

NARCISSISTIC
PERSONALITY IN
ARTHUR MILLER'S
"DEATH OF A SALESMAN"
AND SAUL BELLOW'S
"SEIZE THE DAY":
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

U. H. RUHINA JESMIN

U. H. Ruhina Jesmina, PhD, Assistant Professor
Khulna University, Bangladesh
ruhina.khulna@gmail.com

U. H. Ruhina Jesmin, an Assistant Professor of the English Discipline at Khulna University, has been teaching the English language and literature since 2012. Her scientific interests include American literature, African American literature viewed under the theoretical framework of psycho-analysis.

ABSTRACT

The paper is a comparative study on narcissistic personalities and consequences of their actions in Arthur Miller's play "Death of a Salesman" (1949) and Saul Bellow's novella "Seize the Day" (1956). Relational content analysis method is used to explore different degrees of narcissism in the characters – the subject of this paper. The research aims at analyzing narcissistic traits, such as obsession with fostering a self-image, denial, preoccupation with unrealistic grand fantasies of success, obsession with superiority and fear of inferiority, and feelings of specialness in connection with the characters of Willy Loman and his sons in Miller's play and Dr. Adler and his son in Bellow's novella. Their desperate and excessive attempts to attain their desired image and to get approval of self-worth in society detach them from their true identity and make them lead a life of failure, alienation, and helplessness as well as suffer from an existential crisis.

The narcissistic characters lack empathy and capability of establishing healthy relationships with others they are associated with even as regards parental and conjugal bonding. Instead of healing them, such bonding actually turns out to be a form of bondages that victimizes them. A materialistic and capitalistic society like that of the twentieth century New York was no less for their suffering on both the personal and professional levels. Their fallacious perception of the American Dream is also associated with their narcissist vision of denying their poor status, which was in perpetual conflict with their make-believe images.

Keywords: Narcissism, American dream, capitalism, denial, fantasy, obsession

INTRODUCTION

Both the texts "Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller and "Seize the Day" by Saul Bellow have been separately explored from different perspectives, but this qualitative research, based on relational content analysis method, within the theoretical framework of narcissism, aims at drawing a comparison as regards narcissist personalities in two selected texts. In the result of this study, a new vision will be opened in the field of American literature from comparative lens of narcissism.

The paper offers a comprehensive background on narcissism, narcissistic traits, narcissistic personality, and narcissistic personality disorder, and it also shows how these concepts have been used to explore narcissistic personalities in two texts. The study investigates father-son relationships, conjugal bonding, grandiose feelings of the chosen characters, their false notion of the American Dreams, denial of fact, and indifference to human sensibility to uncover their narcissistic personalities in "Death of a Salesman" by Miller and "Seize the Day" by Bellow.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF NARCISSISM

Sigmund Freud's essay entitled "On Narcissism" discusses the "ego ideal" (Rivkin and Ryan 2004, 415). Ego ideal signifies "the part of the personality which comprises the aims and goals for the self" (Werner 1984, 35). Narcissism, as Valerie Raoul proposes, designates self-centered and self-indulgent types of behavior or attitude (Raoul 1993). This concept was first coined by Havelock Ellis in 1898 and later Freud mentioned it in 1905. Initially Freud associated it with auto-erotic fixation related to homosexuality, but he did not develop the concept further until 1914 in his seminal paper entitled "On Narcissism: An Introduction". Freud's use of the term evolved, shifted and various Freudian schools had developed divergent theories related to the concept (Raoul 1993). There is distinction between primary and secondary narcissism (Raoul 1993).

In addition to the concept of narcissism, according to Karen Horney, a German psychoanalyst and neo-Freudian, it is essentially self-inflation or psychic inflation. It means, the person loves and admires himself for values for which there is no adequate foundation.

Similarly, it means that he expects love and admiration from others for qualities that he does not possess or does not possess to as large extent as he supposes (Horney 1939). By creating a fantasy world of his own in which he is the hero, he consoles himself for not being loved and appreciated. He may feel that though others reject him, look down on him, do not love for what he really is, it is because he is too far above their understanding (Horney 1939).

Moreover, Horney in her book, "New Ways in Psychoanalysis" (1939), argued that narcissism signifies an alienation from self and does not signify self-love. A person clings to illusion because he has lost himself. She disagreed with Freud's idea about narcissists' self-love (being too much in love with themselves incapacitated them to love others) and postulated that narcissists were alienated from themselves and others and hence they were incapable of loving either themselves or anyone else (Horney 1939).

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY TRAITS

Otto F. Kernberg's book entitled "Severe Personality Disorders: Psychotherapeutic Strategies" (1984), containing the chapter "Narcissistic Personalities: Clinical Theory and Treatment", reveals the following as regards narcissistic personalities: they display an excessive need to be loved and admired, and a curious contradiction between a very inflated concept of themselves and occasional feelings of extreme inferiority. In addition, they have an inordinate need for tribute from others. Their emotional life is shallow and they usually present some integration of their conscious self-experience that differentiates them from the typical patient borderline personality organization (Kernberg 1984, 193).

The aforementioned traits, as Kernberg emphasized, fit the characteristics of Willy, his sons, namely, Biff Loman, Happy Loman, Dr. Adler and his son Wilhelm in the selected texts. These kind of "[p]eople with narcissistic personalities tend to be inordinately envious of other people, to idealize some people, from whom they expect narcissistic supplies, and to depreciate and treat with contempt those from whom they do not expect anything" (Kernberg 1984, 193).

In addition, the following traits in the book entitled "Malignant Self Love – Narcissism Revisited" are symptomatic of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD):

"A narcissist, as explored by Vaknin, feels grandiose and self-important and demands to be recognized as superior without com-

mensurate achievements. He or she is obsessed with fantasies of unlimited success, fame, fearsome power or omnipotence, unequalled brilliance (the cerebral narcissist), bodily beauty or sexual performance (the somatic narcissist), or ideal, everlasting, all-conquering love or passion. He or she is firmly convinced that he/she is unique and, being special, can only be understood by, should only be treated by, or associate with, other special or unique, or high-status people. A narcissist is devoid of empathy and is unable or unwilling to identify with, acknowledge, or accept the feelings, needs, preferences, priorities, and choices of others. He/she is constantly envious of others and seeks to hurt or destroy the objects of his or her frustration" (Vaknin 2007, 31).

Based on Vaknin's ideas about Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), it might be said that Willy along with his sons in "Death of a Salesman" and Dr. Adler along with his son Wilhelm in "Seize the Day" display (NPD) through their obsession with fantasies of unlimited success, specialness, lack of empathy, denial of feelings, and true selves. Willy, unlike other characters, committed suicide and thus neurotically secured the desired success and image at the cost of his life. It clearly signals his Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) in its pathological state.

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITIES IN MILLER'S AND BELLOW'S WORKS

Narcissism is one of the personality traits of human beings and thus inextricably linked with human behavior and endeavor. In writing literary pieces, authors manifest a cluster of narcissistic symptoms and thus characters portrayed by them naturally exhibit such traits. Willy and Wilhelm are no exceptions in displaying traits of narcissistic personalities as regards their elevated sense of self-importance.

To the narcissist, his uniqueness is bestowed upon him not by virtue of his achievements, but merely because he exists (Vaknin 2007, 42). Willy's narcissistic personality is worth mentioning here. Willy was preoccupied with unrealistic fantasies about himself and his two unstable, inefficient, and lazy sons, and one of them (Biff) also turned out to be a liar, thief and narcissistic just like their father. He believed he was a well-liked salesman among many in Wagner Company for three years. Though he found out how people "laugh[ed] at" (Miller 1998, 29) behind his back and that he was not "noticed" (Miller 1998, 28), his narcissistic nature still made him deny the truth outright for fear of inferiority. In Act I of "Death of a Salesman", he

boasted of his business to his wife Linda: "Oh. I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford" (Miller 1998, 28).

Willy was aware of the fact that "people don't seem to take" (Miller 1998, 28) him, because he was fat, foolish, and misfit to handle such a business, particularly in his old days in a capitalist and materialistic society like New York after World War II. But his heightened narcissism served as a shield from admitting the fact. He used Denial as his defense to feel superior in fear of inferiority: "[D]enial is a defense against perceptions; unlike all other defenses, it is directed outward rather than inward" (Greenberg 1983, 55).

In the conversation with Charley, an old neighbor, about business, Willy lied that he "got important contacts" (Miller 1998, 40) when he was losing ground. He talked about the prevalent condition of the business market to convince Charley that his make-believe words are true: "Business is bad, it's murderous. But not for me, of course" (Miller 1998, 40). He believed that "greatest things can happen!" (Miller 1998, 37) through the charm of his personality and the values that he injected in the veins of the Loman Brothers who "together could absolutely lick the civilized world." (Miller 1998, 50). Likewise, in "Seize the Day", Wilhelm, who is in his mid-forties, was under the same fantasy that he could be a Hollywood actor, and the degree of his unrealistic hope was laughably so high that before his screen test he changed his name from Tommy Adler to Tommy Wilhelm. His "changed name was a mistake, and he would admit it as freely as you liked" (Bellow 1996, 25). The definition of fantasy is important to understand Wilhelm's fantasy. It is a defense mechanism, as Greenberg maintains in the essay "Alternatives": "Freud had described fantasy as a specific mental process which emerges as a consequence of frustration. In his system, fantasy and direct gratification are alternative channels" (Greenberg 1983, 124).

The fact that he left his college education midway to secure a position of an actor in Hollywood, despite his "speech difficulty" (Bellow 1996, 23), ludicrous body movements, "bearlike" (Bellow 1996, 23) walking, and several other peculiarities, was even more narcissistic and catastrophic. To spoil his education along with his career and family bonding, to pursue such an unrealistic fantasy was his biggest blunder. Willy's and Wilhelm's grand fantasies of success itself were misleading and fallacious, and that was why they were unable to lead normal healthy lives. It also left marks on their close family members. Influenced by Willy's false notion, – that "personality always wins the day" (Miller 1998, 51), the Loman brothers started developing narcissist traits.

NARCISSISTIC FAÇADE OF SPECIALNESS

Regarding the meaning of specialness, Lowen argues that “the promise of specialness is the seductive lure put forward in the parents’ effort to mold the child into his/her image of what the child should be. The promise, in most cases, is not explicit rather implicit in the parents’ attitude towards the child” (Lowen 1985, 105). In “Death of a Salesman”, Willy’s elder son Biff was thought to be the gateway to the fulfillment of Willy’s dreams and success. He was ready to deny reality and to occupy the “parental fantastic space” as Horney pointed out (Vaknin 2007).

The whole Loman family surprisingly started to believe that Biff’s meeting with Bill Oliver will be fruitful, and thus he will secure a good position in Oliver’s company and the family’s troubles will be over for good. A shocking revelation for them was the fact that Biff was not noticed there, and he returned home after having stolen Oliver’s pen from his office. At this point, to the shock of the Lomans Biff disclosed that he had never worked for Oliver. In fact, he was a shipping clerk. In Act II, he confessed that he had been in jail for three months on a charge to steal a suit in Kansas City. It became his habit to steal something “out of every good job since high school” (Miller 1998, 104).

Eventually, Biff discovered the obstacles to his career, and these were his father’s exceedingly high hopes for him, however they did not conform to his potential and actions. Willy made Biff feel to be a kind of specialness probably to compensate for his own sense of failures. Willy identifies himself with his son Biff and wants to fulfill his unfulfilled longings through his son. The core of a father-son relationship and psychological legacy that had been handed down by the father to Biff is evident from this: “And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That’s whose fault it is” (Miller 1998, 104). Alexander Lowen, an American psychotherapist, asserts that “parents literally hold the power of life and death over children” and their narcissism is projected onto their children: “I’m special and therefore my child is special” (Lowen 1985, 13).

THE ROLE OF NARCISSIST FATHERS TO SHAPE THEIR SONS' PERSONALITIES

The role of parents to mold their children's personality is undeniable. Narcissist fathers are driven by their narcissistic need to shape their sons' personality in narcissist fashion. In "Death of a Salesman", Willy's narcissistic personality came strikingly to light when he got engaged in an excessive investment in his own image at the cost of the self. It therefore signaled his denial of true self. He transmitted such characteristic traits and fragile defenses to Biff. In "Seize the Day", Dr. Adler's own sense of self-importance, need for superiority and perfection, dread of inferiority, and lack of empathy constituted his narcissistic personality that had a huge impact on his son. But the paradox lied in the fact that his profundity refused to allow his son at the cost of his education to step in Hollywood for his false perception that he could make a glamorous future in California. He seemingly disapproved Wilhelm's narcissistic action to pursue such a career, as he was well aware about the limitations/reality of his son. Dr. Adler played the role of a catalyst in molding his son's personality. The following arguments illustrate the aforesaid claim:

"Dr. Adler's narcissism is another factor that forms his son's character. Dr. Adler is depicted as a narcissist who does not care for either of his children. His father's self-appreciation is so great and he cares about no one else that he shuffles the protagonist back to the obscurity of oscillating in his inner world. As Richmond purports, Dr. Adler's vampiristic role and the complexity and machinery of New York City are the sources of the failed son's 'congested' emotional condition. On the one hand, Tommy's perspective feelings turn into repugnance and hatred in the novel. In fact, the reason why Dr. Adler is not interested in his son's problems is his narcissism and it causes an abyss between them" (Kalay 2015, 3).

NARCISSISTIC CHARACTERS' FALSE PRIDE AND DENIAL OF REALITY

Narcissistic characters are impelled by their false image and pride, which suggests their denial of reality. They are in love with their make-believe images rather than with their real selves. In this connection, Lowen states that "[n]arcissism develops from denial of feeling" (Lowen 1985, 75). Willy's idea to convince Howard to find a place for himself in New York, and mostly his confrontation with

Company boss clearly displayed his narcissistic personality. In his conversation with the boss, he failed to resist himself and showed his exhaustion, low spirits with poor empathy, lack of adaptability and sales efficiency, hollowness, aggression and imbalanced ego, false pride, and denial of reality. A salesman having such characteristics and limitations was no longer required in Wagner Company. Here lie his big talks with Linda before meeting the boss: "I'm gonna knock Howard for a loop, kid. I'll get an advance, and I'll come home with a New York job. Goddammit, now I'm gonna do it" (Miller 1998, 57).

Willy violated the employer-employee relationship. He vexed his boss by saying that he "can't eat the orange and throw the peel away" (Miller 1998, 64) and felt himself completely lost and proved to be useless and even extremely neurotic and narcissistic. He failed to realize that no emotions, as Willy tried to infuse, matter more than the existing principles of business that is "business is business" (Miller 1998, 63). As the boss expressed in clear terms: "I don't want you to represent us. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now" (Miller 1998, 65).

The reasons behind Willy's losing job, his incapability to build a sustainable relationship with his boss do not differ much from those of Wilhelm with his father. Their ego was dominated by false hope, illusion, and pride. They were under a sarcastic illusion that despite their limitations they would be given importance and emotional support when they had hard times.

LACK OF EMPATHY

A person, as Lynch postulates, experiencing empathic failures is likely to develop a disorder of the self structure and the most frequently occurring self disorder is that of the narcissistic personality disturbance (Jackson 1991). "Wilhelm was beginning to lose himself" (Bellow 1996, 53) but his father "intended to say that he had a right to be left in peace" (Bellow 1996, 54). Dr. Adler's lack of empathy for Wilhelm made him suffer all the more and it impelled the latter to choose Dr. Tamkin, doctor by profession, as his surrogate father. He realized his mistakes as he admitted it to his father: "Let's suppose that all my life I have had wrong ideas about myself and wasn't even careful to take a few precautions, as most people do – like a woodchuck has a few exits to his tunnel. But what shall I do now? More than half my life is over. More than half. And now you tell me I'm not even normal" (Bellow 1996, 54).

However, Dr. Tamkin, as previously mentioned, played a significant role in Wilhelm's life. Apparently, he gave emotional support. Actually, he was an oppressor. He used the weaknesses in father-son relationships with ill motives. Here worth pondering is just Wilhelm's attitude. The biological father was least bothered about his son's sufferings, just like Dr. Tamkin. Wilhelm committed another blunder to befriend Tamkin. For sympathy and support, he chose another father figure who lacked empathy just like his father. Even to a greater extent, an impostor like Tamkin beguiled him and snatched his last hope for fraudulent gain. The blunder might be termed a situational irony and was provoked by his narcissist vision of his being in need of a father's affection as well as protection.

"When Wilhelm deprives from his father's love and affection, he then sets himself in quest of an understanding, loving heart, father-figure for which he becomes an easy victim of Tamkin. Tamkin can conceive the heartiest agony of Wilhelm and lacking of his life, he shows love and affection for Wilhelm to make him trustworthy. Tamkin becomes Tommy Wilhelm's spiritual father. Tommy looks on him as an ideal Father, who understands the relationship of fathers and sons though later on he discovers that he is both narcissistic and materialistic (as cited in Shukla, S. and Shukla, A., 2006, 168)" (Qtd. in Deb 2014, 61).

GRAND FANTASY OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIPS

A narcissist defends himself against failures and powerlessness by creating a grand fantasy of success. Such fantasy could provide temporary escape from reality and support a make-believe image of success. As per the summary of relational content analysis of two texts, father-son relationships that prove to be failures can be even compared to nightmares, especially in the case of Wilhelm. Owing to the strains created by materialism and narcissism, everyone was engaged in a ruthless pursuit of making money at the cost of denying reciprocal feelings for one another. Failure of Willy and his sons was highlighted by the dissimilar and simultaneously successful father-son relationship between Charley and Bernard in "Death of a Salesman", and so is another foil to another pair of father-son relation between Wilhelm and Dr. Adler in "Seize the Day". Charley and Bernard believed in hard work as the key to success, which was a truly reality-oriented approach. It stands in sharp contrast to

that of Willy and his sons, who were motivated by the false ideas of being “well liked” and the charm of personality.

Looked at from narcissistic point of view, as Vaknin proposes, narcissists are obsessed with delusions of fantastic grandeur and superiority (Vaknin 2007). Willy’s activities and vision of life could best be understood in the light of this view. His grand fantasy of success, “that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked!” (Miller 1998, 68) remained his life’s biggest flaw and he transmitted it to his sons as his legacy. That was why Biff, at the age of 34, “[i]n the greatest country in the world a young man with such – personal attractiveness, gets lost” (Miller 1998, 11). Willy’s American Dream or rather wrong dreams destroyed him and his sons.

The concept of the American Dream implies an improbable, unconvincing, and questionable dream. The basis of it as follows:

The “American Dream” is based on the “Declaration of Independence”:

“We believe that all men are born with these inalienable rights – life, liberty and pursuit of happiness” (Thomas Jefferson 1776). This “dream” consists of a genuine and determined belief that in America, all things are possible to all men, regardless of birth or wealth; if you work hard enough you will achieve anything. However, Miller believes that people have been “ultimately misguided” and Miller’s play, “Death of a Salesman”, is a moving destruction of the whole myth” (Juan 2010, 124).

As already analyzed, “Willy Loman is “caught-up” in this American Dream. It causes business to develop in the world. Capitalism and also the profit motive and competitive instinct, makes Willy have a weakness in his personality. This weakness is caused by a combination of business pressures” (Juan 2010, 124).

FROM NARCISSISTIC FASCINATION TO REALITY-ORIENTED THINKING

The narcissist is preoccupied with narcissistic fascination for inflated sense of the self that blocks the path of realizing reality. In “Death of a Salesman”, the Loman brothers were entangled in the epic fantasies of their father. With airs and graces Willy pretended to be a successful salesman, “vital in New England” (Miller 1998, 10). He was used to interpreting the weaknesses of his sons with bragging and pomposity. This distracted his sons from realizing their mistakes.

Unlike Happy, Biff eventually realized his mistakes and pleaded his father to “take that phony dream and burn it” (Miller 1998, 106).

In “Seize the Day”, Wilhelm pursued his narcissistic fascination for Hollywood, marital bonding with Margaret, and connection with Tamkin despite his intuition and oscillating apprehension: “He had decided that it would be a bad *mistake to go to Hollywood*, and then he *went*. He had made up his mind not to marry his wife, but ran off and got married. He had resolved not to invest money with Tamkin, and then had given him a check” (Bellow 1996, 23). Instead of running for the fanciful and impractical things, Wilhelm reflected that he “should have done hard labor” (Bellow 1996, 7) to get at his desired goal to make his materialistic, practical, yet narcissist father even prouder. Just to assert superiority, Wilhelm’s father took a moment to swagger about his son before an old man in Hotel Gloriana. Dr. Adler endeavored to introduce his son as a perfect person among his milieu. Tommy had heard the old man bragging to another old man and saying, “My son is a sales executive. He didn’t have the patience to finish school” (Bellow 1996, 14). The reason why he behaves like this is the fact that he believes his son must be a distinguished person like himself. This pressure damages the protagonist’s personality. On the other hand, Dr. Adler despises his own child. By ignoring him, Dr. Adler dominates Tommy’s inner world. Tommy succumbs to his father’s hegemony and his desire to be appreciated turns into a vicious circle” (Kalay 2015, 3).

The study indicates that the sons, namely Biff in “Death of a Salesman” and Wilhelm in “Seize the Day”, realized that they were living under illusion. They decided to leave the world of fantasy and live in reality, thereby breaking the shackles of their fathers’ invisible dominance over their psychological state.

NARCISSISTIC NEED FOR SUPERIORITY AND DREAD FOR INFERIORITY

Narcissism denotes a “personality disturbance” (Lowen 1985) characterized by excessive feelings of superiority and dread for inferiority. The study reveals father-son’s narcissistic need for superiority and dread for inferiority which are worth mentioning here. Wilhelm’s denial of his poor education contradicted with his obsession to foster self-respect and make-believe image. As a result, he used denial as his defense to hide the truth behind his education/failures. He proudly claimed to be one of the alumni of Penn State and this facade became

the reality he started to believe. In a similar fashion, Biff claimed to be a former reputed sales executive of Bill Oliver, but, in fact, he was merely a shipping clerk. Since Willy was exceedingly obsessed with Biff's greatness. He compared his son with "Hercules", "star", "magnificent", that he could not see him "fade away!" (Miller 1998, 54). He could not afford to see Biff sink in any way/sense and this drive motivated him to commit suicide for securing a bright future for his precious son.

OBSESSION WITH SELF-WORTH

The narcissist, as Vaknin maintains, wittingly or not utilizes people to buttress his self-image and to regulate his sense of self-worth. As long and in as much as they are instrumental in achieving these goals, he holds them in high regard, they are valuable to him (Vaknin 2007). Willy was obsessed with finding his self-worth, which urged him get external indicators, such as an approval from his family and boss. Linda and his mistress served as indicators of his self worth approval. Whether blinded by illusion or pretention, they kept on praising Willy's personality. He referred to Ben, as he proudly mentioned Singleman's connection before his boss, most often to imply that Willy could reach Ben's place, if he then had joined the latter. He also attempted to seek Howard's approval of himself. For this, he proudly emphasized that he had been a favorite of Howard's father and requested his boss to give him New York job or to restore his job in Boston.

According to Karen Horney, a narcissist "felt that he should have been recognized as a genius without having to give evidence of it by actual work" (Horney 1939, 95). Drawing on Horney in connection with Willy's peculiar expectation, it could be surmised that Willy Loman's lack of originality, initiative of his own to obtain glory pushed him towards high self-esteem. It had paralyzed his inner activity. Such failures occurred due to his "fear of people", as Horney emphasizes (95).

In "Seize the Day", Wilhelm's obsession to foster his self-worth is discernible in connection with his father, wife Margaret, and mistress Olive. He knew that his father felt ashamed of him because of his failures in life. To get his father's approval for his self-respect, he left no stone unturned to be successful from a materialistic point of view. He was fired from Rojax Corporation just like Willy was from Wagner Company. He had to start afresh from somewhere

through someone. In the first place, he wanted support from his own father but being frustrated he went to Tamkin and started a joint venture. He unfortunately ended up losing his last 700 dollars. Unlike Willy's suicide, Wilhelm lived and suddenly underwent a rebirth of hope but still nothing was left for him in the city. To restore his self-respect or that of his father's, he was determined to pay the hotel even by selling his car: "As for Dad – As for Dad – I'll have to sell the car for junk and pay the hotel" (Bellow 1996, 115).

To get rid of the neurotic and simultaneously unendurable father-son relationship, he used the denial of fact about Tamkin as a weapon for his defense. To heal his disturbed psyche, he took a cheat as his surrogate father. It effectively signaled the degree of his despair that compelled him to take such a man as his defense. Faruk Kalay in "A Complicated Personality in 'Seize the Day' by Saul Bellow" has argued:

"[T]he protagonist considers himself healed by Dr. Tamkin. However, Fishman goes further and charges Dr. Tamkin of Machiavellianism: rather than being a Machiavellian, it is more important to use pseudoscientific jargon as a pretext to steal Tommy Wilhelm's last thousand dollars (Fishman 1983, 620). Tommy prefers Dr. Tamkin as a father to Dr. Adler. In fact, although he knows that Dr. Tamkin is a charlatan and a swindler, Tommy settles on Dr. Tamkin who to Tommy's mind is more indulgent and apprehensive. However, in desperation, Tommy turns to Dr. Tamkin (their names link their destinies), though his father has warned him, and Tommy knows, that Tamkin is a charlatan and a fraud. Tamkin offers him a way out of his financial impasse by persuading him to bet his last seven hundred dollars on lard futures in the commodity market, though Tommy knows absolutely nothing about them. When Tommy loses his money, Tamkin suddenly disappears. But Tamkin does represent a powerful life force (Meyers 2009, 165) (Qtd. in Kalay 2015, 4).

At the end of the novella, he failed to sustain all his relationships, except his last dream to live his life with his beloved Olive. But his fantasy raises a lot of questions. Will he be able to make his bond with Olive healthy and sustainable? Will he be able to divorce his wife and start with Olive anew? How will he manage a job / capital to lead a better life ahead? Does he not look like Paul Morel in D. H. Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers"? Paul was fixated to his mother even after her death (mercy killing). Besides, neither could he detach himself from Clara nor from Miriam and got stuck in between. In a similar fashion, Wilhelm got fixated on fostering his self-worth and pathetically failed to separate himself from Margaret

and Olive. Just like Willy and sons, Wilhelm along with his father will remain lonely may be in different places of the world, but their narcissist traits will always incapacitate them to live a healthy life with family.

UNREALISTIC FANTASY OF SUCCESS

The perspective that “the narcissist suffers from a chronic lack of confidence and is fundamentally dissatisfied” (Vaknin 2007, 45) could be applied to Willy. Willy’s narcissistic frustration drove him to take his rich brother Ben Loman and 84 years old successful travelling salesman Dave Singleman as his role models and the representatives of his unrealistic fantasy. His distorted and faulty vision made him visualize their actions along with factors behind their success from his own perspectives. Singleman’s achievement as a salesman in legendary proportions and description of his spectacular funeral were Willy’s subjective and make-believe views:

“When Dave Singleman was mentioned by Willy when he was trying to tell Howard what being a salesman used to be like, we only have Willy’s evidence, as all we know, this man maybe made up in Willy’s head. But this man is a huge icon for Willy to look up to. He was eight-four years old, and he’d drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. Also Willy desperately wants a funeral similar to Dave’s. When he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. This is because Dave was greatly valued, whereas Willy isn’t, nor is he loved as much” (Juan 2010, 125).

Willy again inappropriately took Singleman, bachelor as the name suggests, as an example, as his shoulder was not burdened with familial responsibility and overall the latter was exceptional and conspicuously different from Willy. In this connection, William Delaney in “What did Dave Singleman represent for Willy in ‘Death of a Salesman’?” states: “Singleman was homeless. He was undoubtedly buried in Boston because that was where he died. If he had died in Philadelphia, he would have buried in Philadelphia. Willy thinks there is something glamorous and even heroic about being a travelling salesman but he himself is an example of the grim reality” (Delaney 2014).

Willy was under a false impression that he would never have to retire as he was successful, and that the greatest thing was yet to happen miraculously. Singleman achieved his status because of his hard work and “he did not have any competition” (Delaney 2014). Again he mistakenly thought that Ben achieved success overnight,

however that was also his impaired vision. It was Ben's hard work that was supported by luck as the background story behind his success in Africa. In connection with Ben, images of "diamonds" came across Willy's mind frequently but he failed to realize that achieving such precious diamond symbolizing success was beyond his reach especially when he had a lot of limitations and drawbacks.

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER (NPD)

The narcissist, as Vaknin postulates, "[...] does not suffer from a faulty sense of causation. He is not oblivious to the likely outcomes of his actions and to the price he may have to pay. But he doesn't care" (Vaknin 2007, 43). Unlike other narcissist characters from the two texts, Willy at the cost of his own life achieved his goal. He sacrificed his life for excessive investment in making his own image in a post-war American materialistic society which took only capital into account. Such extremity of his thoughts, implemented into actions, clearly uncovered his mental illness called Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

NPD constitutes grandiosity, as Baron puts it, in fantasy and behavior, coupled with need for admiration and lack of empathy. A grandiose sense of self-importance and preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, brilliance, or beauty (Baron 1999, 571). From the chosen characters, only Willy's narcissism was diagnosed pathological as regards his committing suicide. The Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), as postulated by Vaknin, is a form of pathological narcissism (Vaknin 2007, 30) which was also called "egotism" or "megalomania" in previous centuries (Vaknin 2007, 31).

CONCLUSION

Narcissism denotes a personality disturbance characterized by exaggerated sense of the self and also loss of true values of the self. Apart from functioning as self-love for the narcissist, narcissism played its vital role of concomitant self-defense from the stress and strains prevailing in society. Their grandiose image, along with the display of such an image, is a relatively effective self-defense against depression, as postulated by Alexander Lowen, and thus the façade of superiority becomes difficult to break down (Lowen 1985). Their self-love, on another level, leading to self-defense can be identified

with their lack of humanness and loss of moral and cultural values. On the basis of the theory of narcissism, the comparative nature of the study reveals that father-sons relationships from both Miller's and Bellow's texts share many things in common, such as their narcissistic attitude to life, desperate loneliness, failure of sustaining relationships with family, longing for establishing self-worth. Failures of sustaining a good parental and conjugal bonding of Willy and Wilhelm placed them close and so were their loneliness. Unlike Dr. Adler, Willy sacrificed his life to attain his objective of securing a bright future for his sons. Both the fathers unrealistically longed for their sons' unlimited success in their lifetime but ended up destroying their sons' potential for their narcissist influences on them.

REFERENCES

- Baron, R. A. (1999). *Psychology*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall.
- Bellow, S. (1996). *Seize the Day*. USA: Penguin.
- Deb, J. (2014). "Materialism Precedes Murder: Saul Bellow's 'Seize the Day'." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Vol. 19, Issue 1, 61. Available at <www.iosrjournals.org> (accessed March 2018).
- Delaney, W. (2014). "What did Dave Singleman Represent for Willy in Death of Salesman?" *eNotes*. Available at <<https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-did-dave-singleman-represent-willy-332348>> (accessed April 2018).
- Fishman, E. (1983). "Saul Bellow's 'Likely Stories'." *Journal of Politics*. Vol. 45. No. 3, 615–634. www.jstor.org/stable/2130706> (accessed April 2018).
- Freud, S. (1914). "On Narcissism". In: Strachey J., Freud A. & Richards A. (eds.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press. Available at <<https://archive.org/stream/standardeditiono03freu#page/n7/mode/2up>> (accessed June 2018).
- Greenberg, J. R. and Mitchel S. A. (1983). *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Horney, K. (1939). *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton. Available at <<https://archive.org/stream/newwaysinpsychoa00hornrich#page/296/mode/2up>> (accessed June 2018).
- Jackson, H. (1991). *Using Self-psychology in Psychotherapy*. London: Jason Aronson. Available at <<https://archive.org/stream/usingselfpsychol00jack#page/46/mode/2up>> (accessed June 2018).

- Juan, Z. (2010). "Corruption of the 'American Dream' in 'Death of a Salesman': A Thematic Analysis of Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman'." *Cross-Cultural Communication* 6(3), 124–125.
- Kalay, F. (2015). "A Complicated Personality in 'Seize the Day' by Saul Bellow." *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* Vol. 6. No. 1, 3. Doi:10.7575/aiac.all.v.6n.1p. Available at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.6n.1p.1>> (accessed April 2018).
- Kernberg, O. F. (1984). *Severe Personality Disorders: Psychotherapeutic Strategies*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Available at <<https://archive.org/stream/severepersonalit00kern#page/192/mode/2up>> (accessed June 2018).
- Lowen, A. (1985). *Narcissism: Denial of the True Self*. New York: Collier Books. Available at <<https://archive.org/stream/narcissismdenia00lowe#page/12>> (accessed July 2018).
- Meyers, J. (2009). "Bluebeard Bellow." *Kenyon Review*, New Series Vol. 31. No. 2, 160–186. <<https://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/all/article/view/599>> (accessed April 2018).
- Miller, A. (1998). *Death of a Salesman*. New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc. Available at <<https://books.google.com.bd/books?id=jeoQ0zmQ5VsC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=twopage&q&f=true>> (accessed March 2018)
- Raoul, V. (1993). *Distinctly Narcissistic: Diary Fiction in Quebec*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Available at <<https://archive.org/stream/distinctlynarcis00raou#page/n0/mode/2up>> (accessed June 2018).
- Richmond, L. J. (1973). "The Maladroit, the Medico, and the Magician: Saul Bellow's 'Seize the Day'." *Twentieth Century Literature* Vol. 19. No. 1, 15–26. Duke University Press. DOI: 10.2307/440794 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/440794> > (accessed April 2018).
- Rivkin, J. and Ryan M. (eds.) (2004). *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. USA: Blackwell Publishing. Available at <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com>> (accessed June 2015).
- Vaknin, S. (2007). *Malignant Self Love – Narcissism Revisited*. Prague & Skopje: Narcissus Publications. Available at <<https://ia600306.us.archive.org/16/items/MalignantSelfLove-NarcissismRevisitedExcerpts/MSL2excerpts.pdf> > (accessed June 2018).
- Werner, A. and Campbell R. J. (eds.) (1984). *The American Psychiatric Association's Psychiatric Glossary*. Washington, D.C.: The American Psychiatric Press. Available at <<https://archive.org/details/americanpsychiat00amer/page/34>> (accessed June 2018).