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## **The destitute figure in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman***

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## **1. Introduction**

The convergence of traditions and the way in which texts enter in dialogue with each other has given rise to what is known as *Intertextuality*. Around this issue, a discussion about Elizabethan and Modern American drama emerged during our seminar, dealing particularly, on the one hand, with Shakespearean tragedies from the Elizabethan period and, on the other hand, with the works of Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller, as representative authors in the context of Modern American Drama. As a result, it is possible to observe how Modern American Drama tackles the issue of filial relationships in plays such as *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *Death of a Salesman*, establishing intertextual connections with *King Lear*. More specifically, the issue of filial relationships and the tragic action triggered by this topic shed a light on how patriarchal figures lose their roles at the core of the family and, at the same time, their status in society, giving rise to a character that undergoes a process of exile.

Therefore, the figure of the destitute character constitutes the object of study in the present work. The corpus to analyze considers William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, focusing on Lear and Willy Loman respectively. The necessity to explore this figure emerged from a meditation on the importance of having a role to perform in relation to society and at the core of the family. When these characters are deprived from the roles they used to perform or that they wanted to perform, they suffer the loss of their status. As a consequence, a correlation between this process and the weakening of the mind arises. In other words, the importance of this object of study is the fact that through destitution the tragic heroes suffer a cathartic experience, based on degradation and precariousness, that allows for the understanding and posterior recognition of their subjectivity; therefore, destitution shapes identity.

In *King Lear* we can observe how this figure emerges in an instance in which Lear is deprived of his role as father and monarch. Lear has occupied the powerful position that comes with being a king. He has experienced a high status where the privileges of his situation have blinded him, impeding him from elucidating his human limitations. Lear has had a long term addiction to his arrogance, pride and the fixation with a single idea. These flaws induce him to behave with folly and exacerbation unchaining his downfall but also, the dramatic action emerges from the filial conflict present in the play. Throughout his exile, the destitute figure embodied in the old King will prompt him to understand the cause

of his fate. As the old King's mind weakens, this play depicts the issue of madness and how it takes an active role for the developing and shaping of a new perspective of reality. In general terms, *King Lear* addresses the obsession with a fixed idea that, although it is known that it constitutes something wrong, it is difficult to detach oneself from this excessive behavior. This play is important for the object of study because it contains meaningful elements that depict how the destitute figure is configured and expressed.

In *Death of a Salesman*, this figure is presented in the character of Willy Loman, a common man of advanced age who has failed to achieve the American Dream and, therefore, fulfill his dream of becoming a successful salesman. As he attempts to hide his ordinary life and failures behind delusions of grandeur and false success, his own deceit promotes a difficulty for his mind to remain in the "here and now". In Miller's play, the character of Willy Loman falls into an obsessive and excessive pride which constitutes his main tragic flaw, extending his proud conception about himself to the whole family, which causes the dramatic conflict in the filial relationship. This turns into an unhealthy behavior which leads Willy to an imbalance between reality and his self-deceptive thoughts. Under this situation, corporeal illusions are representative of his failure. What is most noticeable about this play is the problem about the advancement of Modernity, and Willy's impossibility to keep on the necessary rhythm to survive and accomplish the American Dream. He has spent his entire life with a fixed idea in mind, but he has not been able to accomplish it. Through destitution, Willy will face the problem of identity and reality from a debased position in society. This play is important for the object of study because it shows us the interplay between reality/present and illusion/past, that helps us to understand how the destitute figure was constructed in the past and how it is expressed in the present.

Therefore, the thesis statement for this work proposes that, in the corpus for analysis, the tragic heroes undergo a process of exile through which they become destitute figures. But destitution is the product of their flaws, which in both plays are manifested as exacerbation and excessive fixation with a single idea. Since they lose status, while they endure the debasement produced by destitution, they become aware of their flaws and are thus able to recognize their fault. The destitute character then, re-forges his identity through degradation and agony. As a result of the intertextual connections between these two plays, a fluidity emerges in the discourse of the destitute figures that centers around the

process of degradation and the shaping of identity, because in both traditions there has been a major concern for the self.

The central concepts for the further analysis of the plays have given rise to the following main bibliographical sources. In the first place, the concept of *hybris* is the starting point from which the analysis develops. Regarding *hybris*, MacDowell argues that its essence lies in excess and the self-indulgent enjoyment of it. Along the same lines, Dickie argues that through *hybris*, as a disposition of over-confidence, one fails to elucidate the limitations of human condition (qtd. in Cairns 1). The *hybris* present in the characters will promote their downfall into destitution. In Northrop Frye's essay titled "King Lear", the author discusses the depriving of social function and identity. When he tackles the denial of the father by the two daughters (Goneril and Regan), he proposes that this is annihilation because he is left to survive without an identity (20). It is from this point (lacking a role and identity) that I will consider the characters of Lear and Willy as destitute figures.

From the concept of destitute figure emerges, in my discussion, the problem of identity. For the understanding of this concept the works of Bouwsma and Kernan were fundamental, as to address it from both traditions. Bouwsma refers to "la crisis del yo" in the Elizabethan theater as a problem that considers the self as something variable and problematic. The crisis in identity emerges from the conception of the self as a social construct (185). Kernan tackles this issue from a modern perspective, in which human nature is in a constant struggle to survive. The material world that humans represent becomes antagonistic to men's hopes and aspirations, and thus a sense of entrapment arises (29).

Moreover, as Modern American Drama inserts the tragedy in the domestic space, the work of Michel de Certeau explores the quotidian as the space in which everyday actions take place. He defines the concept of domestic space as the privileged field in which quotidian unfolds (147). Modern Drama, then, places tragedies in domestic and familiar spaces, which are most suitable if we take into account that in the plays of the corpus, the filial conflict triggers the dramatic action. The space of the house, where the family meets, is the essential place where family disagreements occur. Additionally, in this quotidian space a common man unfolds; in the same respect Arthur Miller himself advances the

concept of a modern form of heroism by developing the idea that common man is as apt for tragedy as the past high-bred characters characteristic of classic tragedy (1).

Finally, in order to provide a broad perspective about the phenomenon of Intertextuality, the essays by T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and R. Barthes' "The Death of the Author" were pivotal starting points that shed light on this concept. T. S. Eliot's conception of poetry as "a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written"(17) determines that each work of literature keeps a relation with its predecessors. Along the same lines, Barthes explains his conception of writing as *A special voice* composed by many others - from different sources and epochs where none of them has a specific origin - that constitute literature. The whole body of literature is composed by indiscernible voices, as it becomes neuter and the identity of authors is lost (1). His vision of the "text" as a piece of woven fabric depicts this idea about the convergence of different traditions, through which texts enter in a constant dialogue (4). Nonetheless, the first author who coined the term was Julia Kristeva in the essay titled "Word, dialogue and novel". In this work she replaces the notion of intersubjectivity with intertextuality, arguing that every text is constructed on the basis of a *mosaic of quotations*. Each text assimilates the others and transforms them; it becomes crucial then to read the poetic language as double, bearing in mind this process of assimilation (qtd. in Villalobos 140).

The objectives that promote the interest in this study are in direct contact with the object of study, insofar it attempts to elucidate the characteristics of the destitute figure and retrace its relationship to the heroes' downfall, in order to understand the importance of this figure in the acquisition of identity. The other objective addressed in this study, is the necessity to generate intertextual connections in relation to this figure so as to understand the phenomenon of Intertextuality not as linear, but as acting in both directions; plays and traditions reflect one another and vice versa, since it is not only about reformulating literary themes, but also about gaining new perspectives to address previous works.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The discussion on critical sources will begin with a discussion on Bouwsma's work titled "El Teatro del Renacimiento y la crisis del yo". The central point in discussing Bouwsma, is to tackle the problem of identity, in an attempt to provide a background for the understanding of *King Lear* as a play from the Elizabethan tradition, and to further generate meaningful relationships with the American Modern Drama.

William Bouwsma dedicates this essay to explore the theater of the Renaissance and what he names *the crisis of the self*. He begins by discussing the social crisis of the epoch caused by wars and economic instability. In this context, the importance of the theater arises as "la más popular de las artes, que saca a la luz el profundo descontento desencadenado por las peculiares libertades de la cultura del Renacimiento" (177). In this sense, the state of the Art presented a clear state of uneasiness, which was exemplified, for instance, by the mannerist tendencies that no longer attempted to copy the actual world but, instead, Arts attempted to create unconventional effects by means of "crear lo que nunca había existido antes, lo cual podía ser interpretado como blasfemia en una cultura en la que se asumía que Dios era el único creador" (177).

Moreover, Bouwsma explores the tendency of the European culture to have a world view in theatrical terms: "Los antiguos pensaron a menudo que la existencia era un drama representado en el gran escenario del mundo, y la metáfora del mundo como un gran teatro fue adoptada después por los pensadores medievales" (181). In this manner, the European culture became "la más teatral de la historia" (181). By this, Bouwsma refers to the idea of understanding the world as a stage; along these lines the Elizabethan theater designed the stage in a way in which it pretended to recreate the actual world. This also conveys the idea that people are, in fact, actors, which contributed to encourage the feeling that life is but a performance of roles: "la imperceptible oscilación entre el papel social y 'el verdadero yo'" (184). This balance between a social role and a private role implies what Bouwsma calls a way of "suavizar las relaciones sociales en nuestras vidas" (184). From these implications the *crisis of the self* arose as reflecting the self as something problematic, variable, multiple. The questioning about the true self collided with the notion of the self as a social invention.

At this time, the culture of the Renaissance was concerned with the problematic of the true self: "el descubrimiento del yo adquiere mayor relevancia" (187), which was

eventually reflected in Shakespeare's tragedies, where the dramatic action is prompted by a conflict between the individual *I* inserted in a unpredictable world. As a result, themes such as introspection, anxiety and a concern for identity were portrayed in the drama of the Renaissance. Bouwsma also advances the idea of subjectivity as a means for the intensification of "la mortificante sensación de estar sin hogar, implícita en la movilidad social de la época" (188), since now there was a present state of consciousness about an unlimited insecurity, unpredictability and anxiety. In this sense, plays were considered *politically subversive*: the world in which the tragic action unfolds is a world of uneasiness, disorder, *out of joint*. It is corrupted, and it is in this sense that human subjectivity arises, as a mechanism that questions the socio-political order as well as the private sphere of the subject. In short, we are witnessing the emergence of a new type of sensibility which allows for a new understanding of *the self*.

When Bouwsma tackles the problematics and variations in the self, which are expressed through the identity crises, he refers to the notion of the self as a social construct (185). I think it is pertinent to advance that, for the purposes of this analysis, the social construct upon which identity is built is only understood when identity at the core of society (and family) is lost. As social beings, men behave differently in solitude. The appreciation of identity is gained by its loss, through destitution the characters gain knowledge of their subjectivity because they are faced with the problem itself. It is also possible to understand that the role performed inside society is not useful when the characters face exile, but they gain a new understanding on conditions inherent to human beings.

The identity crisis is an issue that is going under continuing revisions. The man of the modern theater was also concerned with the problematics of the self. The man at the modern stage senses entrapment in society and nature: "Entrapment limits and denies those essential qualities which we feel to be uniquely human" (Kernan 29). The true nature of man is subdued to a constant struggle of survival the continuous changes that men has to face. Just as with the case of Renaissance, this can be retraced to the economic, political, social and cultural changes that occurred in America during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that influenced the authors of Modern American Drama. Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill, to name some, wrote some of the most influential plays of the period. All these

dramas have distinctive features, mostly related to language, themes, style, characters and structure. These features are heightened by each author's critical comments on American Society at the time of writing. Modern American Drama could be seen as a literary work that comments on the authors view of the ever changing country and 'American Dream'. Their plays also present, through these features, many of the social and cultural changes of America, which one could suggest may have been the aim of this period, as many critics claim "the American theatre has always been a sensitive gauge of social pressures and public issues" (Walker iii). Authors leaned towards philosophical viewpoints fostered by Marx, Freud and Nietzsche's theories about the nature and destiny of man. Ancient ideas of progress collapse: man is left facing hopelessness, indecision and uncertainty.

Two main styles of representing this points in the dramatic text emerged as representative forms in this period: Realism in which: "the realistic set, and the realistic style in general, has been used to symbolize the solidity of the material and social worlds in which modern man is isolated, the way is clear to understand in still another way of oneness of the modern theater" (Kernan 26). The stage was a photographic imitation of the actual world, and they acted as the appropriate places to locate the ordinary people about which the plays treated (Kernan 23). At the same time, Expressionism became another major part of the experimentalism happening during this period. The stage acted as a symbolic place, not an illusion of reality. It was an intensified, a more openly poetic, form of the realistic drama which preceded and still accompanies it (Kernan 26).

Expressionism will be of particular interest for the development of this study, since Miller's stage directions in *Death of a Salesman*, in particular, described an expressionist set: A transparent house which lacks walls. When the action is set in the present, the characters behave as though they are in rooms with walls; when the action is set in the past, they walk through the empty space into another space on the stage, giving the impression that the events on stage are like a dream. Modern American Drama introduced the use of stage directions with a sense of poetic texture. The importance of stage directions lies on the fact that they are a key contribution to the understanding of the play, in the sense that they provide insights that bear a literary value. That is to say, that they are not short straightforward annotations on trivial matters, but appealing comments for the analysis.

Along these lines, *Death of a Salesman* adopts the expressionist use of stage set as a symbol for the dream-like nature of Willy's life and everyday American life in general.

In short, the authors from both traditions considered the crucial social and economic changes to create plays that dealt with characters undergoing the difficulties of identity crisis. Men enduring processes of becoming is a common trait to both traditions. In this way, traditions are interconnected by the reformulation of literary themes. Both traditions pay special attention to the ways in which men, under social pressure, is forced to performed roles. The preceding text sheds a light on the later by settling the basis for reformulation, but the later also highlights features of the preceding text such as the fact that the importance of the discourse of reason continues; good judgment prevails above the insane due to the fact that *logos* is an vital thing to survive, and the eccentric figures are depicted as destitute in the plays.

By addressing the phenomenon of intertextuality, we are able to create connections among traditions. T. S. Eliot puts special emphasis in the conception of poetry as “a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written” (17). Each work of literature keeps a relation with its predecessors, being each piece of written work part of a larger tradition where motifs, figures, images, etc., repeat themselves by means of echoes, textual quotes or even by the reformulation of an already written idea. Along these lines, T. S. Eliot argues that “no poet, nor any artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead” (15), proposing that the critic should appreciate written works of literature in the light of an entire tradition that stands behind them. In this same manner, Barthes explains his conception of writing as special voice composed by many others - from different sources and epochs where none of them has a specific origin - that constitute literature. Literature, then, becomes this unity of voices that merge into one; it is a space where identity is lost, and the only identity existing is the identity of the body that writes (41). Barthes advances his idea by claiming that:

We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author---God), but is a space of

many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture. (3)

His vision of the “text” as a piece of woven fabric, depicts this idea of motives, figures, images that make reference to previous ones, thus, “the writer can only imitate a gesture forever anterior, never original” (Barthes 3). Therefore, and according to the work of Fuery and Manfield, what is called intertextuality is like a cobweb, where each text is connected and reflected in another (56). Fuery and Manfield further assert what Barthes called a tissue of citations, when they refer to “the constituent parts of a text refer back to, quote, and react with all the other texts, indeed all the other signifiers, that exist around them, and that have existed before them” (56).

Nevertheless, the term intertextuality was first coined by Julia Kristeva in "Word, Dialogue and Novel" and then in "The Bounded Text". She proposes that a text is a dynamic site where the relational processes should constitute the focus of analysis. “The literary word is an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings” (qtd. in Martínez 268), remarking on the confluence of elements. Her study is based on Bakhtin’s works on literary language, arguing from this point that “each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read” (qtd. in Martínez 268). Therefore, we can always find a fluidity of different sources: texts are not “self-contained systems” (Martínez 268) but historically tracing to others by reshaping already resented textual structures (Martínez 268).

Texts, thus, are not self-sufficient, they have to be read bearing in mind the past. As a consequence, the meditation on the destitute figure leads us to Aristotle and his discussion on *hybris* in his *Rhetoric*, which is defined on the basis of the disposition with which actions of physical or verbal affront are committed, causing dishonor on the other (Cainrs 2). The one inflicting the action is moved by pleasure and pride; we are then told by Aristotle that: “The pleasure of *hybris* lies in the thought of one's own superiority” (qtd. in Cainrs 2). Different opinions have emerged since then. MacDowell argues that *hybris* does not necessarily refer to dishonor because it does not need to involve a victim. The stress is

not on the disposition of causing pain, but instead its essence “lies in self-indulgent enjoyment of excess energy” (qtd in Cairns 1). Similarly, Dickie claims that *hybris* constitutes a disposition of “over-confidence or presumption, as a result of which one fails to recognize the limitations and precariousness of one's human condition.” (qtd in Cairns 3). I believe that *hybris* has its essence in exacerbated and excessive behavior, by which we are blind to our limitations and inflicting dishonor in others might or might not be an outcome. In the plays of the corpus, *hybris* is the starting point of the inevitability of downfall.

In an effort to elucidate what it is about tragic plays that make them tragic, Mandel proposes a definition by situation:

A work of art is tragic if it substantiates the following situation: A protagonist who commands our earnest good will is impelled in a given world by a purpose, or undertakes an action, of a certain seriousness and magnitude; and by that very purpose or action, subject to that same given world, necessarily and inevitably meets with grave spiritual or physical suffering (20).

The emphasize is put on suffering and the author further asserts that what all true tragic plays hold in common is the inevitability of downfall, being this, the *kernel* of his definition. In this sense, tragedy emerges as a dramatic construct, in which the actions taken by the hero will lead him eventually to the opposite of his initial intentions. Inevitability is drafted from the very beginning (24). That is why *hybris* relates to inevitability, because the aspirations and actions undertook by the tragic hero promoted the loss of his status, as he is blinded by flaws, unable to recognize his limitations and possible consequences.

It is in downfall and suffering that the destitute figure arises. When talking about destitution, we can address Northrop Frye's essay titled “King Lear”. The author faces the problem about “nothingness” and the state into which the old King is descending. Lear has being deprived of his social functions, and so of his identity: “A king who dies is still a something, namely a dead king; a king deprived of his kingship is “nothing,” even if, or especially if, he still goes on living. That is one thing that the issue of the train of knights is

about. They represent, for Lear, his continuing identity as king” (20) As Goneril and Regan impose their authority over Lear, inflicting Lear’s manhood and the continuity of his power and, thus, his identity as a king, he loses his identity, his role and his place in society. By being denied by the two daughters, Frye proposes that surviving without an identity is annihilation. It is from this point (lacking a role and identity) that I will consider the characters of Lear and Willy as destitute figure. When identity is gone, Frye proposes, there is nothing: A father denied by sons is not a father, a king without a kingdom is not a king, a salesman without his job is not a salesman. Though, I propose that Frye’s “nothing” is, actually, a destitute figure that by means of the process of degradation and agony will gain and answer to the question “Who am I?”.

As we have come to reach Modernity, the questioning on the self continues through a different type of subject: This is the common man. Miller proposes that, Modern American Drama brought closer those great tragedies, about great man, to our quotidian and domestic reality. He advances the concept of this modern form of heroism, developing the idea that common man is as apt for tragedy as the past high-bred characters characteristic of classic tragedy. He tackles this issue by explaining that: “On the face of it this ought to be obvious in the light of modern psychiatry, which bases its analysis upon classic formulations, such as Oedipus and Orestes complexes, for instances, which were enacted by royal beings, but which apply to everyone in similar emotional situations” (1). If those classic formulations of tragedy were completely strange to us, it would be impossible to sympathize with the figure of the tragic hero.

Miller further asserts that the process of questioning that arises in the tragic work “is not beyond the common man (...) and insistence upon the rank of the tragic hero, or the so-called nobility of his character, is really but a clinging to the outward forms of tragedy” (2). The problems portrayed in tragedy go beyond the problems of rank or nobility; they tackle more extensively the underlying fear of being displaced. This is another point in which the destitute figure is reflected. We would all be frightened if we were torn apart from our identity; “who we are in this world” (3) is a constant question in tragedy and “it is the common man who knows this fear best” (3) because his situation is more uncertain.

Individualism and common man are dimensions that are also explored in Michel de Certeau's "The Practice of Everyday life". He introduces the figure of an eccentric and peripheral man whose testimonies are built on his life experiences, which are contrary to the apparent necessity of Modernity to destroy individualism, as it tries to create a quantifiable homogeneous society (1). As we are faced with Modern American tragedies, we encounter a type of modern hero that has been overshadowed by the advancement of Modernity, and tries to survive in a modern society where uneasiness and uncertainty reign.

In both traditions we are dealing with modern heroes in the sense that they are variable and complex, and not static and one-sided. And both traditions deal with the same problematic crises, regarding the fear that man has in the face of uncertainties. The individuals move between society and introspection, trying to understand the meaning in their fate. In the case of our plays, the condition of destitution can be also retraced, to a certain extent, to the filial conflict. When the family gathers, it is natural to have misunderstandings, but they can reach a point in which one ends up losing an important component of his life.

Michel de Certeau also explores the space where family reunites. The quotidian is the space in which everyday actions take place, and de Certeau defines the domestic as the privileged field in which quotidian unfolds: "El territorio donde se despliegan y se repiten día con día las acciones elementales de las 'artes de hacer' (...) Uno 'regresa a su casa', a ese lugar propio que, por definición, no podría ser el lugar ajeno" (147). He stresses the importance of this space as a place where family bounds arise under quotidian activities: "En este espacio privado, por regla general, casi no se trabaja, sino en este trabajo indispensable de alimentación, conversación y sociabilidad que da forma humana a la sucesión de los días y a la presencia del otro" (149). Modern Drama has inserted the tragedy in this familiar space. In the space of domestic life, the tragic conflict arises since it is in this space where disagreements with the quotidian characters among we coexist, our family, occur. The importance of this space is that it is mostly private and we can behave with confidence. Under this space we are not afraid of public opinion, and the worst of us might emerge. It was under the "home" that the filial conflict burst and the disputes are more significant because there is a unifying natural bond; degrading the bond degrades us.

In *Death of a Salesman*, the conflict arises not only as a result of familiar drama but is also caused by the pursuit of the American Dream. The American Dream is a synonym of economic stability and materialistic possessions that entails a sense of happiness: “it must be possible to have a nation in which all of us are free to develop our singularities into health, prosperity, and some measure of happiness in self-development and personal achievement” (Bloom xv) The biggest question is what we’re sacrificing for this glittery dream. "Success" starts being a relative term. You’re only successful if you’re more successful than other people you know. As the story develops the tragedy of Willy and his ambition produced by the American Dream, the play suggests that the American Dream is an ‘illusion’. If dreams are supposed to encourage us to reach our life’s goals: whether it is to become successful or to spend *unburdened* our final years, this can take a different turn when *hybris* interferes, disturbing identity. The collapse settles down once our actions drive us to an opposite path, the path of destitution.

The literary theory applied to the analysis of connections between the plays corresponds to Kristeva’s semianalysis, an advancement on Structuralism’s semiotics. Structuralist semiotics dealt with language from the objectivity of the linguistics sing, giving the possibility to analyze language in a more scientific and structured way. Nonetheless, this approach did not account neither for the subject producing the utterance under subjective meaning, nor for the historicity of texts and the plurality of signifiers. These aspects were taken into account by Kristeva’s work, from which emerges her theory of intertextuality.

Kristeva was highly influenced by Bakhtinian’s notion of dialogue, where he establishes a reciprocal relationship between author, work, reader, society, and history. The communication between author and reader is paired with the intertextual notion of dialogue, with words and their prior existence in past texts (Villalobos 140). The individual text and the cultural text are made from the same textual material and cannot be separated from each other. Therefore, all texts contain ideological structures expressed through discourse.

Kristeva established in *semianalysis*, a post-structuralist view of semiotics that emphasizes the fact that texts are always going through a process of constant production.

Ideas in texts are never finished; they rather encourage readers to come up with interpretations of meaning: the individual in Kristeva is a point for production of meaning (Villalobos 143). She is concerned with establishing the way in which texts are constructed on already existent pieces of discourse. Accordingly, Kristeva argues that:

Lo que la semiótica ha descubierto al estudiar las ‘ideologías’ (mitos, rituales, códigos morales, artes, etc) como sistemas-signo es que la ley que gobierna o, si se prefiere, la mayor fuerza que afecta toda práctica social, yace en el hecho de que significa, que es articulada como lenguaje”

(Kristeva 25),

in texts we can see society’s conflict over the meaning of words. Thus, the text deals its existence within society and history. As a result, the *ideologem* integrates history and society as texts where the intertextual function is seen (Villalobos 142).

*Ideologem* refers to the function that gathers trans-linguistic practices of society, since for Kristeva the textual space is constituted by: “el sujeto, de la escritura, el destinatario y los textos exteriores. Es decir, existe una relación dialógica del sujeto con el lenguaje, con el otro y con el mundo extralingüístico” (Villalobos 143). Semiology then, pays attention to anyone with a significant practice on the construction of meaning (Kristeva 31). By significant practice it is understood an emphasis on the way in which the production of meaning is constructed (Villalobos 142) in relation to social and historical traits:

The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. The ideologeme of a text is the focus where knowing rationality grasps the transformation of utterances (to which the text is irreducible) into a totality (the text) as well as the insertions of this totality into the historical and social text. (Kristeva 37)

Then, under the light of this theory, we are given the tools to analyze the problematic that arises during the process of destitution: the searching for an answer to the

question of “Who am I?”. The construction of meaning, that relates both traditions around this question, keeps relationship with the *phallogocentrism* of the cultural setting in Western Tradition. From this point of view, we will go through an analysis that proposes a fluid dialogue from text to text.

### **3. Analysis**

Throughout this analysis, we will explore how the image of the destitute is built on the basis of the previous discussion about tragedy in the theoretical framework section. That is to say, how both tragic heroes' fixed stance conveys a sense of excessive addiction for a single idea, which is translated into an impulsive behavior driven by wrath and pride. This constitutes the heroes' flaws that will eventually lead to their loss of status and resulting downfall. As they are divested from their roles, losing their position in society and at the core of the family, the figure of the destitute emerges through a process of becoming in which the blurry limits of what is real and what is an illusion shape this figure. Furthermore, it is by means of this figure that the tragic heroes acquire the primary connotation of tragic, since through destitution they are capable of finding the space to hold a dialogue with their subjectivities. Finally, we will also shed a light on how this figure is expressed by means of external factors to the character that enhance their dramatic energy.

### **3.1 Preliminary destitution**

In the first place, let us observe the way in which the tragic heroes are first introduced in the plays. Lear appears as a monarchical and patriarchal figure whose long lasting status has promoted a certain blinding to reality: his fixation for the fulfilment of his idea exposes the enervation of old age. While Willy Loman also appears as a patriarchal figure, his exhaustion is more noticeable at first glimpse: although he deceives himself from delusions of a gleaming life and past, he has not enjoyed grandeur at all (unlike Lear). The obsession, with which they are attached to a single idea, constitutes an addiction built on the basis of pride and wrath. This behavior will unchain the dramatic action as it constitutes the central point from which the dramatic irony will arise. In other words, *hybris* is the root of their downfall and inevitability is centered in the fact that there is no willingness to abandon their obsession before is late, because pride is so blinding that limits their capacity to recognize warnings. Obsession for a single idea, then, becomes an addiction that perpetuates a mind state till the point in which destitution bursts in by means of the loss of status and role.

The first observable thing as Lear enters in scene during the first act is how in his initial purpose the inevitability of downfall is drafted, since throughout his speech we will see several instances in which he divest himself from his roles as King and father. Bradley, in his cornerstone study titled “King Lear”, stresses the importance of not forgetting that, although Lear has long been regarded as ‘a man more sinned against than sinning’, his own wrath and folly were the ones that triggered the tragic action in the first place (224-225). It is essential to understand his contribution to the development of the tragic action, in order to elucidate the extent of his downfall to his own deeds. Lear is attempting to divest himself of his rightful position as king and father beforehand, in other words before dying, which establishes a disruption in the order of the realm (what is more, the *status quo* of the realm will be severely affected by this decision as the play progresses). As Speaight puts it: “Lear’s divesting himself of kingship- of its responsibilities though not of his title- was a very odd thing to do (...) Like all sin, it was an offense against unity” (93). By dividing the kingdom, and ceasing his kingship, he is putting an end to his role:

LEAR

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.—

Give me the map there.—Know that we have  
divided

In three our kingdom, and ’tis our fast intent

To shake all cares and business from our age,

Conferring them on younger strengths while we

Unburdened crawl toward death. (I.I.34-40)

Lear’s speech is contextualized in a public and formal instance. Announcing his intention to dismiss himself from the preoccupations and responsibilities of kingship under this context, demonstrates the obsession with which he has tackled this idea. Due to advanced age, he wishes to enjoy *unburdened* his final years, passing his duties to his three daughters. In these lines, the allusions to *age* and *death* give us a first glimpse regarding some considerations around this issue: Lear is old, he has maintained a certain status during an important part of his life; as he moves closer towards death, and his purpose is to retain the privileges of a king, without performing the duties of a king. The issue of advanced age

here takes the form of a whim, in the sense that Lear hopes to maintain his role but not his responsibilities, as well as he hopes to hear embellished expressions of love from his daughters.

The whimsical behavior of Lear is reflected in the fact that he is, apparently, dividing the kingdom upon the basis of which of his daughters praises to love him the most. This is only an arrangement *to gratify his love of absolute power and his hunger for assurances of devotion* and not at all a way of actually dividing the kingdom (Bradley 78)

LEAR

Tell me, my daughters —

Since now we will divest us both of rule,

Interest of territory, cares of state —

Which of you shall we say doth love us most

That we our largest bounty may extend

Where nature doth with merit challenge? (I.I.47-52)

He has arranged a public demonstration of love to satisfy his need for devotion, and this is what Cordelia fails to do. In these lines, he expresses once more that he is no longer interested in kingship, neither in the territory nor in the care of the realm. Lear's fixation in the fulfilment of his whim can be traced to: "a long life of absolute power, in which he has been flattered to the top of his bent, has produced in him that blindness to human limitations, and that presumptuous self-will" (Bradley 86-87). His long-standing status heightens the fact that he strongly maintains his position. Any type of contradiction to his purpose will unleash his rage. Nonetheless, Cordelia's filial bond is expressed by means of honesty and truthfulness, which is what Lear is incapable to understand in the first place. Lear's flaw, then, may be also recognized as *errors of understanding*, and "King Lear" may be seen *as a play about the ways of perceiving truth* (Heilman 152).

As Lear burst in anger against Cordelia, rejecting her as his daughter, Kent tries to interfere and Lear irascibly replies:

Peace, Kent.

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

I loved her most and thought to set my rest

On her kind nursery.—

(*to CORDELIA*) (I.I.122-125)

In this instance, there are two observable things. On the one hand, the image of the dragon equates Lear to a choleric beast divested from humanity, highlighting his temperamental attitude and the hastiness with which he exiles Cordelia. On the other hand, in relation to Lear's role as father, he initially thought about changing duties with Cordelia: as he grows old and tired, it is his daughter's turn to take care of him. Fathers take care of sons, and as fathers grow old, sons take care of fathers. But all types of respect that sons had when they were under the tuition of their fathers, which is when they were young and considered their father to be role model, is not necessarily preserved into adulthood. The decision whether to fulfill their fathers' desire or not is on their own hands. Cordelia was the only one willing to tenderly take care of Lear out the three daughters. By exiling Cordelia, Lear is putting his destiny in the wrong hands. We can see how his future is decided when he utters: So be my grave my peace as here I give | Her father's heart from her (I.I.127-128)

Furthermore, Lear willingly delivers his crown to Cornwall, Albany and their wives:

LEAR

I do invest you jointly with my power,

Preeminence, and all the large effects

That troop with majesty. Ourselves, by monthly course,

With reservation of an hundred knights

By you to be sustained, shall our abode

Make with you by due turns. Only shall we retain

The name, and all th' additions to a king.

The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,

Belovèd sons, be yours; which to confirm,

This coronet part between you.

(gives CORNWALL and ALBANY the coronet) (I.I.132-141)

The ritual of giving away his crown is a compelling objective action of Lear handing over power. Nonetheless, he underlines that he will continue retaining the title of King, but without the duties of a King. He only wants the privileges but not the responsibility. But this speech is also contradictory, for as he is surrendering his crown, symbol of monarchical power, he is also surrendering kingship, which is a whole as it counts in duties as well as in privileges. By dividing the crown, he divides unity in the realm.

Another interesting point to stress here is the way in which Lear addresses hierarchically superior entities in order to break natural bounds, which constitutes a contradiction to order and nature. Along these lines, the concept of *hybris* emerges in the form of a fixed disposition around which the loss of status is preliminary drafted. *Hybris* appears as the choleric exacerbated behavior through which Lear is carried away. Bradley asserts that “Lear, we see, is also choleric by temperament – the first of Shakespeare’s heroes who is so” (86):

LEAR

Let it be so. Thy truth then be thy dower.

For by the sacred radiance of the sun,

The mysteries of Hecate and the night,

By all the operation of the orbs

From whom we do exist and cease to be—

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,

Propinquity, and property of blood,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee from this for ever. (I.I.109-117)

Lear’s choleric speech is the result of the contradiction of his desire produced by Cordelia’s insipid expression of love in comparison to her sisters’ embellished praises. Cordelia didn’t satisfy her father’s desire for a reassurance of the love of his preferred daughter, and this unchained Lear’s anger which was evidently irrepressible. Lear swears on the configuration of the cosmos, and the natural order of things, that he renounces to his duties as a father to

Cordelia, corrupting a natural bond and breaking the filial relationship: *The sacred radiance of the sun* collides with the future storm under which Lear will suffer destitution; the orbs *from whom we do exist and cease to be* are constantly establishing order and the natural cycle of life, but by contradicting this with his words Lear *ceases to be* truly a king and father. The irony lies on the fact that he is addressing the natural configuration of the cosmos with the intention of breaking a natural bond: it is oxymoronic to address nature to break what is natural. The unity of the realm is extrapolated to the order of the cosmos, and if cosmos is disturbed, the action triggers the destruction of order and stability in the realm. In his own words we are witnessing a disruption of his role and the fall into destitution.

Lear is blind; he is incapable of understanding the consequences of his words. With this respect, Kent acts as faithful servant facing Lear's wrath, stressing the fact that he is being capricious. Kent's words reflect Lear's incapacity to understand reality: "See better, Lear, and let me still remain | The true blank of thine eye" (I.I.162-163). But Lear replies again by swearing on entities that are hierarchically above humanity:

LEAR

Now, by Apollo—

KENT

Now, by Apollo, King,

Thou swear'st thy gods in vain. (I.I.162-164)

As with addressing the order of Cosmos, Lear addressing Apollo is a violation of nature: the Greek god is a strong representation of harmony, order and reason, which constitutes everything what Lear is defying.

LEAR

Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance hear me.

That thou hast sought to make us break our vows,

Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride

To come betwixt our sentence and our power,

Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,

.....  
Away! By Jupiter,

This shall not be revoked (I.I.,170-174,181-182)

In these lines, we can appreciate the passion with which Lear defends his stance. It has never happened during his long lasting kingship that he has had to revoke his sentences. Lear misunderstands Kent's advice, and he takes it as a threat to his power. As he did with Apollo, we can add the god Jupiter. He swears on the father of gods, Jupiter, that he shall not revoke his decision of exiling his sons. We refer to sons in plural because is not only Cordelia, who is united by blood, but also Kent, who is united by vows: all his subjects are sons to the realm, and Lear is father to the realm. He is linked to Jupiter in this last sense but, again, denying his natural bonds and politic duties upon the gods and cosmic order will bring about the loss of status as a consequence.

Let us turn now to *Death of a Salesman* and the character of Willy Loman. In his case, *hybris* also emerges as the exacerbated behavior with which he defends his personal stands on the basis of pride and fury: his attitudes are temperamental and irritation arises from the smallest things, to the point of undermining his family. Little comments seem to him a complaint against his person, to which he replays irritated, since he gives himself too much importance: "*I'm the New England man. I'm vital in New England*" (I.10). Though vitality is exactly what Willy lacks but he doesn't realize. The stubbornness with which he is firmly focused on becoming successful and not quitting his job is a pointless obsession, since it has not paid off in comparison to his efforts. And Willy lying to himself about a status he does not possess is the point of emergence of his downfall. To Willy, the success of his sons is also an important component for his personal realization. He projects his dreams onto his sons:

"I'll get him a job selling. He could be big in no time. My God! Remember how they used to follow him around in school? When he smiled at one of them their faces lit up. When he walked down the street... (*He loses himself in reminiscences.*)" (I. 11)

He shelters from reality in false illusions of grandeur that are exacerbated by his pride. He has built a conception on the status of his sons and himself, building prejudices at the same time on the status of others, which are completely erroneous.

An interesting point to highlight here is the one of stage directions. At the opening of *Death of a Salesman* we find relevant information that might help us to understand how Willy's destitution is constructed. The stage direction goes as follows:

*A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. Before us is the Salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. (...) As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream dings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. (I.7)*

The first part of the stage direction contrasts with what follows. The house is described as small and fragile, surrounded by towering and angular shapes. The humility of the house is related to Willy's position in society. Modernity has come to corner Willy; the angular shapes refer not to a soft and warming enclosure, but to the roughness with which the city has trapped Willy and his family, while the melody refers to a tranquility that cannot be found in this space. The American Dream has been unkind to Willy, a common man whose impossible goal is depicted with the severity with which he feels trapped among threatening buildings.

Additionally, the author explains the way in which there is a game played onstage between space and time:

*The entire setting is wholly or, in some places, partially transparent. (...) Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping »through« a wall onto the forestage. (I. 7)*

The domestic space is configured under the breakup of boundaries between present and past, and the fact that boundaries are *transparent*, is an expressionistic technique that helps conceive the blurry limits of Willy's action in the present, and illusions of the past. As Willy finds more difficult to remain in the present, the step that separates it from past becomes more dim for his understanding. This is a crucial technique because it represents the fragility of Willy's mind.

There is an evident difference between Lear and Willy and this is the fact that Willy's destitution began before the time of the play, while in the case of Lear we can observe at the beginning of the play how this was constructed. This factor influences on Willy admitting at times his imperfections, his lack of status and repentance. Moreover, this assertions move Willy in a game between recognition and sheltering. In order to show us how Willy reached such state of degradation, the author moves the play between present and past. The past is presented by means of the illusions of Willy's mind, one of the most noticeable features of his old age and mental deterioration. With this respect, the stage direction provides annotations on his disposition: "*Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. (...) As though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties*" (I.8). Willy has lived a life focused in unreachable dreams, this might or not be a cause for his temperamental behavior but, nevertheless, he has been unable to change his mind and look with honesty at reality. He has dedicated his life to business traveling, there his *mercurial nature*, without success. By the time of the play, his exhaustion makes more difficult to bear old age as he feels "*tired to death*" (I.8). At this point, he is not aware of the burden these words bear, but his physical and mental exhaustion are weakening to the point of agony. His mind has turned weak: he is unable to remain stable and travels between present and past, between reality and illusions.

At times, Willy realizes about enervation as he admits his difficulties to keep focused:

"WILLY: No, it's me, it's me. Suddenly I realize I'm goin' sixty miles an hour and I don't remember the last five minutes. I'm — I can't seem to — keep my mind to it.

.....  
LINDA: But you didn't rest your mind. Your mind is overactive, and the  
mind is what counts, dear.  
.....

WILLY: (...) I have such thoughts, I have such strange thoughts." (I.9)

The strength of a capitalistic man is centered on whether or not he is capable to endure the brutality of competence and the demanding capacities required to succeed. Willy is stuck at the American Dream, but is this a thing of chance of good luck, or are there really a set of skills that make a man apt to fulfill this dream? On this aspect, Miller points out: "The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendously powerful ideals ... [the play's aim is] to set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of life and has no sense of values which will lead him to that kind of a grip." (qtd. in Hadomi 14), emphasizing the existent distance between Willy's fixed stance and the real ability to successfully achieve goals in real life (Hadomi 14).

In reality, the fact is that Willy has been unable to reach the type of life he has so arduously worked for. His efforts, actions and attitudes, with which he hanged on this dream, are fruitfulness and now he finds quite on the opposite side of life. This is how the dramatic irony has arisen, but additionally, Willy is at a point of extreme tiredness in which he is no longer able to perform as a salesman, and the tragic conflict will swing from reality to illusions and vice versa, as remarked by Miller: "There are no flashbacks in this play but only a mobile concurrency of past and present . . ." (qtd. in Moseley 49), while being at the same time inserted in a quotidian space marked by the severity of modern society. In other words, Willy's destitution is a process that we witness by looking at the confluence of elements from the past and present inside the domestic space.

In Willy's first incursion to the past, we witness the tenderness and complicity in the relationship of the Loman men. The kids express how they have missed the presence of his father, since he comes and goes between home and business travels. With this respect, Willy promises that someday he will own a steady workplace: "(...) Tell you a secret, boys. Don't breathe it to a soul. Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more." (I.23). In this promise, we can infer that this dream never fulfilled and he

never became a businessman owner of a steady place. As Willy attempts to make a progress in his career, he won't give up his job as salesman. Throughout years, the loneliness of the road was his companion. In his lonesomeness, destitution established as the opposite intention that Willy longed for, that is to say, the safety of a stable workplace attached to a sense of belonging versus the uncertainty and vulnerability of his position as traveler, where it is impossible to set up roots in professional terms. Spending too much time alone made him vulnerable to become absorbed by his thoughts, as years passed by this feature strengthened and settled down in Willy's mind, transplanting to the domestic space.

When Willy feels threatened by commentaries that he infers refer to his professional failure, he takes them as an insult. *Hybris*, then, manifests through his blinding pride that impedes him to admit he needs help, rejecting opportunities that could provide a positive change to his status:

CHARLEY: You want a job?

WILLY: I got a job, I told you that. (After a slight pause.) What the hell are you offering me a job for?

CHARLEY: Don't get insulted.

WILLY: Don't insult me.

CHARLEY: I don't see no sense in it. You don't have to go on this way.

WILLY: I got a good job. (Slight pause.) What do you keep comin' in here for? (I.33)

Willy has been working under commission, he doesn't receive a fixed salary, which undermines even more his economic instability, but he won't give up to the American Dream because he thinks he is in a superior status. Accepting Charley's offer would be debasing himself. But, actually, not accepting the offer confines him to continue in a precarious situation. As a result, he evades reality and shelters in illusion, as in this scene reality and the present are mixed with Willy's visions regarding the apparition on stage of Willy's brother Ben. Unlike Willy, Ben did make a fortune by disappearing from society and spending a couple of years in a hostile yet natural place. With the apparition of Ben, Willy is capable of lowering the profile to his non-existent status in society, since as they are blood related, Willy can continue showing off the sort of lineage he comes from, even

when he has not accomplish a fortune like his brother. Willy, then, clings to Ben's status to prove he, and his family by extension, comes from a superior birth:

WILLY: No! Boys! Boys! (*Young Biff and Happy appear.*) Listen to this. This is your Uncle Ben, a great man! Tell my boys, Ben!

BEN: Why, boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. (*He laughs.*) And by God I was rich.

WILLY (*to the boys*): You see what I been talking about? The greatest things can happen! (I.37)

He shows off the greatness of his brother to his sons, so they can take the example on him and pursue big shiny dreams. He goes deeper into the lineage so his sons can “know the kind of stock they spring from.” (I.38), asking Ben to tell them about their grandparent:

BEN: Father was a very great and a very wild-hearted man. We would start in Boston, and he'd toss the whole family into the wagon, and then he'd drive the team right across the country; through Ohio, and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and all the Western states. And we'd stop in the towns and sell the flutes that he'd made on the way. Great inventor, Father. With one gadget he made more in a week than a man like you could make in a lifetime.

WILLY: That's just the way I'm bringing them up, Ben — rugged, well liked, all-around. (I.38)

Willy's father was also a salesman, though Willy doesn't remember much about him, he is really proud mainly because he has followed his steps, yet without the same success. The passion with which the man is characterized lights up Willy's enthusiasm. His father was successful doing a similar job, but a thousand times superior. By extension, Willy's sons can also be superior, so he asserts that their upbringing is been based on make them tough and likeable. Still, Willy worries too much about appearances that in reality are worthless, since he has not being rewarded at all for being likeable, at the same time they are inexistent, as Willy is constantly deceiving himself with the image he has created about a

prosperous man, so he destitute nature is not recognized. But the only one who has failed to perceive this is he.

### 3.1.2 The filial conflict

Since Lear has handed over power over the realm to his two daughters and Willy has never accomplished the position of a successful business man, these two characters become destitute figures in relation to their position in society. Notwithstanding, they are also patriarchal figures, which is the role they perform at the core of the family. But, there is a fraught filial relationship among fathers and sons that becomes more evident as the advancement of age begins to cause deterioration in the minds of the tragic heroes. The loss of the paternal role as a figure of authority and respect contributes to destitution.

The filial conflict in *King Lear* rose in first instance with the exile of Cordelia. Then, Lear is left to the cares of Goneril and Regan. Based on what they have witnessed with the banishment of Corderlia, they began to make comments of the declining state of their father's mind. Goneril remarks "how full of changes his age is. | (...) and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly." (I.I.296, 299) The easiness with which he changes moods is due to "the infirmity of his age" (I.I.300). As his advance age takes possession over his mind, the daughters expect several instances of his folly behavior:

GONERIL

The best and soundest of his time hath been but  
rash. Then must we look from his age to receive not  
alone the imperfections of long-engrafted  
condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness  
that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Lear's mind is characterized as *infirm*, his temperamental attitudes are deep-rooted as a result of flaws that have persisted for several years, and they are bothered by the fact that

they will have to deal with this. Consequently, they will join forces to go against their father so they can restrain him, and control his exacerbations.

Similarly, the Loman brothers detect the same type of degeneration affecting Willy's mind, as they hear him talking to an imaginary young Biff from the past. Happy explains to Biff the mental situation of his father: "Isn't that terrible? Don't leave again, will you? You'll find a job here. You gotta stick around. I don't know what to do about him, it's getting embarrassing." (I.20) His desperation is noticed in the fact that he is starting to feel embarrassed about his old father, and doesn't know how to control his behavior nor how to manage the situation alone.

For Goneril, the behavior of his father is also out of control and she feels that he has wronged her and the integrity of her house. As a consequence, she commands her steward to "come slack of former services, | You shall do well. The fault of it I'll answer." (I.III.9-10). Lear loses the respect of a father and a king as his figure is degraded in its authority. Goneril passes the problem to her sister "Whose mind and mine I know in that are one, | Not to be overruled" (I.III.16-17). The alliance plots against Lear's authority, in the sense that he is not to rule over his daughters anymore because now they hold the authority themselves. Lear begins to understand the situation when he utters "I think the world's asleep" (I.IV.44). Attendants no longer pay attention to his demands, to which one of his knights observes "I think your highness wronged" (I.IV.57). Lear's body of followers is severely reduced and his authority is recognized by only a few. The main characters that will stay by his side are Kent, by defending him from offenses; and the Fool, by helping him to realize about his errors.

In the Fool speeches we can observe several remarks on the folly actions that Lear committed, which as a consequence led him to his actual position where he lacks the authority of a proper king. The Fool gives him a lecture about how to maintain an appropriate behavior where passions do not interfere with common sense. The rewards of keeping moderation, sense and good-judgment, contrastive to the excess of Lear's actions, are more valuable because there is wisdom in them. Maintaining moderation would have saved Lear's lands and position as king, but he act unreasonably and becomes a bitter fool since he owns nothing, as the Fool highlights: "All thy other titles thou hast given away that

thou wast born with.” (I.IV.34). He voluntary gave away kingship, now others hold the power to rule even over him. Nonetheless, this issue is, as we already know, traceable to Lear’s deeds:

FOOL:

When thou clovest thy crown i' th' middle, and gavest  
away both parts, thou borest thy ass o' th' back o'er  
the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when  
thou gavest thy golden one away. (I.IV.44-47)

In these lines, the aforementioned comment on wisdom is expressed in *thy bald crown*, which is Lear’s head and therefore his unwitty and fragile mind. Lear did a foolish thing indeed and the Fool sings to this. Not only has he been overruled as king, but also as father:

FOOL

I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy  
daughters thy mothers. For when thou gavest them  
the rod, and put’st down thine own breeches,

*(sings)*

*Then they for sudden joy did weep*

*And I for sorrow sung,*

*That such a king should play bo-peep*

*And go the fools among (156-162)*

The filial conflict then is expressed in these lines by means of the inversion of roles. The daughters do not respect the father, though Lear put himself in this situation since his fixation with a single idea led him to want the position of a child: without responsibilities and being comfortably taken care of. But he did not expect, of course, that his daughters were so unwilling to accept him and treat him with patience. He would deserved the respect that comes with wisdom by the hand of old age, had not been for the fact the he did not act with wisdom when dividing the kingdom upon such whimsical idea.

FOOL

*(to LEAR)* Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou  
hadst no need to care for her frowning. Now thou  
art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art  
now. I am a fool. Thou art nothing. (176-179)

The fool has always performed the role of jester in the court. But the situation of Lear is only tragic: when he was a father with authority he was treated with respect; now that the daughters hold the power, he needs to worry about being reprimanded like a little child. The filial conflict, then, emerges in the way in which Lear loses fatherhood over his remaining daughters. He is neither a king nor a father, he is nothing.

This issue is further developed in the conflict of the knights. The filial relationship turns quarrelsome with the dispute that Lear holds with his daughters. Goneril pretends to reduce the number of knights so she can put an end to Lear's excesses. But this decisively marks the powerless situation of Lear. "May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?" (I.IV.210) the Fool utters, so even Lear under his foolish condition understands the severity in this issue. He outlines the filial ingratitude as wrath takes possession over his speech, while he tries to defend his knights and his position:

LEAR

*(to GONERIL)* Detested kite, thou liest!  
My train are men of choice and rarest parts  
That all particulars of duty know  
And in the most exact regard support  
The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show,  
Which like an engine wrenched my frame of nature  
From the fixed place, drew from heart all love,  
And added to the gall! O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
*(strikes his head)*  
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in

And thy dear judgment out!—Go, go, my people. (I.IV.253-264)

With the remark on Cordelia, Lear understands the folly in his initial behavior admitting the weariness of his judgment. We observe how Lear, introspectively for a moment, recognizes his flaw and punishes himself. He realizes how exposed he is under the house of Goneril.

Goneril imposes her authority over Lear by inflicting his manhood. The entourage of knights represents the greatness of his empowered manhood, as well as the continuation of his kingship. The magnificence of a king lies on the capacity of showing his power, but Lear's knights have been reduced, and so has been his former status.

LEAR

I'll tell thee.

(to GONERIL) Life and death! I am ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,

.....

(...) Thou shalt find

That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think

I have cast off for ever. Thou shalt, I warrant thee (291-293,304-306)

In his last remark, Lear notices that his daughter believes he has lost his past grandeur, so he stresses her apparent mistake. Lear sees in Goneril's intention a threat to his privileged status, therefore he turns to Regan looking for empathy. But the sisters are together in this, and Lear's goal begins to fall apart when he visits Regan. She advises Lear to ask for Goneril's forgiveness and accept her conditions. But Lear won't stand the dismissing of his men, he would rather choose destitution:

LEAR

Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?

No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose

To be a comrade with the wolf and owl—

To wage against the enmity o' th' air— (II.IV.202-205)

Destitution is summoned by addressing the elements in nature from equal to equal, and voluntarily preferring to face the inclemency of the elements.

As a consequence, in Lear's last speech before fully entering into destitution, the tempest burst out when he calls for the forces in heaven:

LEAR

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need.

You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,

As full of grief as age, wretched in both.

If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts

Against their father, fool me not so much

To bear it tamely. Touch me with noble anger.

And let not women's weapons, water drops,

Stain my man's cheeks! (II.IV.269-276)

If in the first lines he asks for patience to bear filial ingratitude, in the last ones he ask for anger to beat this. Again, he calls for the natural order with the intention to destroy natural bonds. The pact he makes with the superior entities to take revenge against his daughters, claiming he will produce horrible pains to his progeny, constitutes once more a crime against nature and the continuity of his lineage. Tough Goneril and Regan also attack this natural bond they don't swear it by addressing the order of cosmos as Lear does. The disturbance in nature, therefore, appears when Lear utters his future revenge:

(...) No, you unnatural hags,

That all the world shall—I will do such things—

What they are yet I know not, but they shall be

The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep?

No, I'll not weep

*Storm and tempest*

I will have such revenges on you both

I have full cause of weeping, but this heart  
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep.—O Fool, I shall go mad! (II.IV.276-284)

The storm appears in scene abruptly, marking the mental breakdown that Lear suffers once he swears that he will seek revenge. He will embrace ultimate destruction before to let his daughters see his pain, preferring madness and destitution before submission.

In the case of the Loman brothers, we are able to witness how in the past Willy Loman constituted a role model for his sons, as he was the steady head of the family to his son's eyes:

BIFF: Where'd you go this time, Dad?

WILLY: Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the Mayor.

BIFF: The Mayor of Providence!

WILLY: He was sitting in the hotel lobby.

BIFF: What'd he say?

WILLY: He said, »Morning!« And I said, »You got a fine city here, Mayor.« And then he had coffee with me. (...)

BIFF: Gee, I'd love to go with you sometime, Dad. (I.23-24)

Biff, particularly, is impressed by the level of importance with which his father describes his status. Willy pretends he has important connections and that he is well-liked straightaway as he steps on new places. This vision collides drastically in contrast with the opinion of Biff in the present. He realized about the falseness of Willy's status that was magnified by his pride. For him, Willy is a fake with a pointless obsession:

BIFF: I don't care what they think! They've laughed at Dad for years, and you know why? Because we don't belong in this nuthouse of a city! We should be mixing cement on some open plain or — or carpenters. A carpenter is allowed to whistle! (I.48)

Willy was never able to settle in workplace that promoted steadiness. On the contrary, the uneasiness arisen by the lonely of the road pushed him towards creating a false identity. He elevated his real status and extended his false capacities to his sons. He also deceived himself about the true identity of his sons, especially with the talents of Biff. The grown up Biff is not willing to pursue his father's dream. To Biff, a carpenter has more freedom than a businessman, but of course is a lower position, much more humble. Whistling becomes a forbidden action if a man wants to succeed. Biff realizes that in order to become successful a huge price on freedom has to be paid. While to Willy this is not important, and so the filial relationship swings from two extremes. On the one hand, the disappointment of having a lazy son, because Biff does not follow the homogenizing patterns imposed by Modernity and lacks the features of a capitalistic man in search for success and grandeur. On the other hand, Willy loves him when he sees in him the possibility of personal fulfillment, and also, when he realizes that he truly tries to take care of him.

The quarrelsome relationship is built on the fact that Willy has been dishonest with his family and himself. While Biff and Happy (and Linda) understand the real situation, Willy feels rejected by his sons. But this is retraced to his flaw because through delusions of grandiosity, Willy instilled something delusive, forcing his sons to become big by looking at values such as popularity and external approbation, instead of looking at them and recognize their natural, inherent capacities.

In conclusion, sons play a crucial part in the destitution of the tragic heroes. The loss of fatherhood is the product of the sons rejecting their fathers. Goneril callously replies to Gloucester "My lord, entreat him by no means to stay". (II.IV.296) In spite of the wild night outside. While to Regan, this is a right punishment to his father's excesses: "O sir, to wilful men, | The injuries that they themselves procure" (II.IV.300-301). They both shut the doors to his old father, casting him away to the heath in a stormy night. Happy, similarly, feels embarrassed about his father as he begins to act peculiar, and denies him in front of a stranger: "No, that's not my father. He's just a guy" (II.91). In this point, Willy is transported to the past to the moment in which Biff caught him with his lover. In the face of this awe, Biff judges his father for the first time: "BIFF: You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! (... *Willy is left on the floor on his knees.*)" (II.95). Back to the present, this is the

second part of the climax in Willy's destitution: he has troubled again his sons with his erratic behavior, and he is left alone severely disturbed, being cast away to his own luck by his sons.

### 3.2 Into destitution

In *Death of a Salesman*, the first part of the climax in Willy's destitution occurs when, in an attempt to finally settle down workwise, he is fired due to his old age and clear exhaustion:

WILLY (*with increasing anger*): Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week. | HOWARD: But where am I going to put you, kid?" (II.62). There is no place for such an old man in the world of business. All of Willy's efforts were pointless. As he begins to exasperate, the limits of reality become blurry. Howard realizes of his mental weakness and he gets rid of the old man that is a nuisance for his business:

HOWARD: Willy, you can't go to Boston for us.

WILLY: Why can't I go?

HOWARD: I don't want you to represent us. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now.

WILLY: Howard, are you firing me?

HOWARD: I think you need a good long rest, Willy (II.65)

In spite of the fact that Willy was never successful, at least he was something: a salesman. By depriving him of his job, the long rest turns out to be Willy's death.

Under the tempest in *King Lear*, we see the climax in the destitution of the king in key elements that mark this. In first instance, we will focus on those elements that are external to the character. The first noticeable matter is the storm. Lear defies the elements with rage, as expressed by a gentleman attending on the King:

GENTLEMAN

Bids the winds blow the earth into the sea

Or swell the curlèd water 'bove the main,

That things might change or cease (III.I.5-7)

Lear contending face to face with the elements is the consequence of those occasions in which he asked for their power to break natural bonds. The contradiction produced by his words has unleashed the fury of nature expressed in the hardness of the storm. The storm constitutes a purifying experience: it is a punishment to Lear's flaws. The storm will inflict suffer in Lear, who will lose his sanity but at the same time will gain understanding of his subjectivity through this cathartic experience:

(...) Tears his white hair,  
Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,  
Catch in their fury and make nothing of.  
Strives in his little world of man to outscorn  
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.  
Trying to stand up against the storm. (III.I.7-12)

The tearing of his white hair shows us how this symbol of wisdom is stripped off by the hero. He is beginning to understand the folly of his past actions. As the fury of the wind fades this symbol into nothingness, Lear's purification through agony has begun. He willingly accepts to endure the severity of the storm: even the wild beasts find shelter, while he runs *unbonneted* and is unprotected at the mercy of the tempest. Lear is caught by the fire of thunderbolts, which are also a purifying component as they scorch Lear's hair. His wisdom and his reason moreover, are torn apart by the purging symphony of the natural elements.

Destitution is expressed by means of the precariousness that Lear begins to acquire:

LEAR  
Why then, let fall  
Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave—  
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man. (III.II.18-20)

The human insignificance compared to the power of cosmos helps Lear to understand his actual destitute condition. Precariousness then, begins to appear in the loss of components

in Lear's clothing. With this respect, the Fool mentions that Lear is not wearing his codpiece, the men's garment to cover the crotch, exposing his private parts:

FOOL

He that has a house to put 's head in has a good headpiece.

The codpiece that will house

Before the head has any—

The head and he shall louse.

So beggars marry many. (III.II.15-19)

A man that has a place where he can protect from foul weather is, metaphorically speaking, having good judgment. The fool says that the man who thinks more about a house for its codpiece (having intercourse) than a house for his head, will experience poverty and full degradation. Preferring to satisfy lust before shelter good judgment, turns a man into a beggar. Lear, by having his private parts unprotected, is severely exposed to lose his dignity. The king's penis is a symbol of his *phallogocentric* kingdom. The masculine privilege in the construction of meaning has been disturbed by exposing the king's manhood.

Furthermore, the King continues to unclot. The garments of a king are no longer appropriate for him under such circumstances. He needs to lose those symbols that represent the type of King he once was: wrathful, exacerbated, and obsessed. Enduring the agony of destitution will allow him to find and build his identity:

LEAR

—Is man no more than this? Consider him well.—

Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool,

the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three on 's are sophisticated.

Thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more

but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.—

Off, off, you lendings! Come. Unbutton here. (*tears at his clothes*)

(III.IV.98-103)

In the figure of Poor Tom (Edgar disguised), Lear sees a man free from the trappings of society. The human being as *the thing itself* is not in debt to animals, his endurance is his own merit. Tough it is difficult to go naked under foul weather, it is important for Lear to bear this suffer. Nudity is the ultimate manifestation of precariousness; therefore, Lear is totally unprotected and his physical appearance is in tune with the destitute condition.

Destitution is also manifested in the mental condition of the characters. Through their speech, we can explore the fragility of reason that at this point is settled in the heroes' minds. Lear himself admits that "My wits begin to turn.—"(III.II.66). Before madness truly settles in his mind, we can observe how the Lear becomes aware of his weakening:

LEAR

(...) When the mind's free,

The body's delicate. The tempest in my mind

Doth from my senses take all feeling else

Save what beats there—filial ingratitude.

.....

Oh, that way madness lies. Let me shun that.

No more of that (III.IV.12-15,22-23)

The painful thought on filial ingratitude attacks hard against the stability of his mind and this constitutes a bigger pain than that of the body. When he meets Poor Tom, he cannot conceive that his suffering is not the product of a similar experience: "What, has his daughters brought him to this pass?— | Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all? (III.IV.60-61). In Tom's misery, Lear projects himself and realizes about the error he committed when he gave away power to his daughters.

For the characters accompanying the king, it is heartbreaking to observe his unsteady mental state, since madness has increased considerably: KENT(*to* LEAR) "O pity! Sir, where is the patience now, | That thou so oft have boasted to retain" (III.VI.59-60). Nonetheless, an understanding on other matters begins to appear in Lear's speech. These meditations are the product of having experienced precariousness and degradation. Destitution allowed the king to acquire new insights on issues unknown to him:

LEAR

The usurer hangs the cozener.

Through tattered clothes great vices do appear;

Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks.

Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it. (IV.VI.152-156)

In spite of the fact that madness has settled on the Lear's mind, he is capable of uttering thoughtful remarks. He possesses *reason in madness*. Due to his recent experience, he has noticed the problems that arise from injustice, wealth and power. The sins of poor men are much more noticeable than rich men's. When money has the power to cover up crimes, justice becomes useless.

In the case of Willy, he no longer knows what to do: he is hopeless. And still, he continues to deceive himself at times:

WILLY: Sure, sure. I am building something with this firm, Ben, and if a man is building something he must be on the right track, mustn't he?

BEN: What are you building? Lay your hand on it. Where is it?

WILLY (*hesitantly*): That's true, Linda, there's nothing. (II.67).

Realizing of reality at this point (that he has nothing) will exhaust his sanity completely. He feels an urgency to plant seeds to compensate Linda. Nonetheless, there are points in the play that show us that Willy was somehow aware of his real situation. He recognized in his skills the fact that he was not completely suitable for his job: "WILLY: But I gotta be at it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men — I don't know — they do it easier. I don't know why — I can't stop myself — I talk too much." (I.28). But Willy did not focus on finding what his real virtues were. At times, he also faced his real status:

WILLY: I'm fat. I'm very — foolish to look at, Linda. I didn't tell | you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F. H. |Stewarts, and a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer I heard him say something about — walrus. And I — I cracked him right across the face. I won't take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that. (I.29)

He was not as well like as he always claimed to be. The problem of appearances is a big issue in the competitive world of capitalism. For a person who is *foolish to look at*, it could be very difficult to succeed. That is why Willy felt repentance of not going with his brother to Alaska: “WILLY: I got an awful scare. Nearly hit a kid in Yonkers. God! Why didn’t I go to Alaska with my brother Ben that time! Ben! That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate! What a mistake! He begged me to go.” (I.32)

Willy was obsessed with a dream and he did not look at himself to see whether or not this was his most suitable future. That is why he regrets he did not go with his brother to give himself a second chance when things were already wrong. Ben, unlike Willy, did find a good life, but he did not find it under a normative-homogenizing pattern, on the contrary, he found richness in the wildness. The wildness that Willy endured is settled in the city, where the beasts are other common men that are enemies as long as they are his competition. They all pursue the same dream: to have an important job position. Only a few accomplish that, others are only destitute figures trapped in a system in which it is not clear whether to stand out it is due to good luck or skills.

Going back to the issue with the seeds, Willy is desperate to feel that he has accomplished something: “WILLY (*anxiously*): Oh, I’d better hurry. I’ve got to get some seeds. (*He starts off to the right.*) I’ve got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing’s planted. I don’t have a thing in the ground.” (II.96). He recognizes that Linda has suffered because of him, that his family deserves to own something since he dragged them with him to failure during this whole time. To be able to give them something that comes out of his arduous work, will at least give him a little satisfaction:

WILLY: (...) ‘Cause she’s suffered, Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me? A man can’t go out the way, he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something. You can’t, you can’t — (*Ben moves toward him as though to interrupt.*) You gotta consider, now. Don’t answer so quick. Remember, it’s a guaranteed twenty-thousand-dollar proposition. Now look, Ben, I want you to go through the ins and outs of this thing with me. I’ve got nobody to talk to, Ben, and the woman has suffered, you hear me? (II.99)

Notwithstanding, he just cannot let business go. His thoughts have summoned his brother, the closest to success he will ever be, and proposes a new deal. But Ben explains that he is the one with a final proposition for him, answering Willy's questions regarding how they can go back to the great times and how can he give Biff something, so he does not hate him.

This time Willy needs to be sure of his decision. Death seems the only solution, but he needs to act with efficiency or he will just be a foolish old man. Death is an unknown path, but with Willy's death his family will have a chance to overcome financial problems:

"BEN: The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy. (...) (*with greater force*): One must go in to fetch a diamond out." (II.106). Committing suicide could be painful, the point where life ends is rough and hard to overtake for those who stay: "BEN: Not like an appointment at all. A diamond is rough and hard to the touch. (...) (*with promise*): It's dark there, but full of diamonds." (II.107). But the reward is more important than anything else. This will finally give Willy the chance to be useful (in economic terms). As he becomes more and more convinced by the illusion of Ben talking, he hurriedly decides it is time: "BEN: A perfect proposition all around. (...) Time, William, time!" (II.107). Willy confirms his decision when he sees Biff crying. The preoccupation for his father's welfare is a proof that Biff cares about him. Willy is shocked with this demonstration of filial love, but he won't be at peace until he feels he was able to give him something in return. Thus, in his heart this is the *best thing* and the *only way*.

In *King Lear*, the restoration of Lear's identity is achieved with the returning of Cordelia. Cordelia's filial love restores fatherhood, and Lear regains respect as a father.

CORDELIA

(*kisses LEAR*) O my dear father, restoration hang

Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss

Repair those violent harms that my two sisters

Have in thy reverence made! (IV.VII.24-27)

In Cordelia's kiss is contained the power to heal Lear's wounds inflicted by Goneril and Regan. The truthful love of the honest daughter is accepted, and he already understood Lear

the falseness on the other's praises of love. At the same time, when Kent reveals his identity to the king and Lear receives him back, Kent is restored to the realm and thus Lear receives the son of the body politic, fixing the other injustice he committed against unity.

### 3.3 The destitute and the emergence of individuality: a case for *semianalysis*

In this part of the analysis, attention will be paid to the way in which Lear's discourse merges with that of Willy having into consideration Kristeva's theory of *semianalysis* and inter-discursivity. At the beginning of *King Lear*, as well as the beginning of *Death of a Salesman*, we can notice that characters talk about themselves from a plural viewpoint:

LEAR

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.

.....

Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance hear me.

That thou hast sought to make us break our vows

.....

Sir, will you, with those infirmities she owes—

Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,

Dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath—

Take her or leave her? (I.I.134,170-171,207-210)

In spite of the fact that Lear is referring to his personal feelings and actions as singular, he uses the plural word "our" symbolically, so as to express that he embodies the whole kingdom: Lear talks from the perspective of the body politic. This discourse settles on the basis of patriarchy, as the fatherly authority applies to family and realm. As we mentioned before, Lear is not only father of his blood descendant daughters, but he is also father of the kingdom, a figure of authority and obedience that cares for the common welfare of his people.

In *Death of a Salesman*, patriarchy is expressed by the same technique. In the following of Willy's utterances, it is meaningful to observe how the discourse unfolds from the conjoining of father-and-sons:

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

BIFF AND HAPPY (*together*): Yeah! You bet!

WILLY: We'll take our bathing suits.

HAPPY: We'll carry your bags, Pop!

WILLY: Oh, won't that be something! Me comin' into the Boston stores with you boys carryin' my bags. What a sensation! (I.24)

From the use of "we", the unity of family arises as an important component for the accomplishment of patriarchy. Willy attempts to make his sons proud of him, so he can sustain his role model as father.

Inter-discursively, we can see how the previous discourse is reformulated by the later. Willy's discourse tackles the issue about plurality-from-individuality by means of reformulating the power embodied in the monarch through the figure of a successful salesman: from royalty to acquisitive power. As the king is father to the realm, and the sustainment of his position is due to the love and respect of his subjects; the salesman is only successful if well-liked and respected by his buyers, which will constitute a form to sustain the power in his position. Advancing on this idea, we can notice that status is maintained by admiration and respect, the use of plurality-from-individuality is a measure taken by the characters to express his awareness on the importance of sustaining status.

Moreover, due to the understanding of texts, Willy's discourse also enhances our perspective on Lear's folly when he banished Cordelia. Willy, —half induced by his self-

deceptive thoughts, and half aware of his own insignificance in the business world — works really hard to gain his sons admiration. He is in a constant struggle to show how important he is, since he has not enjoyed the same powerful status that Lear. Lear, on the other hand, has rested in a powerful position his whole life, and therefore finds it more difficult to accept the disappointing speech of Cordelia. The point is that for Willy is very important to be a role model for his sons, because his other role (salesman) is more precarious. Lear, on the other hand, has not endured precariousness yet, and therefore it is easier for him to exile Cordelia: the paternal role becomes less important due to the fact that his status has blinded his limitations, compared to Willy, who has at times moments of awareness on his debasement. In short, to Willy is important to strengthen his fatherly role to minimize the degree of the other. To Lear is not important to lose his preferred daughter (or let us say that at this point he does not realize about the severity of his mistake); he has a title, attendants and two more daughters.

But when destitution emerges, and there is precariousness in both roles, the characters begin to make inquiries about their identity:

LEAR

O you sir, you, come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir?

OSWALD

My lady's father.

LEAR

“My lady's father”? My lord's knave, your whoreson dog!

You slave, you cur! (I.IV.67-70)

Lear is no longer seen by inferior subjects as a figure of authority, he has lost identity as a king and as a consequence utters an important question:

LEAR

Does any here know me? Why, this is not Lear.

Doth Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?

Either his notion weakens, or his discernings

Are lethargied. Ha, sleeping or waking?

Sure, 'tis not so.

Who is it that can tell me who I am? (I.IV.112-117)

He does not recognize himself now that authority is beginning to decay. In his appearance, he is unable to elucidate whether this person is he or someone else. The crisis in identity produces weakening in his mind: this is disruptive issue for the preservation of *logos*. While in the case of Willy, it is through his debilitated mind that he makes inquiries about his identity:

WILLY (*longingly*): Can't you stay a few days? You're just what I need, Ben, because I — I have a fine position here, but I — well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel — kind of temporary about myself. (I.40)

In these passage, as he talks to the illusion of Ben, the several times he uses the pronoun *I* highlights the uneasiness with which he has lived, and though he does not admit it, he knows he does not have a fine position, and needs to be comforted by the “presence” of his brother. As he names his father, the root of his crises lies on the lack of a role model. Ben makes him feel less anxious in addition to the *music played upon a flute*, that is a reminder of good old years. In both discursive cases, the crisis in identity appears when the characters stop taking about them from plurality, and began realizing about their individuality, mainly because identity is under scrutiny.

Through the precariousness and severity, subjectivity settles in the use of *I* and the recognition of individuality emerges. Common man and its struggles are the struggles of generations: the scrutiny of identity. Though this is an illuminating process around the limitations of the characters, it also sheds a light on the construction of individuality as a confluence of experiences:

BIFF: Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!

WILLY (*turning on him now in an uncontrolled outburst*): I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman! (II.104-105)

Willy as a common man might be a *dime and a dozen*, but he does not reduce his entire life to a minimum of achievements; he rather defines himself as a name that bears a mixing of different experiences, a plurality contained in a single person. The importance of individuality contained in the name can also help us to understand the view of Lear:

LEAR

(...) Pray, do not mock me.

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less. (IV.VII.58-60)

He is the confluence of all his *fourscore and upward*, nothing more and nothing less. Both characters reduce the scope to a minimum that contains a plurality of experiences: Willy Loman is the confluence of his past and present; Lear is the confluence of all his years lived. This place goes beyond the role they perform; it is about *the thing itself*:

Along these lines, the destitute figure has not to be seen as nothingness, but as a figure that tries to create individuality, and thus destitution is not the end for the characters, but just an interlude between what they used to be and what they become. Acceptance of reality reduces the sight to what we are, but past experiences never vanish and thus man cannot be reduce to what he is now, but to what he was entirely during his whole life. At the end, learning from our errors is only growing and becoming wiser.

## **4. Conclusion**

The importance of the destitute figure unfolds with the succession of parts that produce a progress in the individuality of the characters. Destitution begins with the *hybris* present in the characters' behaviors, as the point where inevitability is drafted. The climax in destitution, then, occurs at the precise time of downfall: characters are cast away by their sons, but as a process it implies the before and after. Throughout the endurance of precariousness, and the suffering agony, the tragic heroes are capable of gaining consciousness about the severity of their flaws, and the folly in their actions. At this point it is where identity is understood by the characters, as the assemblage of their errors with their posterior growth. And therefore, the man that emerges is composed by the complete process.

In this process, the filial conflict plays a crucial role because, otherwise, the tragic heroes in these plays would have not undergone a complete destitution. They would have rather shelter at the comfort core of the familiar space. But instead, the shelter they found only increased their destitute feature. The play between past and present in *Death of a Salesman* sheds a light in this matter. Willy, due to the fact that he was unable to accomplish the dream imposed by the modern society, sheltered from reality in self-deceptive illusions, nonetheless, in these illusions he also found the reality of his position, as he always wonder "what is the secret?". This phrase contains the major point in the search of Willy, since he was only focusing on how to achieve the American dream, as the point where he could find happiness and self-fulfillment. But ironically, this question and his search for an answer were the major components of his suffering.

Regarding Lear, madness was at times the place where he could find a distraction from his agony. As his discourse mixes crucial remarks on his destitution, he also utters nonsensical comments. But maybe by distracting his fragile mind, he was able to look at this from perspective. Madness, then, is an insight from which eccentric characters behave. The *logos* rejects eccentricities, due to the fact that it is by this means that men criticizes the established system. By finding themselves outside the system, they gain awareness on the flaws of the imposed system; from the inside we are either slaves or slave masters, from the outside we are dissenters with the capacity to challenge the establishment. The discourse of the destitute figure, thus, is expressed by this means of eccentricity as the resource that

Modernity has to perpetrate its continuity. Hence, I think that it the duty of the reader to discern whether it is legitimate to only see this figure as an outcast, or as a worthwhile bearer for the construction of meaning and interpretation of texts and discourses.

Throughout this work, we can appreciate how the intertextual connections among texts is also reflected by means of and inter-discursive tradition, where the repetition of discourses around the issue of the destitute figure and its attempts to define individuality, gains importance because it provides a continuous to the reformulation of texts. The modern hero is figure that emerges through the plurality in its individuality. Just as texts are not isolated and static phenomena, the tragic hero is constituted by the confluence of his experiences.

In this sense, the destitute figure is not a figure that dissolves into nothingness. The loss of identity is just another experience that adds subjective connotations to the experience of becoming. Having a no-place and losing status is a process that advances new ideas on the struggle to acknowledge identity; the emergent crisis, thus, acts as a fruitful component to the gaining of understanding. When society cages character in the performance of a role, identity is limited to the associated features of that role. But when the destitute figure loses its past identity, the tragic hero is capable to face a new problem that will add valuable insights in the understanding of the self.

The tempest in King Lear, as a purifying experience, sets the propitious setting where Lear undergoes degradation and suffering. The only weapon that he has to confront this is neither the role he performed nor the status he had; it is Lear the man, reduced to a single composed by the confluence of several. Lear as the confluence of his entire experience as human being, and Lear as a symbol of the human struggle common to all modern men. In the case of Willy, the city is a wild place, as a jungle where other common men are also trying to survive. This concrete jungle constitutes the place where Modernity sets the same struggles of the Elizabethan tragic hero: men act as wild beast in a Darwinian attempt to survive. The American Dream is not attainable to all, but this goal reduces man to a homogenizing process, where the necessary aptitudes to achieve this goal minimize the plurality of individuality. But if a man fails to achieve this dream, or if he rejects it, it is possible to acquire a bigger perspective on the human capacities to survive in the everyday

place, or to totally refuse and undergo a journey where the unknown can only be fructiferous to human growth (as in the case of Biff).

Men are not isolated and static; they reformulate themselves as texts do throughout tradition. Individuality is never finished; it is constantly changing only by gaining, since losing status or roles does not imply that this part never existed. A man's existence does not disappear just because a man ceases to be; in other words, death does not mark an end, because existence will always be present throughout tradition. It is in this sense that the importance of tradition emerges, since it constitutes a continuation to man, where the proof of his existence finds a concrete way to reevaluate posterior works of art.

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