



“GRIEF AND RESILIENCE LIVE TOGETHER”: AN ASSESSMENT OF ARTHUR MILLER’S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to assess Mrs. Obama’s assertion, “grief and resilience live together”, in Miller’s tragedy, *Death of a Salesman*, from the theoretical perspectives of Marxism and Psychoanalysis. Using a qualitative content analysis, the paper finds that even though the protagonist meets his tragic end through his sufferings and disillusion, he displays unparalleled courage, resilience and optimism, as a common man, in a battle with the capitalist society. The paper affirms the afore-said statement and limns the defects of capitalism and its consequences on its victims – more so their psyche and mental state. With this paper, the researchers seek to expose the ills of capitalism and its devastating effects on the working-class members of the society.

Keywords: *Grief; Modern Tragedy; Marxism; Psychoanalysis; Resilience*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilaksanakan untuk menilai pernyataan Mrs. Obama, “*grief and resilience live together*”, dalam tragedi Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, dari sudut pandang teoretis Marxisme dan Psikoanalisis. Dengan menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa meskipun tokoh protagonis menemui ajalnya yang tragis melalui penderitaan dan kekecewaan, dia menunjukkan keberanian, ketahanan, dan optimisme yang tak tertandingi, sebagai orang biasa, dalam sebuah pertempuran melawan masyarakat kapitalis. Penelitian ini menegaskan pernyataan sebelumnya dan menjabarkan cacat kapitalisme dan konsekuensinya terhadap para korbannya – terlebih lagi kondisi jiwa dan mental mereka. Dengan penelitian ini, para peneliti berusaha mengungkap sisi negatif kapitalisme dan dampaknya yang meresahkan terhadap anggota masyarakat kelas pekerja.

Kata Kunci: *Grief; Marxism; Psikoanalisis; Resilience; Tragedi Modern*

INTRODUCTION

Michelle Lavaughn Robinson Obama, a former First Lady of the United States of America, asserts in her memoir, *Becoming*, thus: “grief and resilience live together”. Amongst many other things, Mrs. Obama sheds light on the significance of finding hope and strength amidst pain and loss. Particularly, she refers to the grief of losing children to gun violence and natural calamities, and the ordeals faced by soldiers and their resultant effects on their families. For the former First Lady, the pain, grief and agony that are experienced by the affected people, consequently, mould them into resilient individuals and evoke the spirit of hope for a better future. The present study is set on the idea of ascertaining the truism

E-ISSN: 2621-9158
P-ISSN: 2356-0401

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Submitted: 30 November 2022
Approved: 28 December 2022
Published: 30 December 2022

Citation:
Yeboah, P., A., O., Otoo, P., Manu, J.G., & Freitas, P.K. (2022). “Grief and Resilience Live Together”: An Assessment of Arthur Miles’s *Death of a Salesman*. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics*, 9(2), 205-218. Doi: 10.22219/celtic.v9i2.23114.

or otherwise of the aforesaid assertion, by Mrs. Obama, in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

Writers always write to reflect the socio-politico-cultural conditions of the societies and eras in which they find themselves. This is what makes literature an indispensable aspect of human life. Rachmayanti and Andini (2014, p. 84) therefore posit that "literature is the reflection about life, thought, feeling, behaviour and attitude of human being". Wahyuni (2014, p. 64) adds that "language and literature is the product of culture". *Death of a Salesman* highlights the plights of Willy Loman, a man who has lost his identity and self because of the harsh economic conditions and the pursuit of the American Dream – to live a better and luxurious life. Willy is a sixty-three-year-old man who has been a travelling salesman for thirty-four years yet possesses nothing. In the realization of his failure over the years as a salesman, he vents his frustrations on his two sons, Happy and Biff, by battling verbally with them and accusing them of failing in life. The sufferings that come with the fast-changing world, the evils of capitalism, and the disappointment of not attaining his dreams in a highly competitive world, drive him away from reality and leaves him suicidal. He ends his life so his family can claim his life insurance for a better life – Willy becomes a subject of the tragic. Although Miller's play was written in 1949, its relevance reverberates the present-day world across all continents. It is against this backdrop that this study is positioned to assess the assertion, "grief and resilience live together", in Miller's tragedy, *Death of a Salesman*, from the theoretical perspectives of Marxism and psychoanalysis. While we glean the economic conditions that propel Willy to pursue the American Dream through the application of the Marxist theory, the Psychoanalytic theory help delve into the mind of Willy for a better understanding of his mental state and his psychological motivations.

Miller (1949, p. 1) defines tragedy as "the consequences of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly". He outlines the tenets of modern tragedy in his essay *Tragedy and the Common Man*. This also serves as a preface for his play, *Death of a Salesman*, which had been criticized for its deviation from the Aristotelian principles of tragedy. He opines that tragedy should not be restricted to characters that belong to royalty and nobility. Miller's concept of tragedy retains the catastrophic ending of the Aristotelian tragedy, arguing that this last appeal is necessary to realize the truth about death for us to strengthen ourselves for life. It also maintains the idea of the tragic flaw by defining it as the "inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he, the tragic hero, conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status" (Miller, 1949, p. 2). He, however, challenges the view that tragic plays should revolve around kings and people of nobility by noting that:

If the exaltation of tragic action were truly a property of the high-bred character alone, it is inconceivable that the mass of mankind should cherish tragedy above all other forms, let alone capable of understanding it (Miller, 1949, p. 1).

Tragedy could be understood and cherished by a majority of mankind if it revolves around a hero who they can relate to, the everyday or ordinary man.

This, Miller believes necessitates the invocation of the tragic feeling within the audience. Williams (1966) shows a firm support to the idea of the common man as the tragic hero in modern tragedy by noting that every man is important hence, the death of everyone is tragic. He challenges the classical view that the death of a king is more tragic than that of a commoner. For him, the Greeks presented kings as their tragic heroes for the purpose of exciting pity and fear but considering recent happenings in the world today, every sad incident may be assessed in its own way as tragedy.

As noted earlier, the paper is anchored on two principal viewpoints – Marxism and Psychoanalysis. Propounded by Karl Heinrich Marx and Friedrich Engels and often referred to as “political economy” (Heyman, 2018, p. 1), Marxism focuses on the struggle between capitalists and the working class. It holds the view that the power relationship between capitalists and the workers are inherently exploitative (Whyman, 2022). Exploitation and alienation can be said to be the two main effects of capitalism. In Marxism, a person is exploited if he performs more labour than is necessary to produce the goods that he consumes. On the other hand, a person is an exploiter if he works fewer hours than needed to sustain his consumption. It holds the view that it is unfair for or unjust that some individuals would be able to earn an income without working, while others who work would be deprived of it. Ideology, according to Marxist critics, is a belief system, and all belief systems are products of cultural conditions. This means that theories such as capitalism, communism, religion, humanism, ethical systems, and Marxism are ideologies. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1972, p. 47) define ideology thus:

It represents the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, all that men say, imagine and conceive, and include such things as politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc.

Tyson (2006; 2014), however, stresses on the fact that not all ideologies are productive or desirable. Undesirable ideologies tend to be repressive ideologies presented to citizens and in order to ensure their acceptance, they pass themselves as the natural way of doing things. Presented as the natural way of seeing things, such repressive ideas prevent people from understanding the material or historical conditions which they live in because they tend to believe that those conditions have no bearings on their way of seeing and understanding the world. It is one such ideology, Capitalism, which Marxism sets out to attack. Tyson (2006; 2014) cites the American Dream, which is aptly represented in Arthur Miller’s modern tragedy, *The Death of a Salesman*, as one of such false and repressive ideologies. The American Dream makes people believe that it is only natural to get better in life and live luxuriously. A Marxist analysis of the play reveals that the American Dream is an ideology, a belief system that supports the socioeconomic inequalities of capitalist countries in which the means of production – financial, natural, and human resources – are privately owned, making those who own them the dominant class. This is why Tyson (2006, p. 58) argues that “the success of the American dream – the acquisition of a wealthy lifestyle for a few rests on the misery of the many”.

The psychoanalytic viewpoint first became prominent in the late 19th century as part of the wave of critical discourse pertaining to psychological treatment after 1960. Proponents of the theory are Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Alfred Adler and later, Jacques Lacan. Generally, psychoanalytic theories explain human behaviours based on the interactions of various components. Lipner, Mendelsohn and Muran (2017, p.2) assert that "psychoanalysis is a generic term for both a set of psychological theories and a group of techniques, each of which emphasizes the unconscious as an essential factor in human adaptation and behaviour". Concerning the unconscious, Tyson (2006, p. 12) indicates that "the notion that human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware – that is unconscious" was one of Sigmund Freud's most radical insights and it still governs psychoanalysis today. Freud notes that humans are motivated by desires, fears, needs and conflict between these forces which they are not aware of. The unconscious mind happens to be where sad experiences are stored. Such experiences are suppressed within the unconscious mind. Freud's fundamental contribution was to ignite the systematic study of the unconscious and provide the needed linguistic expressions for such studies (Habib, 2005; 2011). Analysing Miller's text from the theoretical perspectives of Marxism and psychoanalysis afford the researchers the opportunity to: assess capitalism and its effects on the working class and delve into the psyche of the protagonist for a better understanding of his mental state, respectively.

Miller's *Death of a Salesman* has been explored from diverse angles by literary critics over the years. Some critics have regarded it as a communist propaganda, denouncing the evils of capitalism whilst others have seen it as a sympathetic study of the problems of big businesses (Wood, 1969). Wood further notes that it has also been analysed in Freudian terms and attributed to its author abstruse psychological theories whereas from the point of view of Catholicism, it has been approvingly regarded as a warning of the meaninglessness of life where there is no religious faith. For Zhao (2016), Miller has successfully characterized the tragedy of a common salesman in America. Analyzing Willy's death mainly from three main perspectives of tragedy – a personal tragedy, a family tragedy and a social tragedy – Zhao (2016) concludes that Willy's death reveals some social problems behind personal and family tragedy in current societies, arousing our reflection on ethical and moral standard in a money-oriented society. Qingxia (2019) establishes Willy Loman as a tragic hero of a modern era by attributing his flaw to the American dream and his victory to his willingness to sacrifice himself for a better life for his family. Although Miller's *Death of a Salesman* has received enormous scholarly attention, no attention has been given to it with regards to its connection with Michelle Obama's assertion in her 2018 memoir, *Becoming*, that "grief and resilience live together". Consequently, this present study, leaning on the Marxist and Psychoanalytic theories, seeks to examine the truism of the aforementioned quotation based on the happenings in Arthur Miller's tragic play.

METHOD

This study employs the qualitative research approach in analysing Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The qualitative research approach grants the

researcher the opportunity to critically observe the data and offer detailed explanation and description to it (Kuntjara, 2006; Babbie, 2016; 2020; Arride-Stirling, 2001). To achieve the objective of assessing Mrs. Obama's assertion in the context of the named play from the theoretical perspectives of Marxism and psychoanalysis, the qualitative content analysis was used by the present researchers. This is a systematic investigation of texts to understand meanings that are present in them (Leavy, 2017).

FINDINGS

From the Marxist and psychoanalytic standpoints, the researchers find that the happenings in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, corroborate Michelle Obama's assertion that "grief and resilience live together". Even though Willy Loman dies at the end of the play, his persistent pursuit of the American Dream and eventual death expose the detrimental impact of capitalism on the ordinary working-class member of the society. Willy's resilience is unmatched as he battles fiercely to rise above the prescriptions of a society that does not recognize his kind. His death therefore can be considered as an assertion of "victory".

From the Marxist perspective, the researchers find that through class struggle and Willy's quest for economic success and equality in a capitalistic society, he and his family plunge into untold hardship, difficulty and grief. Even though the entire story revolves around Loman, his wife, Linda, whose lamentations and sympathy for Willy makes her an advocate for the working class and the exploited, brings out vividly, the sorrow and grief registered in the play as she constantly laments her husband's condition.

Through the psychoanalytic viewpoint, the researchers unravel a deeper understanding of the push factors and psychological motivations that compel Willy to engage in such fierce battle with a society that he cannot possibly conquer. The resilience that Willy exhibits is clearly seen through his position as a modern tragic hero – his total compulsion to evaluate himself justly in the society and also, being one who does not remain passive in the face of what he considers a threat to his dignity. This compels him to patronize the American dream – the need to get ahead, the need to be better than before and the need to be better than others. He becomes a disillusioned salesman who thinks he can be just as good as anyone else in the society. Through his death, Willy Loman does not only sacrifice himself for his family but also for anyone who is exploited and discriminated against simply because of the level of stratification that exist within our societies. As evident from the discussion, Willy's quest for success and recognition in a highly capitalistic society destroys his personality, ruins his relationship with his sons and leaves him suicidal. This is indicative of how undesirable and repressive capitalism is as an ideology and an economic system.

DISCUSSION

Miller's (1949, p. 1) definition of tragedy as "the consequences of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly" rightly matches Michelle Obama's assertion that "grief and resilience live together". Naturally, when one faces difficulties, he or she sets out to overcome them but it is often not devoid of challenges. In Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*, readers are introduced to a tragic hero who refuses to remain passive in a society of great economic difficulty and

inequality. In the process of clinging to a resilient ideology of also becoming somebody who is successful and well-liked by everyone, he and his family experience immense grief and hardship. Willy is in constant altercation with his son Biff because he (Willy) always projects his fears and failures on him. His pursuit of the American Dream makes him ascribe his fears and unfulfilled desires to his son and condemns him for it. Willy condemns his son (Biff) for not being successful at the age of thirty. He tells his wife:

WILLY: How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farmhand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought, well, a young man, it's good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But It's more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five Dollars a week!

LINDA: He's finding himself, Willy.

WILLY: Not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace...the trouble is he's lazy, goddammit! (p. 5)

For Willy, a man is nothing unless he is successful. He fears that his son might end up being a failure like himself since he seems to have accomplished nothing at the age of thirty. It is for this reason that he pushes Biff to pursue the American Dream like he does with little or no regard for the consequences. This is evident in one of Willy's imaginary conversations with Ben, his dead brother:

BEN: William, when I walked into the jungle, I was seventeen. When I Walked out I was twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich!

WILLY ...was rich! That's just what the spirit I want to imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right! I was right! I was right! (p. 35)

This shows Willy's determination to secure a dignified spot in the society for his sons. He therefore extends his frustrations to Biff and expects him to be all that he is not and cannot be. The difficulty that accompanies this agenda only makes him a daydreamer. This is what psychoanalysts term "projection" – ascribing our fear, problem, or guilty desires to someone and then condemning him or her for it, in order to deny that we have it ourselves (Tyson 2006, p. 15).

Willy believes that for one to secure a reputable place in the society, he or she must be well-liked and successful – hence, his desperation to be liked. He tells his sons:

...because the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead, be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. "Willy Loman is here! That's all they have to know, and I go right through" (p. 20).

Willy's fascination with individual success clearly stems from his relentless quest to protect his dignity and that of his family. This, according to Tyson (2006, p. 65), is in line with the ideology of the American dream which stipulates that self-worth is only acquired through economic success. As a salesman, he tries futilely to challenge a capitalistic system that seeks to exploit and repress him after working over thirty years for a company. He is therefore disillusioned by his quest to prove his self-worth, gain respect, and become rich in the society. He reassures and motivates himself with statements such as, 'personality always wins the day' and 'start big and you'll end big'. Mr. Loman is obsessed with living a luxurious life to the extent that he finds it almost impossible to differentiate between reality and illusion. He tells Happy and Biff:

America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there'll be open sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing, boys: I have friends. I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own (p. 18).

The first-person narration often employed in such instances makes it difficult for the audience to make out the authenticity of Willy's claims. This is because, with the first-person narrative, readers only see what the narrator sees and what the narrator chooses to share (Guo, 2021; Tucker, 2011). However, one cannot help but to think that Willy, a dreamer as he is, is only living in his mind, a luxurious life that he can't possibly afford to live in reality. This substantiates the claim of psychoanalysts that what a person cannot express or do because of social rules will be expressed and accomplished in dreams, where there are no social rules (Adler, 1957, p. 358). Similarly, in Willy's mind and imagination, he seems to be insulated from the belligerent forces of capitalism than in reality. This is why he constantly boast of a deluxe life that he cannot possibly have in the economically harsh society that he finds himself. This is what psychoanalysts call "wish-fulfilment". According to Pataki (2014), wish-fulfilment is a psychoanalytic concept that applies to situations in which some agent with a frustrated desire represents the world as he would like it to be rather than as it actually is. Willy even boasts of how massive his funeral will be because he believes he is well known. This is seen in his imaginary conversation with Ben:

...but the funeral – (straightening up) Ben, that funeral will be massive! They'll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange licence plates – that boy will be thunder-struck, Ben, because he never realized – I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey – I am known! (p. 97)

Miller's tragic hero obviously does not want to accept his place in the society as a common man, but chases after unrealistic dreams of becoming a known man. This is why Miller (1949) asserts that the tragic hero's flaw is his intrinsic reluctance to be unconcerned about the challenges or ordeals that pose as a threat to his dignity.

It is apparent that Willy Loman knows his place in the society as a salesman but he refuses to accept his fate submissively. His resilience is explained to some extent by Alfred Adler's psychoanalytic view as a unified driving force of human attitudes and experiences (Hofman, 2020). Adler (1957; 2013) calls this driving force "the striving for perfection". This view shifts more towards the idea of self-actualization: the desire to fulfil our potentials, the strife to become better versions of ourselves, and to reach our ideals. He first called this "striving for perfection" then later as "the aggression drive". Willy goes every length just to prove that he is just as good as everyone else. Discussing Freud's theory of perfectionism, Cohen (2020) calls this *achievement perfectionism* – a type of perfectionism which centres on self-gratification. Before Biff goes to Stanley to seek a job, Willy advises his son to lie about himself and his accomplishments just so he does not appear as someone without a purpose. Willy tells Biff:

And if anything falls off the desk while you're talking to him – like a package or something – don't you pick it up. They have office boys for that... tell him you were in business in the West. Not farm work. And don't undersell yourself. No less than fifteen thousand dollars. Because you got a greatness in you, Biff, remember that. You are all kinds of greatness... (p. 48)

Every decision that Willy takes seems to be influenced by his relentless pursuit of the American Dream – his desire to be rich and successful – even if it means concocting lies and living a pretentious life. He doesn't want to simply accept his fate as a common man in a society in which classism is the order of the day. Although Martin (2019) suggests that perfectionism may be caused by a combination of personality traits, childhood experiences, demanding parents, or culture, it is obvious that in the case of Willy in *Death of a Salesman*, his quest for perfection is as a result of the economic pressures that accompany capitalism. Nilsen (1994, p. 155) therefore asserts that the fault lies in the "impairment of Willy's conscience and sanity by intolerable economic pressures". Clearly, Willy's quest for self-identity in a capitalistic commercialized world causes him to lose his sanity as he drowns in the pool of depression. This reflects Hamachek's multidimensional approach to perfectionism. Perfectionism could be normal or neurotic (Ho, 2015). The latter corroborates the form of perfectionism that Willy displays. Hamachek (1978) describes this kind of perfectionism as displayed by Willy as the strive for unrealistic and often unattainable goals. Undoubtedly, Willy's pursuit of the American Dream makes him a neurotic perfectionist. This is evident in his persistent pursuit and desire to become someone in the society. For Ho (2015, 9. 20), Hall (2006) explains Willy's actions better when he argues that "the neurotic perfectionist engages in an unhealthy form of intense achievement striving which is fuelled by a fear of failure..."

Willy's struggle with the society that he finds himself limns precisely the intensity of the grief registered in Miller's play and that which Michelle Obama makes reference to in her memoir. As indicated by McCabe (2018), Marxism identifies two mutually contradictory classes in the society – the capitalist and the working class. Willy definitely can be associated with the latter. He is a salesman who after working for over thirty-years for a company is stripped off his salary and put on straight commission work. His wife, Linda, laments Willy's plight, the exploitation and class inequality in a capitalistic society:

A small man can be just as a great man, he works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away...for five weeks he's been on straight commission, like a beginner, an unknown!...those ungrateful bastards. When he brought them business, when he was young, they were glad to see him but now his old friends, the buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him in a pinch – they are all dead, retired (p. 39).

Willy's wife, like a communist activist, condemns this repressive economic system by recounting Willy's bitter experiences as a member of the working class with the capitalists, those who own and manage businesses in their own interests with the aim of making profit. Consequently, she brings to bare the devastating effects of capitalism on the common man and the untold grief and hardship that comes with the system. She laments again:

Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy... what goes through a man's mind, driving seven hundred miles home without having earned a cent? Why shouldn't he talk to himself? Why? When he has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me that it's his pay? How long can that go on? How long? (p. 38-39)

The above extract is replete with rhetorical questions. Such questions are not designed or expected to illicit an answer (Wales, 2014; Yankah, 1994). They were utilized in the extract to charge emotions and to express strong feelings of outrage and vehement indignation (Abioye, 2009, p. 3). Their usage is a deliberate attempt to highlight the grief that is registered in the play. The rhetorical questions posed by Linda clearly indicate how undesirable capitalism is for the working class and the intensity of their pain. Willy borrowing money from Charley and lying to his wife that it is his salary only shows the level of economic hardship his family has been subjected to because of the competitiveness of the business world. Linda

seems to sympathize with her husband. She tries to justify Willy's actions and exonerates him completely of them whilst putting the blame directly at the door steps of the capitalistic society in which they find themselves. Without speculating, one can even argue that for Linda, Willy falls into tragedy through no fault of his but because of his attempt to live up to the expectation of a capitalistic society and in the process, maintain his dignity. The harsh economic conditions Willy experiences - his salary being taken away, working on commission, his inability to pay his insurance, being fired by Howard after working in the company for over thirty years and borrowing money from Charley just to pretend it is his salary – are circumstances that will definitely wrench the soul of any mortal and squeeze every bit of joy and happiness within. No wonder Willy becomes suicidal. Linda reveals this to Biff:

LINDA: He's dying Biff...

BIFF: Why is he dying?

LINDA: He's been trying to kill himself

BIFF: How?

LINDA: Remember I wrote to you that he smashed up the car again? In February? The insurance inspector came. He said that they have evidence. That all these accidents in the last year – weren't – weren't accidents (p. 40-41)

Willy

's suicide attempts and hallucinations reveal the psychological torture and stress he is subjected to almost each and every day in a society where the rich enrich themselves by mercilessly exploiting the poor. The level of financial stress experienced by Willy can indubitably make him suicidal. This is why the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2018) warns that stressful life events (which Willy's situation is no exception), can trigger suicidal behaviour in some people.

At the requiem, a section of the play where grief is predominantly registered, Charley paints a clear picture of Willy's predicaments and that of the members of the working class in general. He says:

Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand; Willy was a salesman and for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back – that's an earthquake...Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream boy. It comes with the territory (p. 107).

Charley in the extract above helps the audience to better understand Willy's actions and status in the society. We can deduce from Charley's statement that Willy is just a common man who is neither an engineer, a law maker nor a doctor,

but instead a simple salesman who only relies on the smiles and approvals of others in high places. Charley also admits that it is only normal for such a person to have dreams of becoming successful. The grief and loneliness that clouds the lives of Willy and his family is further exacerbated as none of his so-called acquaintances shows up at his funeral. This is seen in the ensuing dialogue:

- LINDA:** Why didn't anybody come? ... But where are all the people he knew? ...
- BIFF:** He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong... He never knew who he was (p. 106).

The intensity of the grief experienced by Willy's family at this point validates the Marxist view of capitalism being a repressive ideology that blinds the working class and keeps them subservient to the ruling power system (Tyson, 2006, p. 57). Even though the entire story principally revolves around Willy Loman, it is also clear from the foregoing that a discussion on grief and resilience in the play will definitely be incomplete without the mention of his wife, Linda. She seems to be the glue that binds the entire family together. She sympathizes with Willy when no one seems to care about him. She defends him whenever the need arises. She bitterly laments the loss of her husband when excused by Charley, Happy and Biff thus:

Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy, I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. (A sob rises in her throat.) We're free and clear. (Sobbing more fully, released) We're free (p. 108).

Linda's lamentation which is filled with repetitions and rhetorical questions, shows the level of grief and sorrow that shrouds Willy's life in his quest to obtain a dignified spot in the society. As seen in the extract above, the grief registered in the play is so great that Linda finds it difficult to cry. She asks questions that she possibly cannot get answers to. The idea that they have been able to make the last payment on their house but Willy is not alive to witness it makes the grief much more glaring and arouses pity in the audience.

CONCLUSION

The present study was carried out to assess the assertion, "grief and resilience live together" in Miller's tragedy, *Death of a Salesman*, from the theoretical perspectives of Marxism and psychoanalysis. The Marxist perspective paints a clear picture of class struggle, Willy's quest for economic success and equality in a capitalist society. With this, he and his family plunge into untold

hardship, difficulty and grief. The lamentations and sympathy for Willy from Linda make her an advocate for the working class and the exploited, and vividly brings out the sorrow and grief registered in the play. The Psychoanalytic perspective affords us to know the psyche and mental state of Willy in order to better understand his resultant actions.

The idea that grief has the potential of evoking hope and resilience is clearly seen in the play through the theoretical perspectives employed for this study. It has been established that the happenings in the play corroborates Mrs. Obama's assertion. Willy's death, just as the case of Sir Thomas Moore in *A Robert Bolt's Man for All Seasons*, shows how one can raise awareness and unravel the follies in society. Willy's grief for having worked for over thirty years as a salesman without being a successful man, in the eyes of the society, made him live with some resilience of accomplishing the supposed dream, albeit in an excessive way which led to his tragic death. His struggles and death do not only represent the failure of an ordinary man, a father and a husband, but reveal the truth about the harsh economic realities experienced in societies whose prescriptions cause people to blindly chase unrealistic dreams. Even though Willy dies tragically, his death opens doors for us to scorn economic inequality and makes the system of capitalism unappealing.

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