems strangled as it is between the devil and the deep blue sea. Though he who is supposed to be with nature happens to divorce it and clings to technology, he does not suspend the relationship altogether. The technology that Willy favors disdaining nature, fails to reward him with the success he dreams of and slogs for. The failure that he encounters speaks volumes of his bankruptcy of thrill, contentment and peace and drives him toward his exit. This is how technology succeeds in sabotaging and sacrificing his life beyond either salvation or regeneration.

The car can be said to symbolize technology in the life of Willy. It serves as a vehicle on all his business trips. But, it so happens that it is the very same car

which he has used to kill himself as it fails to take him where he has sought to go. Even though he has been able to avoid all the accidents, he is unable to avert the last one which he has deliberately executed. Further, the expressions that Willy uses bear witness to his acrimony and antipathy towards the aftermaths of technology. "The way they boxed us in here." (Death) by building apartments and thereby letting no fresh air, exposes his sense of deprivation, animosity, uneasiness with the modern world. Willy continues to externalize his feeling that ravaged his mind. "...Willy does not fit in with the industrialized world; he is more at home in a pastoral world, one in which he can use his hands to build a porch or plant seeds in a garden." (Roudane 76) These instances picture the civil war in the mind of Willy, the effect of his Mental Otherness.

### ***Appeasement in Dream World***

Without exception, everybody in the world wants to find fulfillment in what they do and what they live for. Willy Loman is not an exemption to this fact. But, he is not able to find such self-actualization in his real life however hard he tries. So he tries to find it in the world of wishful thinking. John Orr declares, "...Willy escapes life through a wish-fulfillment dreaming about his kingly ascendancy." (Orr 2) What he fails to accomplish in the real life, he wants to relish in the world of hallucination. Anthony S Abbott clarifies,

...an illusion may be a special strategy—a dream, ideal, fantasy, a created vision—which the individual devises to give life meaning. Such a strategy may allow the hero to face reality in a way that the more superficial games do not. It may... allow him to see through the pretense of the world and preserve for him at the same time a sense of the heroic, a sense of his own specialness, his godlike quality. (4)

Man is basically gregarious in nature. But the experience he acquires from the surrounding world, eradicates this nature in some and some are born with it. This results in individuals withdrawing from the people around him/ her. Such people start living by themselves and indulge in soliloquizing. "...Willy's anguished debate [is] with himself and with the world in which he has never felt at home." (Bigsby 175) "In *Death of a Salesman*...the expressionistic staging and the theme music are used to represent the characters' hallucinations and their immanent mental breakdown." (Adam 118)

### ***Extra-marital Relationship***

In spite of the excellent qualities of his 'angelic' wife, Willy seeks sexual pleasure from an illicit relationship. C W E Bigsby argues, "Desperate to sustain his self-esteem he has an affair with another woman, buying her attention with a gift of stockings while his wife sits at home mending her own." (175) Though Linda remains completely loyal and faithful to him, Willy commits this sin which is totally unforgivable. In Boston, he is caught red handed while staying with a woman

by his very son, Biff. To cover this episode, Willy apologetically kneels down before him and pleads to turn a blind eye to the event. "In Willy's psyche the memory of the Boston incident is intolerable—because it violates Willy's image of himself as a good husband and responsible father. It violates what Miller calls "his image of his rightful status"" (Abbot 132) Willy gives new stockings to the woman with whom he has this extra-marital relationship whereas Linda is presented pathetically mending her old stockings. Reflecting on this Alice Griffin says, "Willy's guilt is compounded by his gifts to her of stockings, "two boxes of size nine sheers." Because women's nylon stockings were a luxury during and after World War II, the fact that Linda is always mending her stockings infuriates Willy and deepens his guilt" (52). This is how he treats her with no scruples.

### ***'Murder' of his Sons***

"Willy Loman is a tragic victim who victimizes others...." (Orr 241) Willy does not do anything harmful to anybody like Joe Keller nor does he commit any murder like him—the actual 'murders' of the 21 pilots and his own elder son, Larry. However, Willy, who does not do anything like him faces a similar end. To say, Joe Keller kills, and these killings are physical. But what Willy does is, 'killing' the futures of his sons. He shows them a way of life which is totally unrealistic. All his daydreams, phony ideals, business tricks and fruitless endeavors planned and thought to be showing the way, actually detour them. Martin Gottfried comments, "...Willy's ideal is wrong...that the model he holds up to his sons is a vicious and dangerous one. At the end of the play, it should be felt that Willy's worship of this false ideal leads to his suicide." (142) Eventually, they are misled and their lives become useless altogether. Even though they are in their thirties, they are not yet settled down in their life and this thought greatly distresses Willy, Linda, Happy and Biff.

Willy spends his life to make Biff his replica and to be faithful to the American Dream, irrespective of what it brings and what it does not bring. He is neither allowed to be an individual nor to be the architect of his own life. Instead he is forced to imitate his ideology without minding whether it is for the better or the worse. Willy is the person totally responsible for the crisis in Biff's life. Willy wants to be the driving force behind him, operating his activities. Obviously, what Willy does and fails to do, how he brings him up and how he does not bring him up makes his life pitiable. Biff is infected with the false ideology which Willy imbues him with. He imposes all his 'ideals' inherited from the world around him and the theories of 'personal attractiveness', 'being well-liked', 'smile and shoe shine' and so forth. This is how Willy acts to pass on the inheritance to his posterity. The philosophy of life which fails him is forced upon Biff for him to experiment. Benjamin Nelson writes, "Through an intricate series of flashbacks, originating in Willy's fevered mind, the roots of the family's deterioration are gradually

revealed.... Willy has spent his life attempting to instill his values into his sons...thus unintentionally but unquestionably paving the way for their ruin.” (105)

“Most fundamentally, parents are responsible for bringing up their children. They have moral obligation to protect them ... Unfortunately, some parents are derelict in their duties, and they warrant moral condemnation.” (Kurtz 175) Happy is put behind the bars for stealing which he learns from his father who asks his sons to steal from the neighborhood. As Willy has an illicit affair, Happy is happy to have ‘plenty of woman’ Willy’s incarnate. Biff’s life is half spent before knowing what it really means. Announcing, “I’ll keep away from him, that’s all.”(1973:163) he proclaims, “I’ll apply myself” (1973:165). Finally, Biff accuses his father for the failure in his life, “And I never got anywhere because you blew me full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That’s whose fault it is!” (1973:217). It sums up the entire story about the inflated man and his vibrant son who wants to be himself. Finally he advises his father to burn the phony dream.

### ***Vanity and Remorse***

It is disheartening that Willy finds no meaning or purpose in life and so do his sons. Biff openly admits, “...I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been!”(DS194) The end of Willy reflects that his adoration of the American dream and his toil to realize it have not blessed Willy with a peaceful and successful living but have only blighted his living. He confirms that, “Surely every man walketh in a vain shew[show]:surely they are disquieted[busy] in vain.”(Ps 39:6) Willy’s life is thus a misconception and his mission a miscarriage. What Biff discovers about himself that he is nothing is also true about Willy. He accuses Willy, “And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air.... (DS216) The brokenhearted Biff finally begs Willy, “Will you let me go, for Christ’s sake? Will you take that phony dreams and burn it before something happens? ....” (DS217) These illustrate how Willy impairs Biff inadvertently. Willy, with his empty life engages himself in wishful thinking. According to Brooks Atkinson, “ Mr Miller has no moral precepts to offer and no solutions of the salesman’s problems.” “By embracing the fraudulent values of his venal society in his fanatical pursuit of his impossible dream, Willy relinquishes control over his life and unwittingly sets in motion the chain of circumstances that eventually bring about his demise.” writes Stephen R Centola (Langteau 11). Being torn between his rightful and passionate dream and the failing endeavours, he can no longer live amid all the contradictions. So he is left with seeking regeneration through suicide, without knowing what his life after death holds for him – anything better or still worse.

### **Conclusion**

The play, *Death of a Salesman* is a display rather demonstration of Willy’s mind. As the original title denotes, the play is about ‘the inside of his mind’. This article

traces the-stated-to-be-origin of his mental otherness and its evolution and its climax. It is a true and life-like description of what all can pass through, influence dominate and dampen the efficacies of one's mind. The death of Willy is not a sudden and unintended occurrence. The thought has flashed in his mind, got registered and repeated in it waiting for an opportune moment to blow him up. In this way, "...METABOLIC and chemical changes [are] taking place in his agonized psyche before his inevitable suicide." (Maine 151).

Right from the beginning of the play, Willy is seen to be suffering from weariness. "I'm tired to the death." (Death 131) testifies to the fact that something serious is happening to him. Linda's caring words, "But you don't rest your mind. Your mind is overactive, and the mind is what counts dear." (132), "Just try to relax, dear. You make mountains out of molehills." (135) picture the exact state of his mind. Linda's exhortation to her sons, "... a terrible thing ... 162) Likewise, throughout the pages of the play there are numerous instances that substantiate the deterioration of his mind that gets ready for the great disaster, his death. Thus, this article analyses the play in a new perspective and to bring to light the possible causes for his failures and the consequences. What Willy does and what happens to him as a result is not something far-fetched. It is down to the earth, day-to-day and common affairs. Millions of Americans take after Willy—they either survive with the Mental Otherness or sever themselves from the Reality of life like Willy, the Mentally Other.

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