Objective Time and Subjective Time in the Plot of *Death of a Salesman*: A Cognitive Neuropsychological Approach

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing Arthur Miller's utilization of objective time and subjective time in his tragedy of *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Objective time is related to events in the present, whereas subjective time is related to his memories of the past and predictions of the future. The study presents the concepts of objective time and subjective time in the light of recent relevant neuropsychological studies and analyzes the text in light of them. Present events that belong to the objective sphere in the play are few and they make the backbone of the plot which covers the last two days in the life of the character. These events and the dialogs they stimulate belong to the domain of objective time. The memories these events and dialogs trigger belong to the domain of subjective time. Memories of past experiences and future predictions record the protagonist's mental activities of the mind moving back and forth in time which is either gone or has not come. Therefore, these memories cover the past life of sixty-three years of the protagonist, whereas the objective sphere covers the last 24 hours of the protagonist's life. The study divides the remembered life of the protagonist into three phases, namely his early years before he got his job as a salesman in Wagner's company at the age of thirty-four, the second phase covers the years from thirty-four to fifty-one when his son discovers his illicit relationship with a woman in a hotel in Boston, and the last phase covers events till the beginning of the play. Noticeably, the character does not remember things in the order of their occurrence. Remembered events from the three stages are related randomly across the play. The study explicates why the playwright uses episodic memory in the first and third phases and future memory is recruited to predict prospective events and achievements during the years of the second phase.

Keywords: Objective time, Subjective time, Episodic memory, Future memory, Tragedy, Tragic character.
الأدوار الموضوعية والزمن الذاتي في حيكة تراجيدية آرثر ميلر موت بائع متجول:
تحليل معرفي نفس - دماغي

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ملخص
تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل استخدام آرثر ميلر للزمن الموضوعي والزمن الشخصي في مسرحيته التراجيدية "موت بائع متجول" (1949). يرتبط الزمن الموضوعي بما يحدث في الزمان الحاضر، بينما يرتبط الزمن الذاتي بذكرياته من الماضي وتوشيقها للمستقبل. وتحل الدراسة الزمن الموضوعي والزمن الذاتي في ضوء دراسات علم النفس الدماغي الحديثة التي تستعرض البحث المتصل منها بالنظرية الطرود وتحليل النص في ضوبتها. ما يجري في المسرحية من أحداث هي قليلة وتشكل البيئة الأساسية للحرب التي تغطي اليوم الأخير من حياة البطل التراجيدي. تنتمي هذه الأحداث والحوارات التي تحقّز تلك الأحداث إلى الجزء الموضوعي أي الزمن الحاضر. بينما تنتمي الذكريات التي تستثيرها هذه الأحداث والحوارات إلى مجال الزمن الذاتي. تسجل ذكريات التجارب السابقة والتنبؤات المستقبلية الأنشطة العقلية للبطل الرواية حيث يتجول عقله ذهاباً وإياباً في ذكريات حياة ويلي لومان وتجاربه الماضية وتطفّعه المستقبلية في الزمن الذي انقضى والزمن المستقبلي الذي لم يأتي بعد. تغطي هذه الذكريات الحياة الماضية لمدة ثلاثة وستين عاماً من عمر بطل المسرحية، بينما يغطي الزمن الموضوعي أو الزمن الحاضر آخر يوم من حياة الشخصية الرئيسية.

تقسم الدراسة الحياة التي يذكرها البطل إلى ثلاث مراحل، وهي سنوات الأولى قبل أن يحصل على وظيفته كبائع في شركة فانغر في سن الرابعة والثلاثين، وغطي المرحلة الثانية السنوات من الرابعة والثلاثين إلى الحادية والعشرين عندما يكتشف ابنه أنه يقيم علاقة مع امرأة في فندق في بوستن، بينما تغطي المرحلة الأخيرة الأحداث حتى بداية السرقة. من الملاحظ أن ويلي لومان لا يذكر الأحداث بتسند حدوثها. ترتبط الأحداث التي تم ذكرها من المراحل الثلاث بشكل عشوائي عبر المسرحية.

توضح الدراسة سبب استخدام الكاتب السرحي لذكريات الماضية في المراحلت الأولى والثانية ويتّجه الدافع المستقبلي للتتبّي بالأحداث والانجازات المحتملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوقت الموضوعي، الوقت الذاتي، ذكرى الماضي، الذكرى المستقبلية، التراجيديا، البطل التراجيدي.
Introduction

This study aims to examine the neuropsychological concept of mind wandering in Miller's *The Death of a Salesman*. Mental time travel (MTT) is a "central component of mind wandering". Corballis argues that memory is a "critical component of mind wandering" and is a tool of mental time travel. In this play, episodic memory plays an important role in the construction of the mentality and psychology of the tragic protagonist Willy Loman. Besides, memory marks the identity of the character. The events of the play take place over the span of one day. However, the play covers and analyzes the six decades of the life of the major character and his family. These years are extracted from the memory of the major character. Memory oscillating back and forth provides the character's story. The years of his between 34 and 48 are marked by the use of future memory, whereas the 1st three decades of his life and the last two decades are reconstructed by the use of episodic memory. The study argues that two incidents make the demarcating line in Willy's life, namely his appointment in the Wagner Company at the age of 34, and the trip of his son Biff to follow the father in Boston with the conviction that his father could convince the teacher of Math Mr. Birnbaum to pass him so that he can get a scholarship from the University of Virginia. Therefore, the play covers the three stages in the life of the tragic protagonist: the first stage of three decades is given less space in the play than the other two stages. The second stage covers the years 34-48 of Willy's life. This phase makes the golden era of Willy's life. The third stage covers the years from 48 till the end of Willy's life. The play starts and ends on the last day of his life. The incidents of the whole life of Willy are retrieved through two types of memory, namely The play uses two types of memories: episodic memory and future memory. The former is used to relate the incidents of stage one, future memory is employed in stage two, stage three is marked by the use of episodic memory.

Before Biff's visit, the attitude of the character and his family is positive and their outlook on life is optimistic. The character employs future memory and keeps dreaming about his and Biff's prospective career. After that incident, the father gets guilt-ridden and loses the trust and confidence of his son and his mind gets preoccupied with episodic memory to the degree that at times he blends the present and the past in a confusing method to his prolocutors. And since that incident, the two characters never get along and keep fighting.

Literature Review

Miller uses two forms of time in this play, namely objective time and subjective time. Objective time or clock time is sequential in nature and flows only forward in one direction. It counts the moments of time regardless of
human consciousness or awareness. Fatima Rassi (2014) argues that this sort of time marks the Aristotelian type that can be measured by the actions and changes that happen during its moments. The current of the one-dimensional flux of objective time is metaphorically a container for the actions that occur in the present moments.

Subjective time, however, is totally different in the sense that it does not flow in one direction and accounts for events that occurred in the past and may occur in the future. Thus, it has nothing to do with the present objective time. Subjective time is the mental ability of the mind to dislocate itself at different time points in the past and project itself at different future times. The domain of subjective time includes the events that happened before and are gone and events that are not yet.

St. Augustine much earlier introduced the difference between the two concepts of time. Manning et al. (2013) argue that St. Augustine considers objective time as the chronological progression of moments of time, whereas subjective time is the conscious "memory based, subjective phenomenon.”

Modern neuropsychologists take interest in the phenomenon of subjective time and map the activities of the brain during the process of what they metaphorically call mental time travel (MTT). Suddendorf and Corballis (1997, 2007) argue that MTT is the capacity of remembering past events and imagining future events. Studies consider MTT as one form of mind wandering. Michael Corballis (2013) argues that mind wandering includes the major component of mental time travel, which is a mental capacity to remember past events and imagine prospective ones. He further maintains that mind wandering is a network of activities of the mind when it is not focusing on a certain task or the "immediate environment".

Recently, numerous modern neuropsychological studies tackle various aspects of subjective time. They connect it to memory or consider it as an aspect of memory. Suddendorf and Corballis (2007) define MTT as the ability to re-experience past incidents and anticipate the future by projecting the self to “imagined future and imagined past.” Tulving (1985) argues that mental travel draws on projecting oneself into past moments of time. He argues that future memory is to dislocate oneself forward to pre-live an incident in the time to come.

Szpunar (2011) distinguishes between the awareness of subjective time or chronesthesia and the associated mental activities. Tulving and Kim (2007) call these two aspects the medium and the message, arguing that the medium makes the message possible. Szpunar (2011) argues that chronesthesia as defined by (Tulving 2002) is connected to the concepts of temporal consciousness and
temporal existence. The two concepts indicate a willful process of the brain to travel to the past or the future, both of which, contrary to objective time, do not exist in reality.

Tulving (1985) and Szpunar (2011) argue that past and future moments do not belong to physical reality. They are rather products of the human mind. Physically, past incidents are gone and are not anymore. However, they are stored in the temporal lobe of the brain, whereas the future has not come yet. The mind produces predictions of them and plans about them which are stored in the frontal cortex of the brain. The storage is processed by the hippocampus. Szpunar (2011) maintains that the ability to reproduce past experiences and predict prospective ones marks our identity and the flow of existence in the world. Watson, & McDermott (2007) point out that the anterior hippocampus is more stimulated processing future episodes and the posterior hippocampus is more engaged while processing past events. Neuropsychologists show that past experiences are stored in the temporal lobe and future events and plans are stored in the frontal cortex.

Ingvar (1985) argues that the type of memory responsible for re-living the past is called episodic memory, whereas the type of memory that enables the individual to project him/herself to future experiences and predict them is called future memory.

Corballis (2013) points out that memory is an essential medium for providing the mind with the elements around which mind wandering is constructed. Squire (2004) points out that memory can be divided into two categories: declarative and non-declarative memories. Declarative is explicit and conscious, and non-declarative is unconscious and related to habits and skills. According to Squire (2004), declarative memory can be either episodic memory or semantic memory. Episodic is the medium to reconstruct past events and semantic memory is concerned with knowledge about the world. Klein, S.; Robertson, T. and Delton, A. (2009) argue that both episodic and semantic provide materials for prospective future events.

This mental capacity is connected to the concept of subjective time which is provided by memory. Subjective time is a conscious capacity of the mind projecting itself to different time points in the past or the future. Szpunar (2011) holds that objective time which counts the flux of present moments regardless of the consciousness of the mind. He points out that related to episodic memory is incidental memory which is the mental ability to reconstruct past events is that capacity that enables the mind to reconstruct or remember past events or relive past experiences in order to imagine or expect future events. Szpunar, Addis,and Schacter, (2012) find a connection between remembering
the past for the purpose of imaging the future. They argue that "imagining possible future events depends much on the same cognitive and neural machinery as does remembering past events."\textsuperscript{13}

Other scholars, such as Jacoby (1984; and Hassabis and Maguire(2007) deny that pastness and futureness are not properties of the human brain, but are rather a means to impose some sort of organization to our thoughts.

**Theoretical framework**

This analysis will rely on Corballis' article (2013) on time wandering and its relationship with mental time travel to show how the memory wraps up the past of the protagonist and his present moments. Mind wandering fills in the gaps in the life of the character and puts present moments in his autobiographical life flux. This helps a lot in understanding the dreamy nature of the tragic protagonist.

The article of Arzy et al. (2009) serves this study tremendously in its analysis of the mental ability of the character to move back and forth by projecting the self to different points in time in the past and the future to re-experience past moments and predict future ones. What is interesting in this article is the conclusion that there is a similarity between memories of the past and the future. The authors also find out that it is possible to evaluate past and future experiences that are detached from the present moment. Relevant to our study is that Arzy et al's study is the demonstration that past memories could include memories that were considered future ones before they were realized. This explicates the nature of Willy's memories and mental dislocation at different points in time.

This current study also benefits from the article of Allan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin (2015), which analyzes the play in light of the Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory and Family Systems Theory. This article is specifically helpful in analyzing Biff's departure from home to various states to build a career away from his family.

**Discussion**

This section will cover the two categories of objective time and subjective time. The first section covers the six events that occur in the play and the dialogs that develop around them. The discussion covers the memories that are incurred in lieu of the events and the dialogs map the life of the protagonist. These memories are studied in light of the modern cognitive neuropsychological theories presented in the literature review section.
Objective time and events from the present

Objective time is a concept that is concerned with events that occur in the present. And since the events that take place in the tragedy of Willy Loman are those that happen in the last 24 hours of his life, these events are the only ones in the play that are included in the scope of objective time. There is a lot of talk and only six events that take place during these hours. Interesting is the fact that every action done by Willy is paralleled by a simultaneous one by his son Biff. The events include (1) Willy's unexpected return from a sales trip because he has failed to focus while driving and the return of Biff from the horse ranch in Texas, and Biff's return from Texas, (2) Willy's visit to the headquarters of the Wagner's Company in New York in order to find a bureaucratic job in there instead of driving, and Biff's visit to the office of Bill Oliver to get a loan to start the Loman Brothers' Sports project, Willy loses his current sales job and Biff is ignored by Bill Oliver, (3) Willy calls on Charley's office to borrow money and, coincidentally, he meets Bernard the successful counterpart of Biff, (4) Biff’s and Happy's invitation to Willy to dinner in a restaurant in New York, and (5) Willy's suicidal crash of his car in order to secure the money for their imaginary sports project. These incidents that compose the plot are sequential and breed one another. They are connected according to the cause-and-effect rules of drama after the Aristotelian concept of the unity of the plot. They also happen in the present and belong to the domain of objective time.

These incidents compose the action and construct the plot of the play and they provoke a lot of discussion around them. These incidents and exchanges provide the volume of the play. The discussions serve two purposes: first, they shed light on the personality of the major character. After all the tradition of tragedy is constructed around the personality and the life destiny of one character and the function of the other characters is to polish various facets of that character. This tradition is described in Aristotle's Poetics and is adopted in Miller's tragedy of the common man. Diane Long Hoeveler (1978) looks at the play as a morality play in which the characters are fragmented aspects of Willy. She holds that the protagonist is a "medieval hero, a generator of other personalities which are to a large extent fragmented aspects of himself." She adopts the remark of Brian Parker That the characters are "allegories of the central character's psychomachia." This study views the characters as mere catalysts that assist in the portrayal of the personality of Willy Loman. Linda, for instance, helps portray the character in the role of a husband, Biff and Happy show us the protagonist as a father, Charley helps delineate the character through juxtaposition, and Bernard contrasts with Biff and demonstrates the difference between the achievements of Willy vs. Charley as fathers and family men.
Most importantly, a pivotal role is given to Biff whose actions coincide with and parallel those of the protagonist. Every time Willy and Biff meet, they quarrel and fail to communicate. In fact, what they do not say is more audible than what they say. Between the two characters, there is the secret of the Boston woman that Biff finds in his father's hotel room as he follows him there to talk to Birnbaum to pass him in Math in the Regent's exam so he can graduate and get a scholarship to the University of Virginia. Biff's discovery turns his life upside down. After his disillusionment, he loses faith in his father, refuses to go back to school, and quits the idea of University education. Since then his father feels guilty towards him and continues his life guilt-ridden because of that incidents. The two characters never share this information with anybody and Biff's feeling of hatred toward his father turns into a puzzle for everybody around him. The father is inhabited with guilt but never shares his knowledge with anybody. Biff turns into an indictment for his father. Willy looks at him as a nemesis that finally chases him to death. Biff becomes the albatross hanging around Willy's neck for the last seventeen years of his life, to use Coleridge's allegory in *The Ancient Mariner*. In the end, he sacrifices himself to drop the albatross and cleanse his mind by paying his life to compensate Biff for the loss of his career.

Second, the dialogs that accompany the incidents of the action include comments about the current failures of the family and, more importantly, they trigger incidental or episodic memories which enable the protagonist to reconstruct past experiences and, at times, invoke provisional hopes or wishes for the future, or what modern neuropsychology terms future memory. These memories belong to the mental realm of subjective time, according to Szpunar (2011). Willy Loman relates his life by projecting his mind to various moments in the past or the future. Interestingly, he remembers moments in the past when he projected his mind to prospective moments in his career and that of Biff, typical of the way described in Arzy et al. (2009). He retrieves non-sequential various moments from his past experience, depending on the action occurring at the given moment. His memory, both past and future, gives him his identity and links the scattered experiences and memories of his life to a continuous flux. Following is a discussion of the events that compose that action of the plot and the arguments and memories his mind retrieves on every occasion.

The first event in the play is the unforeseen return of Willy Loman from a business trip because he could not focus while driving as he kept going off to the shoulder of the street. In this episode, he appears exhausted and is back home with the cases of samples that he intended to distribute to customers on his failing trip. There is an air of poverty on him evident from his dress and a sense of melancholy and desperation projected by the sad music of the flute that accompanies his return. His return cause an obvious in the trepidation of his wife
upon noticing him unexpectedly at home. An analysis of the discourse in Linda's guesses that his surprising return could be a car accident, a problem with the steering of the car, or a defect in his eyesight due to his unreliable eyeglasses indicates a lot about the recent experiences of Willy. We learn from her guesses that he is used to having car accidents, technical problems with the steering of his car, and suffers from defective eyesight because he has not checked his eyeglasses recently. Willy, however, explains the incident to her as follows:

Willy [with wonder]: I was driving along, you understand? And I was fine. I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life. But 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! I’m tellin’ ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I’d’ve gone the other way over the white line I might’ve killed somebody. So I went on again—and five minutes later I’m dreamin’ again, and I nearly—[He presses two fingers against his eyes.] I have such thoughts, I have such strange thoughts.

This account indicates that he has a dreamy mind that results in a problem of concentration with his loaded mind with worries and concerns. This is what neuropsychologists call mind wandering which usually occurs to a passive mind not concentrating on the current environment (Corballis, M., 2013). That lack of focus is the result of two factors, one related to his failure as a salesman and the other to deprivation of Biff. In Act One, he explains the reasons behind his failure, and, in Act Two, we understand why he feels anguished over the disruption of his son's career. This self-suffering leads to his lack of concentration. To Linda, and, later to Howard Wagner, he maps the reasons behind his disappointing career as a salesman. He explains that instead of buying from him, the customers mock him for his obesity, old-fashioned dress, and continuous chattering. They do not even notice him as they come in to any place as they used to do in the good old days. Linda's reaction to his worries is sympathetic and consoling as she tries to raise his morale and restore his confidence.

Parallel to this event in Act One is Biff's return after years of departure. He left home seventeen years ago when he was disappointed with the fake reality of his father, who up to that moment was his role model. Chavkin A. and Chavkin N. (2015), who study the play in light of the Family Systems Theory and the Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory to analyze the problematic relationship of Willy and Biff and the reasons behind the dysfunction of their family life, argue that Willy does not meet his son's expectations. He departed after he had discovered that his father was not "the family man and husband
whom Biff idolized when he was growing up, but a hypocritical philanderer who
desires to impose his values on his sons” (29).  

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2011) explain Biff's reaction to his shocking
discovery of his father's adultery as an "emotional cut off" which is defined as
"the flight from unresolved emotional ties to one’s family of origin, typically
manifested by withdrawing or running away from the parental family, or
denying its current importance in one’s life.”  

Departure from the family location is what scholars on Family Theory call "geographic cure"  

Biff comes home when this cure fails to secure him any stable work. His return home re-
ignites emotional struggles with his father. Biff returns to a family totally
different from the one he left 34 years ago. He finds his father in hard financial
straits after the company deprives him of his salary and puts him on commission,
which makes him "swallow his pride and borrow money from Charley" to run
his life.  

Biff's brother Happy makes up for his depression at work by seducing
women. The return of Biff puts the family in an irritating situation with his
frequent quarrels with his father. The mother and Happy cannot decipher the
mystery of the Willy-Biff relationship. Linda wonders: "Why are you so hateful
to each other? Why is that?" (39). She asks her husband the same question, but
gets no answer. Both Willy and Biff hide the real reason behind their
confrontations from others.  

The father's reaction to Biff's failure in the business world is equivocal. On
the one hand, he is irritated because of Biff's inability to reach anywhere and be
settled in his career. This failure sustains the father's feeling of guilt towards his
son and retains Biff as an indictment for his corruption. This is why Willy
continuously attempts to remove the blame off his shoulders. On the other hand,
the father maintains his view of Biff as a champion in high school before the
Boston disillusionment: "Remember how they used to follow him around in high
school? When he smiled at one of them their faces lit up. When he walked down
the street" (6). Willy on another occasion remembers a swarm of Biff's friends
clinging to him. Many of them waiting for him in the cellar and he gives orders
to sweep the furnace room or hang the wash up on the line (21). Willy later
recalls how Biff was smart and accurate, remembering how he simonized the
Chevy car that the dealer did not believe that it had 80,000 miles on it (8, 17).  

These declarative episodic memories, as Squire (2014) would call them,
revive positive and happy moments when Biff and Happy used to idolize their
father. The memories are ignited in the mind of Willy to temporarily compensate
and anesthetize his deep feeling of pain over the son's loss of career. These
memories belong to the second phase of Willy's successful life when he and Biff
traded admiration, respect, and trust. Simultaneously, these memories in
subjective time provide the father with optimism and positive attitude to regain

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the meaning of family and happiness. They stand in juxtaposition to the arid reality posited by events and confrontations that occur now in objective time.

Furthermore, these positive memories renovate the deteriorating morale of Willy Loman. Thus, he decides to request a job in the headquarters of the company in New York that will take him off the highway. Biff is also incited by a fake dream shared with Happy to visit Bill Oliver, a manager who fired him years before for the theft of a box of basketballs, upon a promise that he would support him when in need. In Act Two, the two characters leave home in the morning with a sense of hope to ameliorate their careers.

The second incident in the plot is Willy's disastrous visit to Howard, requesting a stationary job. His appeal and description of his stressful situation in business are received with no sympathy by the young manager. Howard Wagner represents the inhuman and brutal business world in America. He declines Willy's quest and fires him because business is business and his company cannot "take blood from a stone" (60).

This event takes Willy back in memory to an incident thirty-four years back when he declines an offer by his brother Ben to go to Alaska and start a career in the limber business rather than working in the Wagner Company as a salesman. The recruited incident analyzes the reasons why he chose to be a salesman in New York. From the remembered scene reconstructed and re-experienced in his episodic memory, we learn that he chose the current job based on promises made to him by Frank Wagner that in a few years he would be a shareholder in the company and that he would earn a good income from his work in the Wagner Company. Besides, Biff was making massive progress in the field of sports and has a promising future. On top of all this, Linda categorically rejected even the thought of the Alaska offer based on the promising career awaiting the family in New York. This tour of subjective time guides us to square one when Willy explains clearly his past decision to go into a business career rather than venture with his brother Ben in the lumber trade in Alaska.

Parallel to Willy's visit to Howard Wagner's office is Biff's call on Bill Oliver's Company. Biff's quest to meet Bill in his office is declined despite the numerous reminders sent by the secretary and the long hours of waiting he endures in the waiting room. Worse is Oliver's failure to even recognize Biff as he meets him casually outside his office for a very short while? This negligence and disrespect take a severe toll on Biff's self-confidence and aspirations for a better future. His shattered psychology awakens a quest for revenge. He resorts to his usual method of stealing as he rushes into the office of Oliver and pinches his fountain pen. Simultaneously, his irritation over his father's illusions about him and his social status multiplies. His confusion and depravity incite him to
confront his father at Frank's restaurant and spell out his honest conviction about his worthlessness and his father's disappointing career.

The third event is Willy's call on Charley's office to take a loan of $110 to cover the due monthly payments. This event serves two purposes: First, his encounter and exchange with Charley emphasize the contrast between the two characters. We learn more from it about Willy Loman and his entanglement with his current situation. Besides, we are given empirical proof of what Linda says to her sons that their father borrows money from Charley and pretends that it is his pay. The meeting also shows the pretentious unrealistic nature of Willy compared to the practicality of Charley. Furthermore, this incident, more importantly, puts Willy face to face with Bernard, the classmate of Biff, who is now a successful attorney in the Supreme Court and who enjoys sports with high-class friends in Washington. This encounter intensifies Willy's feeling of depression over the failure of his son to which he is responsible. In an exciting exchange, it is Bernard, here, who sojourns his past memory and recounts his own experience with Biff after his return from the trip to Boston seventeen years ago. Bernard's memory puts Willy in an apprehensive mood lest Bernard is aware of the real reason behind Biff's departure from school and the abandonment of pursuing a university education. Bernard wants to solve the puzzle behind the abrupt change in Biff's behavior and attitude. Subjective time in this incident is unique because it is recruited from the memory of Bernard and not of the major character. Important, as well, is the reaction of Willy because he insists that he is not to blame for the deprivation of Biff and his career.

The fourth episode is Biff's and Happy's invitation of the father to Frank's Chop House restaurant. The invitation is extended by the mother when all family members are optimistic and enjoy a positive attitude. Both Willy and Biff meet in the restaurant when they are crestfallen and deprived of any hope for a better future. This incident serves a number of purposes in the play. It demonstrates, the irritated nature of Biff, and the frustration of Willy over the failure of his own career and uncertainty about the career of Biff. It shows also that Willy is a dreamer, who has misguided his family and led to its devastation. Besides, the scene shows how irresponsible a womanizer Happy is and that there is no hope to be expected from him.

The exchange between the father and Biff reflects their frustration and their inability to discuss the issue of their career. The father is annoyed and does not want to hear infuriating news from his son. He longs to hear about the success of his son in meeting with Bill Oliver. This is the only way that he is going to release himself from his guilt of causing all this damage to Biff and his career. During the discussion, the father blends the talk with his son with his memory of the incident of the woman Biff found in his hotel room in Boston. Blending
objective and subjective time and uttering sentences from the argument with Biff and with the woman in that incident confuses Biff and Happy who think that their father is insane because of the in sequitur status of the exchange. As they are hopeless to communicate rationally with him, they leave him to mind wander in the restaurant and go out with two streetwalkers. The totally shattered father wakes from his mind excursion to find his sons are gone. He is guilt-ridden and finds no hope in saving Biff. The subsequent talk with Biff at home in an attempt to explain his revelations about the hopelessness of the family and their deluded life ends up in vain. This leads to the last incident in objective time.

The last incident in the play is Willy's suicide by crashing his car in order to secure money from insurance for his sons to start their imaginary Loman Brothers Sports business venture. He feels responsible toward his family and wishes to make up for his mistakes that have led to all this damage in the life of his family. Killing himself is an act of compensation for Biff in order to enable him and Happy to establish themselves in the business world. This last incident triggers in Willy's mind another memory of Ben during the father's attempt to save the family. Ben has been the source of inspiration for Willy as a model of success. This is why he enters the jungle of death in the hope that his children can get out of it with wealth and success.

The foregoing events compose the plot of the play. They all belong to the present and occur in the last 24 hours of his life. They belong to the domain of objective time. These events are surrounded by dialogs and exchanges among the characters that inform a lot about the major character and his tragic dilemma. These events that occur in the present in the objective time-domain guide the life of the character from his return from a failing trip to a trip from which he will never return.

**Subjective time**

The life of the character prior to the events in the present threads of the plot is communicated in subjective time the major component of which is memory. Memory of its two types, the episodic and future memory, covers the events of more than six decades of the character's life. The accounts of past memory and future expectations throughout the life of the character are not sequential but are randomly reported through projections of the character's mind to a variety of points in time in the past or the future depending on the occasion that ignites them. This mobility of the mind back and forth is in line with the findings of Arzy et al. (2009), Suddendorf and Corballis (1997, 2007), and Szpunar, K., Addis, D., Schacter, D. (2012). The study will analyze the workings of that mental ability to reconstruct past moments and predicting future ones.
With one exception, the events are recruited in the mind Willy Loman. These memories accompany the events in the objective sphere. However, it is important to state that incidents or occasions remembered do not occur sequentially, as in the study of Arzy et al. (2009) Rather, the protagonist mind dislocates himself from the present to various moments in the past and projects himself to different life moments triggered by the incident he lives. Sometimes he remembers a moment in the past in which he projects himself to a future moment relevant to that moment in the past. The two recalled moments of past and future belong to the past from the perspective of the present life point. For instance, when he remembers an experience at the age of forty-eight in which he predicts the future of Biff after high school. The projected moment and the moment of projection are now in the past at the character's age of sixty-three. Such maneuvers of the mind back and forth in the past are neuropsychological experiences of mind wandering. If we analyze the dialogs that accompany the events that construct the plot we discover that there are three phases and types of memory: incidental memory in the first phase, future memory in the second phase, and episodic memory in the third phase. The following discussion of the remembered moments of subjective time is analyzed in the order of the events of the present objective time.

**Phase one and incidental memory: events from the past**

Noticeably, Willy's mind projects itself to past moments when he relates memories of the first three decades of his life. These were the decades before he finally settled in the job of a salesman in the Wagner Company. Through incidental memory, his mind re-experienced the early events during this phase related to his childhood, parents, and the job offer he gets from his brother Ben to accompany him to Alaska to run a timber business. These memories of early life occur at a very late stage of his age. For instance, when he is fired by Howard Wagner, his mind wanders to incidents way back to the time when he chose to be a salesman in the Howard Company. During that mental tour in the past, he recalls why he took the decision to choose the salesman's job over the adventure to Alaska.

Under the pressure of the moment of losing his job, the tragic character's mind retreats to the past and remembers a whole dialog with Ben with its full words, attitudes, and feelings that accompanied the talk. In this scene, he justifies his decision of staying in New York rather than taking the offer of his brother based on five factors: the pressure of his wife, the offered incentives given by Frank Wagner, the impact of the role model Dave Singleman on him, the promising future of his sons, and the desire to be a part of the business world of New York. These factors are explained by Linda in her attempt to prevent Ben from persuading her husband to take the Alaska adventure (65). This mental
tour occurs in the heat of Willy's dismissal from his job. It offers the very reason why he preferred the sales job to the Alaska adventure in the company of his brother.

**Phase two and future memory: prospective events and plans for the future**

This phase accompanies the successes of Willy Loman was very well known in New England, made a lot of money in salary and commission, and met very important people in numerous cities. At that time he used to come home with gifts for the children and enjoyed driving a luxurious Chevy car. He also was optimistic about the future of Biff who was the champion of the school football team. This phase covers his years from 32 -48. Because of the atmosphere of success, Willy's mind at that time roams forward to imagine a prosperous future for himself and for his son. He resorts here to what Ingvar (1979, 1985) and Tulving (1985) call the future memory by projecting himself ahead to a prosperous future for himself and the whole family. The future he expects for himself is similar to that of Dave Singleman, and, similarly, a prosperous career for Biff in the business world. He imagines having a ranch and two houses in which Biff and Happy can dwell after they get married and have children. These dreams projected in prospective memory were all in the past. So the future memories are remembered within the scope of episodic memory, as in the findings of Arzy et al. (2009).

**Phase three and incidental memory: events from the past**

The third phase follows his dismissal from work and the disastrous result of Biff’s visit to Bill Oliver. It is featured by the incidental memory which flushes to the fore the incident that has brought about the whole schism into the life of the family. The incident clearly solves the ambiguity that has puzzled everybody around Willy Loman and Biff. The incident is recruited in the memory of the major character as he reaches a deadlock with regard to any possibility of progress in his or Biff's careers. Memory gives revival to the most notable pre-experience that has brought about the disastrous collapse in Biff's life and the burden of guilt in Willy's mind. It is the story of Biff's Boston's disillusionment. This memory is revived in the mind of Willy in the restaurant when he despairs of any progress in his and Biff's future success.

In that incident, the writer distinctly merges the dialog of Willy with his sons in the present with that of the retrieved dialog from memory to the extent that Happy and Biff think that he has lost his mind. Besides, the inclusion of previous statements from memory into the sequence of argument with Biff in the present creates a non-sequitur effect, as in the following dialog:

Happy: He had it in his hand and just then Oliver walked in, so he got nervous and stuck it in his pocket!
Willy: My God, Biff!
Biff: I never intended to do it, Dad!
Operator’s voice: Standish Arms, good evening!
Willy [shouting]: I’m not in my room!
Biff [frightened]: Dad, what’s the matter? [He and Happy stand up.]
Operator: Ringing Mr. Loman for you!
Willy: I’m not there, stop it!
Biff [horrified, gets down on one knee before Willy]: Dad, I’ll make good, I’ll make good. [Willy tries to get to his feet. Biff holds him down.] Sit down now.
Willy: No, you’re no good, you’re no good for anything.
Biff: I am, Dad, I’ll find something else, you understand? Now don’t worry about anything. [He holds up Willy’s face.] Talk to me, Dad.
Operator: Mr. Loman does not answer. Shall I page him?
Willy [attempting to stand, as though to rush and silence the operator]: No, no, no!
Happy: He’ll strike something, Pop.
Willy: No, no...
Biff [desperately, standing over Willy]: Pop, listen! Listen to me! I’m telling you something good. Oliver talked to his partner about the Florida idea. You listening? He—he talked to his partner, and he came to me... I’m going to be all right, you hear? Dad, listen to me, he said it was just a question of the amount! (87, italics and underlining mine)

In this exchange, there is an interplay between the statements uttered by the interlocutors and the statements in italics reproduced from memory of the hotel incident.

Bernard is the only character, other than the protagonist, who is given the chance to remember the past because he witnesses one vital incident that Willy is not aware of. Bernard’s memory complements the line of the plot extracted from the mind of Willy. The event he remembers accounts for the results of Biff’s disenchantment about the integrity of his father, including his refusal to take the summer make-up exam and burning the sneakers on the sole of which the name of Virginia University is inscribed as a sign of giving up on university education. Here is his account:

Well, just that when he came back—I’ll never forget this, it always mystifies me. Because I’d thought so well of Biff, even though he’d always taken advantage of me. I loved him, Willy, y’know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers—remember those sneakers with “University of Virginia” printed on them? He was so proud of those, wore them every day. And he took them down in the
cellar, and burned them up in the furnace. We had a fist fight. It lasted at least half an hour. Just the two of us, punching each other down the cellar, and crying right through it. I’ve often thought of how strange it was that I knew he’d given up his life (73).

He ends up asking a fatal question that awakens Willy's strong sense of remorse: "What happened in Boston, Willy"? (73) The protagonist who is on top of the action and knows all the details is not aware of this thread of the plot. He gets angry at the intrusion of Bernard and immediately rushes to defend himself and remove the blame off his shoulders:

Willy: What are you trying to do, blame it on me? If a boy lays down is that my fault?
Bernard: Now, Willy, don’t get—
Willy: Well, don’t—don’t talk to me that way! What does that mean, ‘‘What happened?’’ (73)

Subjective time and objective time intertwined

This idea of mental traveling culminates in blending the present and the past in the same dialog. Willy's present interlocutors get frustrated and confused when he indulges in two dialogs at the same time, one with the present interlocutor and the other with another from a past memory. One such situation is when he plays cards with Charley. He is shown to have a dialog with Charley at present and with Ben in a past experience. During their chat about a number of issues, such as Charley's job offer to Willy, the importance of vitamins, and Willy's manual skills in the maintenance of the house, Willy remembers a dialog with his brother Ben in which they talk about the death of their parents and their affairs then.

Ben: I must make a train, William. There are several properties I'm looking at in Alaska.
Willy: Sure, sure! If I’d gone with him to Alaska that time, everything would’ve been totally different.
Charley: Go on, you’d froze to death up there.
Willy: What’re you talking about?
Ben: Opportunity is tremendous in Alaska, William. Surprised you’re not up there.
Willy: Sure, tremendous.
Charley: Heh?
Willy: There was the only man I ever met who knew the answers.
Charley: Who?
Ben: How are you all?
Willy [taking a pot, smiling]: Fine, fine.
Charley: Pretty sharp tonight.
Ben: *Is Mother living with you?*
Willy: *No, she died a long time ago.*
Charley: *Who?*
Ben: *That’s too bad. Fine specimen of a lady, Mother.*
Willy [to Charley]: *Heh?*
Ben: *I’d hoped to see the old girl.*
Charley: *Who died?*
Ben: *Heard anything from Father, have you?*
Willy [unnerved]: *What do you mean, who died?*
Charley [taking a pot]: *What’re you talkin’ about?*
Ben [looking at his watch]: *William, it’s half past eight!*

(31-2, italics and underlining mine)

The statements or phrases in italics are recruited from the past experience with Ben. The underlined words or phrases indicate the confusion of the present partner in the dialog. Charley, like Biff and Happy, believes that Willy suffers from mental distraction, cannot concentrate, and is probably mad. Again, the statements from the past create a feeling of non-sequitur effect, which shows a lack of linguistic coherence, purporting a mental disorder.

This pattern of intertwining objective moments with subjective moments occurs in many places in the play. Observers think that Willy suffers from mental defects and treat him like an insane character except his loving wife who tries to give a positive explanation for this case.

I don’t say he’s a great man. 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— (40)

In this response to the unsympathetic Biff, Linda justifies the behavior of Willy and the need to lend familial support for him at his depravity. This is also Miller's presentation of the tragic protagonist as a common man, and, not necessarily, a great man as in traditional tragedies that follow Aristotelian rules.

**Conclusion**

Arthur Miller in *The Death of a Salesman*, which is his implementation of the tragedy of the common man, skillfully utilizes the concepts of objective time and subjective time to build his plot which covers the last twenty-four hours in the life of the protagonist Willy Loman. The plot is constructed retrospectively by the use of memory. Memory is shown to be the reservoir of his previous experiences, practices, successes, and failures. It is also a register of his future
aspirations of his past years. Memory has been a rich subject of neuropsychological studies on subjective time vs. objective time, and though the playwright was not an expert in neuropsychology, he uses the concept very efficiently.

Interestingly, memory, with the exception of one single case given to Bernard, is confined to the mind of the protagonist in line with the traditions of tragedy. Through the retrieval of past incidents, the protagonist evaluates his failure in leading his family to accomplish his aspirations. Therefore, he feels guilt-ridden because of his illicit behavior that is discovered by Biff, who has always been looked at as the future of the family. Biff's disillusionment has destroyed the potential future Willy has aspired for his son. This is why the memory of Biff's disillusionment serves as a nemesis that chases Willy to his doom.

Endnotes
2 Corballis, 2.
4 for discussion of future memory, see Tulving, 1985.
7 Corballis, 1.
8 Corballis, 2.
10 for more on the hippocampus, see Addis D et al., 2007.
11 see also other scholars on the subject in no. 3 above.
12 for more on this subject see Szpunar, 2011; Arzy et al., 2009.

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16 Hoeveler, 632.
17 Arthur Miller, *The Death of a Salesman* (Beirut: York Press, 2002). All quotations are taken from this text and hereafter page numbers are going to be put in brackets immediately after quotations.
19 Chavkin A. and Chavkin N., 32.
20 Chavkin A. and Chavkin N., 32.
21 Chavkin A. and Chavkin N., 35.

**References**


