



All is not Gold: Fatherhood and Identity in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman

February 18, 2016 · Volume 20 (2016)

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Thomières D. All is not Gold: Fatherhood and Identity in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. PsyArt Journal. 2016 Feb 18 [last modified: 2016 Feb 18]. Edition 1.

Abstract

The essay tries to shed some light on Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. It starts with an analysis of a seemingly irrelevant detail: the difference between gold and diamonds. Gold must be seen as a symptom pointing to Willy Loman's obsession for imitation, which can be accounted for by a specific form of pathological narcissism, itself caused by a faulty representation of the structure of fatherhood in his unconscious. From there, it will prove necessary to question the protagonist's peculiar relation to naming, especially his use of the Name of the Father. The approach chosen will be interpretative systematically progressing from symptoms to structures that are both ever more abstract and specific. In other words, the problem raised is to determine how far one can go from a theoretical point of view in order to reconstruct the logic governing Willy's unconscious.

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