

The Significance of Stage Directions & Linguistic Rapportuer in Miller's Death of a Salesman

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Abstract

The present paper aims at exploring the significance of verbal & non-verbal devices in Miller's Death of a Salesman. It is hypothesized that stage directions play a vital role in exposing the playwright's intents as well as the play's atmosphere. Stage directions assist linguistic rapportuer to perfect the performance in front of the audience. This is why the play might lose some of its significance when read only, not seen performed. It can get confusing when you have the words, but when you see it performed it all comes together and makes sense.

1-Introduction

In the second decade of the twentieth century, attempts were made to tackle the actual problems of the American society and to avoid the romantic view of life. Hence, a number of American dramatists, such as Eugene O'Neil, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and others, take on their shoulders the task of picturing life as it really is. Their plays usher a new stage in the development of American Drama. This stage presents a modern man, who is lost and alienated, as a hopeless creature in a destructed society. The works of those writers reveal the fact that the world where they live, "is not a pleasant little nest made for our protection, but a vast and largely hostile environment", wherein ordinary men are continuously crushed under the pressure of materialism, competitiveness, and spiritual bankruptcy⁽¹⁾. These oppressive conditions which modern society witnesses, help to create the long maturing of the American tragedy⁽²⁾. The audience as well as the playwrights come to realize that they can no longer close their eyes to the world with its rapid changes and conflicting values. As a matter of fact, modern American tragedy comes to existence at a time of crisis which is multi-dimensional. In the theatre, this crisis is represented by the new themes and techniques.

2- Stage Directions & Linguistic Rapportuer

The exploitation of the theatrical conventions of symbolism, realism and expressionism with the adoption of the psychological theories in motivating the action of the characters are rife during this period. As such the American tragic plays can be considered a detailed miniature of the American life in the twentieth century. Since 1920, Arthur Miller says, “American drama has been a steady year-by year documentation of the suffering and frustration of man”⁽³⁾. This shows that the dramatists take the American society as a subject matter to dig deep into the uprooted problems of such a society and diagnose the sickness which is caused by the “collapse of spiritual values and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying” solutions to the dilemmas of modern America⁽⁴⁾. In turn, the American individual is living in a world wherein the laws of market and materialistic competition take precedence. This situation encourages American dramatists who make use of stage effects, whether written or visual, to shed light on the predicaments of modern man. They believe that “the responsibility of the dramatist is to be a sort of demoniac social critic to present the world people as he sees it”,⁽⁵⁾ in the hope that the audience will get rid of their complacency and mental apathy.

As a playwright, Miller is bitterly moved by American society with its ebbing and flowing. His mentality is shaped by the great depression, which has great destructive impact on the financial wealth of his family and demonstrates to the young playwright the insecurity of modern experience. This ordeal kindled his mind and touched his heart. Being socially conscious, he is concerned with people’s plight and dilemma that are manifested clearly in his dramatic works. In an interview with the editor of Playbill, Miller said, “I am trying to account as best I can the realistic surface of life as well as Man’s intense need to symbolise the meaning of what he experiences”⁽⁶⁾. So moral passion and attitude of social responsibility form an important aspect of Arthur Miller’s Plays. Accordingly, almost all of Miller’s present a “socialist commentary on the economic structure of the United States”⁽⁷⁾. The collapse and destruction of the towering structure of American economy expose the evils of the modern technology which leads ordinary man, who feels bewildered and hesitant, to a loss of confidence and a sense of inner defeat. Thus, the American drama has been particularly concerned with the modern face of suffering. The great American master works, such as Williams’ A Streetcar Named Desire, Miller’s Death of a Salesman and others “have been concerned with the response of mankind to rapid technological advance”⁽⁸⁾.

Miller established his reputation with Death of a Salesman and took it further, among the critics, with The Crucible (1953) and two one-act plays composing A View from the Bridge (1955). According to Marcus Cunliffe, “these plays have wrenched the hearts of American audiences, perhaps because in some instances the characters portrayed come so close to being common

place, or to revealing in sombre from the current American problems and maladies”⁽⁹⁾. As a social dramatist, Miller is keenly aware of American need, certainly for his own time. In Death of a Salesman, he wrote far better than “he seems to have realized, at least if we may judge by his critical essays on the play [itself]”⁽¹⁰⁾. This is true of both the play’s content in its analysis of American values and of its technique.

As far as stage directions are concerned, they are highly suggestive in modern American drama. In the twentieth century, American drama tended to “seek its effects in theatre poetry - that is, in stage effects”⁽¹¹⁾. The crisis of depression and its attendant ideologies impregnated the theatre, making the American vernacular seem impressive since it reflects reality. This gloomy reality is presented in a play text by the dramatist’s use of stage directions. Then these stage directions should be imagined visually by the readers.

Furthermore, the stage directions are vitally important because they tell us about the characters, theme, time and place of action. In a play text, Julie Grover pointed out that “we only have two sources of information : the dialogue, that is the words the characters say, and the stage directions”⁽¹²⁾. Just as stories and novels present information in what is called exposition or description, plays give information in stage directions . This leads some playwrights to make them so long that we might be reading a novel as in the case of modern drama. They can likewise convey important clues about how readers should regard a scene⁽¹³⁾.

In modern American drama, great emphasis is given to stage directions. Therefore; in reading the text we are being asked to do what the director in the theatre has to do, in the sense that we have to lift the words off the page and envisage the play as it would be when performed in the theatre. In doing so, the American theatre becomes by its nature sensuous. The theatre’s attraction “lies in its power to transcend the written word”⁽¹⁴⁾. To do that we need to imagine the stage, the setting, the costumes, the lighting and other sound devices.

The style of most stage directions tends to be neutral, that is, to furnish directions for producing the play. Many realistic playwrights feel it desirable to furnish their technical collaborators and their readers with elaborate verbal descriptions of whatever sets they have chosen for their play. This kind of stage directions is offered to give both technicians and readers a vivid visual account of the sets and “to establish the tone of the play”⁽¹⁵⁾.

However, in the hands of a brilliant dramatist such as Arthur Miller, the stage directions become almost as significant a part of the text of the play as the dialogue itself. They are drastically connected with the reader’s perceptions of the play and its hero.

Death of a Salesman (1949) is a modern play which faithfully reflects a tragic story of an average man in the most artistic terms. The play presents a true miniature of a capitalist society that values machines more than men. To achieve his aim , Miller moulded his material into dramatic form to suit and at the same time exploit the resources of a stage to engage audiences all over the

world. He uses the setting and stage directions to help reinforce the various themes such as dream and death that led the audience to relate further to the characters. This helps the audience and readers as well to understand the play in greater detail and ultimately to feel its enjoyment. In addition, the mixture of expressionism within Ibsen- like symbolism gives the play its particular meaning. It creates a dreamlike aura as we shall see later.

With reference to the play under discussion, the setting and stage directions are significant to our understanding and appreciation of the play. The opening stage directions and set design, given by Miller, fashion an integral part to full understanding of the play and its implications. Much of the layout of the set itself, namely the house and forestage, is carefully described. Its importance lies in the fact that it has been given at the commencement of the play, before the appearance of any characters. These opening remarks set forth the boundaries of what is to become the scene of the tragedy that is to follow. "As such these stage directions must be regarded as almost equally important to the play as is the dialogue itself" ⁽¹⁶⁾.

From the title of the play and its background, it is clear that Death of a Salesman centres around a common man who falls a victim to modern industrial society. Willy Loman, the central character in the play, is an old salesman who is perplexed by the failure and pointlessness of his life. In fact, he feels himself betrayed because he cannot achieve the financial goals society has set up for him. Willy bewails that he "put thirty-four years in this firm ... and now I can't pay my insurance" (Act I, p.59) ⁽¹⁷⁾. His impatience and stubborn nature generate an iron bar between the false ideas imposed on his mind and reality. He doesn't allow himself to accept his failings and denies their existence till the very end. This creates a misunderstanding between Willy and his sons who show no respect towards their father. Only his wife Linda understands him and always scolds her sons to treat him properly. Linda believes that "He [Willy] is only a little boat looking for a harbour" (p.59). The harbour Willy is looking for is not found neither in the American society nor at home. As such his aggrandized vision of success is valid as long as he lives in his home which is shrouded by false dreams and aspirations.

As a travelling salesman, Willy spends more than thirty-four years working for a capitalist company. What is important here is that in such a society, Willy's job has no built-in security against old age. This sense of insecurity and hopelessness is agitated seriously when his demand is refused by Howard Wagner, his boss, to give him a steady job in New York and exempt him from travelling. Howard's ethic of "business is business" (Act II, p.58) increases Willy's feeling of frustration and bitterness especially after being fired from work. Therefore; the business problems together with the family problems, provoked by the former, occupy Willy's mind and make him feel neurotic, alienated and schizophrenic. To prove that, Miller begins his play with only one fact that Willy Loman "is going to destroy himself" ⁽¹⁸⁾. Being obsessed with the

idea of success and financial prosperity in his competitive society, he finds himself a failure, insignificant and alone.

This sense of alienation, from one's society, family and finally oneself, according to Julie Adam, "is germane to several of Miller's plays and is usually described in terms of the complex relationship between past and present"⁽¹⁹⁾. The past and present are inseparable. In the course of the play, for instance, Willy becomes alienated from the present. At the same time, he mentally and emotionally submerges himself in the very past he is trying desperately to understand and escape. In other words, in order to reconcile himself to his past and make the present bearable he enters the timeless world of subjective reality where he can feel at home. Willy's illusions of materialistic success, which is embedded in the myth of the American Dream, elude him constantly and consequently make him live in past fables. He clings to the world of dreams as a strategy to compensate for what he cannot achieve and unable to admit.

As the play opens, we see Willy in the final stages of his losing battle. Returning exhausted from yet another failed business trip, he has already lost grip on external reality. Willy is controlled by his dreams and past experiences. We are told and shown that he is alienated from his work and from his sons by being a prisoner to internal conflicts of his own. Willy is also alienated from the external reality which in this play constitutes part of the action. His condition represents not just the wanderings of a mind that has lost its grip on reality, but also "the painful attempt to recapture a past long gone by re-living it in the present"⁽²⁰⁾. To a large extent, the intensity and effectiveness of the play lie in the fact that it provides a sharp conflict between two levels of reality operating in the play simultaneously: Willy's thought processes and hallucinations and the action occurring around him. The play's emotional power resides in this technical interplay between realism and expressionism which is manifested in Willy's subjective recollections. One of the play's important contributions to world theatre "was its theatrical style, which is closely linked to its new conception of dramatic form"⁽²¹⁾. The subtle blend of realism and expressionism enables the audience of Death of a Salesman to experience the disintegration of Willy's mind as Willy experiences it.

The realistic dimension of the play is fairly obvious as seen reflected in its influence from Henrik Ibsen who is the master of presenting a whole lifetime within a short period of stage time. In Death of Salesman, the major action takes place in the past and the events are revealed in the course of the play. The dramatic action moves forwards and backwards to create tension and rises to an exciting tone as it reveals the events that lead up to the catastrophe. Miller asserts that the past and present are interdependent. He brings to our attention the importance of past decisions regarding how they affect the present. In the play, it is alluded to, in Willy's adultery, the discovery of which alienates Biff from a doting father. This event is filled out with various props and evocations of the modern, urban world of middle-class society. The foundation of a realistic

atmosphere is provided by the following documentations of early twentieth century America such as the refrigerator, the subways, saccharine, Chevrolet, B.F. Goodrich, Thomas Edison, General Electric, New York Giants ... etc. These cultural links represent the face of urban country. Even the language, which is used in the play, is every day ordinary, cliché ridden speech that the audience relates to immediately such as "... life is a casting off ", " The world is an oyster and you don't crack it open on a mattress", "... personality always wins the day". The backdrop itself presents a house in Brooklyn that is dwarfish and small among the great buildings that could be the setting for any modern city. Frank Ardolino states that, "Miller's poetic use of demotic English, the level of language which characters speak and which describes their actions and environment, creates the play's tragic dimension"⁽²²⁾. To achieve the depths of tragedy, Miller expands the ordinarily limited expressive capabilities of demotic English by exploiting the sounds and multiple meanings of simple verbal, visual, and numerical images. His system of onomastic and numerical images and echoes forms a complex network which delineates Willy's insanity and its effects on his family.

Within this realism is an Ibsen-like symbolism that enriches the meaning of the play. It is one of "those theatrical plays in which every object seen and referenced can, and often should, be construed as a symbol"⁽²³⁾. The stage directions and the dialogue make this clear, as there is repeated reference to plants, the sky and various other typical topics of symbology that congrue with the base content of the plot and the plights of the characters. As for the dialogue used in the play, it can safely be said that there is no genuine communication amongst members of Will's family. What we have is a continuume. Mutual understanding and intimate conversation are completely lost. There are exchanges at cross purposes when two characters are talking of two different thing (not on the same wavelength). A two-level dialogue appears when Willy talks to Linda (personal reality) and to Ben (imaginary) : the communication is not immediate but hampered because reality and hallucination interfere with one another.

In Act II, a scene is symbolic of the (in)capacity to communicate : the scene in which Willy visits Howard, who is more interested in his recording machine than in talking. The recording machine, which should help communication, creates an obstacle to communication, a barrier between Willy and Howard. It is emblematic of the difficulty to communicate. Most of the dialogues are in the form of questions, which rarely elicit adequate answers;

Linda : Don't you feel Well? (P.8)

Biff : So what do I do tomorrow? (P.83)

Happy : What do you mean? (P.16)

Willy : Bernard is not well liked, is he? (P.25)

There are several images woven into the fabric of Death of a Salesman that solidify its significance. Willy complains about being "boxed" in a place where

“there’s not a breath of fresh air in the neighbourhood”. Biff, his son, finds life in the west far more meaningful. He feels disappointed, “To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off”. The nostalgia for the west is connected to Willy’s own past. We are told that Willy’s father is a flute-maker and a pioneer who roamed the far-off territories to earn his living. His father belongs to the past. This implied that the past is a joyful time in which both Willy and Biff aspire to. It’s “an intergenerational desire for the simpler, pioneer way of life ... a symbol of Willy’s revolt against modern, urban lifestyle” ⁽²⁴⁾. Willy’s skill at manual work embodies this rebellious protest against such kind of life.

No doubt, Miller meant for his audience to look into the working of Willy’s inner life which comes under scrutiny as he tries to manipulate his older son into being the success he has always believed he would become. In fact, The Inside of His Head is the first title conceived for the play because in Miller’s own words “the inside of his head was a mass of contradictions ” ⁽²⁵⁾. We catch glimpses of Willy’s subconscious distraught with guilt, hope and regret. Miller allows us to see the internal turmoil of a disturbed mind which becomes weak and corrupted by his own experience. As a result, he is unable to help his own sons to healthy maturity. This is true to most modern American drama which “displays the prevalent attitudes in depicting the American man as weak and corrupted by his experience” ⁽²⁶⁾.

Dramatically speaking, Miller relies heavily on the dramatic machinery at his disposal. He uses several techniques to show attitudes to success held by the characters. Some of these techniques are the use of motifs, the American Dream, language, stage directions and also through sequence in the past. The employment of stage directions, concerning music, colour, lighting, nature imagery, dream and memory sequences, is one of the techniques, used by the dramatist in the play.

In Death of a Salesman, Miller uses staging and special effects to create atmosphere and tone, and to express ideas nonverbally to his audience. Through effects of lighting and sound, he creates characterization, irony, images, metaphors, tone, and transitions .

The play begins thus :

A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises. (P. 7)

The sense of suspense is established from the very beginning of the play. As an ignorant audience of the play’s plot and setting, we are free to manipulate the play differently by the gentle sweetness of the flute music. It conjures up mental images of the peaceful stillness of a pastoral scene. Music is used to set atmosphere and tone. It sets the mood of the play. While it may be thought of as pastoral, one can also see that the haunting flute which both opens and closes the play might be imagined as sounding forlorn and gently tragic. The sound of the

flute, Edward Murry explains, is Willy's theme⁽²⁷⁾. It ironically juxtaposes in Willy's mind the romantic promise of the past with the sordid actuality of the present. The flute also characterizes Willy's suicidal impulses. Music is used differently according to the action. All memories of early days are accompanied by flute music that relate to Willy's pioneer father. It suggests happier times by its cheerfulness. Within the scene when Ben, Willy's superego, relates their family history, the music changes to "a high, rollicking tune" to symbolize the exaggerations of self-important speech. Miller uses the music to help the audience feel integrated into the performance. The changing of music in the opening scene of act two symbolises foreshadowing and helps to increase the tension on the stage. The dramatist wants to show that the change of music represents the changing aura. In act two, "music is heard, gay and bright". It is delusively upbeat and indicates the mood. Biff will see Bill Oliver to ask him for a loan. Willy puts his faith on him to save the family. In the scene with the woman, a "raw, sensuous music" is played in the background which suggests seduction. In the final scene the music rises in intensity to an "unbearable scream" till it crashes with a frenzy that symbolizes Willy's frenzied state of mind because of feelings of regret. It then changes to a "soft pulsation of a single cello string" that changes into a "dead march" as the background to Willy's funeral. Miller uses sound to its expressionistic best in the tape-recorder scene where Willy tries to convince Howard to give him his job back. But the accidental playing of the mechanical voices only worsens his deluded condition. They remind him of the mechanization of a world he hardly understands. The voices are just like his thoughts that he has no control over. In Death of a Salesman, "the expressionistic staging and the theme music are used to represent the characters' hallucinations and their immanent breakdown"⁽²⁸⁾.

The dream-like mood, created by the opening music is destroyed by the harsh reality of the decidedly urban setting. The moment that the curtain rises and reveals the set, the stage directions, which is long and significant, tell us that Willy's family undergoes a very cruel experience, resulting from the social context they live in:

Before us is the Salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange (P.7)

Instead of gently rolling hills and the serenity of a countryside, we are confronted with a sharp and angular cityscape that dwarfs the house in which most of the play is to take place. The house itself is lit by blue light from the sky, setting it apart and classing it as distinct from the background, which glows the angry orange of an urban sunrise.

This type of setting serves as an overshadowing. It tells the audience in advance that sooner or later Willy's house with its residents will crumble down.

The above created atmosphere expresses the mood of hostility that lies outside Willy's house. From these opening stage directions, we get a very clear indication of what Miller is trying to show. Willy's house is described as a skeleton, invaded by great buildings. This challenging outset gives a sense of impending disaster. The dramatist makes use of his stagecraft to put the audience into picture. This picture reflects the time and locality in which the members of this family, among many other families, live. Besides, as a realistic play, a great attention is given to small details and every effort is used to give evidence of reality since the goal of realism in setting is to give fidelity to physical fact. In this respect, Edward A. Wright says, "the setting must portray the type, the style, the mood, and the very spirit of the play" ⁽²⁹⁾.

Thus, the feeling of agony and frustration is shown in the first stage directions which form a recurring contrast, in Willy's mind, with the immediate environment of big industry and capitalistic encroachment. This contrast is sharpened by the stage devices of an expressionistic set showing Willy's house dwarfed in by highrise buildings and the playing of a recurring pastoral type of music;

As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. The kitchen of centre seems actual enough, for there is a kitchen table with three chairs, and a refrigerator. But on other fixtures are seen. (P.7)

The contrast between the fragility of the Salesman's house and the solidity of the apartment houses surrounding it provides more visual irony as well as hinting that the American dream, as depicted by a house in the city, is far less substantial than it might seem to be at first glance. By describing the kitchen at centre of the house, Miller wants to say that in such a society there is no room for the poor. Even human little needs are not in their hands. The kitchen is empty only for modern signs which are hollow.

This visual irony is a central point of the staging and set design for Death of a Salesman : the fact that the house, while appearing from a certain perspective to be solid and whole , in fact is merely a shell. As it appears in the stage directions, Willy Loman's house has no real walls to separate it from its surroundings and the forestage. This contributes to the impression that his mental state and foothold in the reality of the present are tenuous at best; that his ability to remain focused on what is happening in the present is uncertain as the indefinite boundaries of his home. Miller's solid vault of apartment houses, that menaces the Salesman's house, helps us to see the social forces that warp the individual. Accordingly, the setting becomes a means by which a playwright communicates. In his portrayal of Willy's house as small and fragile among the towering apartment houses surrounding it, Miller thereby conveys "the vulnerability of the individual" ⁽³⁰⁾.

In addition, the first stage directions show the role of the society in the lives of the individuals. Though Miller dramatizes the individual in a moment of self-confrontation and potential self-understanding, “he does not overlook his role in the social fabric”⁽³¹⁾. His characters are clearly related to family, community, and nation. Willy is presented as a product of society. He can no longer understand the nature of the world he is living in. Therefore; he is repeatedly asking himself about the reasons that lie behind his and his sons’ failure. All the time, he tries to examine the validity of his dreams, as a result, he realizes that they are useless. This knowledge unnerves his mind and pushes him to be obsessed more and more with competitive striving activity.

Linda, Willy’s devoting wife, ascribes the causes of her husband’s predicament to his over-exploitation by his company and lack of understanding between him and his sons;

A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty- six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away.

Biff: Those ungrateful bastards!

Linda: Are they any worse than his sons?

When he brought them business.

They were glad to see him .

But now his old friends, the old buyers

...They’re all dead, retired...(p.39)

Linda’s speech reveals the state of Willy who falls prey to economic system. To a very large extent, the economic system of Willy’s society is responsible for his failure. If we take seriously Miller’s views expressed in his famous essay “Tragedy and the Common Man”, we see that Willy’s fall is entirely due to the hostile and manipulative economic system in which he lives. So his destruction “posits a wrong or an evil in his environment”⁽³²⁾. Even the false dreams of success and bigness would be products popularized and encouraged by the same economic systems. That is why the play emphasizes, particularly in the second part, the harshness of the social and economic system. Willy’s interview with his employer brings out his protest that he is not to be treated as an orange whose peel is thrown away after it is eaten. His protest against exploitation does restore his dignity in our eyes but does not completely absolve him of personal responsibility of his failure.

Nature imagery is another motif running through the play that symbolizes the great gap between the past and the present. The pastoral image in Willy’s mind stands for an unattainable peace that once belonged to a better life in an Edenic America. That is why Willy laments its loss, “The grass don’t grow any more ,you can’t raise a carrot in the backyard”. And this lament continues into

a reminiscence of two beautiful elem trees with swings and hammocks on them. The strange melody that accompanies Willy's dreams is one of "grass and trees and the horizon". His dreams are coloured with talking about lilacs and wisteria, peonies and daffodils. But all the time, Willy is shocked by grim reality which reflects the contradiction in Willy's mind and the society as well. According to N. S. Pradhan, "[Willy's] dream emphasizes Willy's 'fall' as it also highlights the contradiction in Willy's character"⁽³³⁾. As Willy holds this view of a pastoral life as a source of great comfort to himself, he regards the same idea in Biff's desire of a farm life in Texas as a symbol of failure. Even when he talked about the beautiful flowers, he doesn't forget his reality which is polluted, "What a fragrance in this room !".

As we said before, the past and present are interrelated in Death of a Salesman. The past is not merely where Willy came from, but rather exists simultaneously with the present. The past becomes, "a place rather than a time , and thus is not only recalled by the characters but also lived in"⁽³⁴⁾. This remembered past is always coloured by desire and pain. It is looked at from Willy's troubled mind. The loss of the past is mourned, but even those, who aspire to it, do not seem to be in control of their own present.

The development of the rural-agrarian dream begins in the first paragraph of the stage directions. When Willy bought his house, we are told, there were woods all around and he could hunt rabbits and snakes and had elms growing in the yard. But now everything has changed. All woods are burnt. Willy's house which attaches him to growing things and to the out-of-doors, is marginally related to the rural-agrarian dream. The house affords the family a place of its own and a sense of belonging, of social status and pride. Willy's simple hope had been for a home shaded by magnificent elm trees, graced by a lawn and a garden. This picture for his house is what really attaches Willy to the out-of-doors. It is his effort "to create a fruitful relationship with the world of nature by which he would satisfy aesthetic and spiritual needs"⁽³⁵⁾. Miller gives us that painful scene in which Willy wanders out in his yard at night, trying to plant by flashlight.

The predictable difficulty is that the city and business plight the fulfillment of Willy's rural-agrarian dream. Ironically, he comes fully to own the little house, which is like the homestead, only on the day he is buried, when the last payment on the mortgage is finally made. His house is alien in the city, surrounded and intimidated, as it is said before, by the huge structures around it. These shut off air and light so that no grass, not even carrots, will grow. Builders have chopped down the elm trees. The fragrance of peonies and daffodils, once so intoxicating in the spring, is now only a memory. The independence and virility of life beyond the horizon becomes, in the city, a "measly manner of existence", as Biff says, "To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your

whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying.... And always to have to get ahead of the next fella”.

The city and the pursuit of success enforce a way of life that is essentially corrupting, distorting the human personality. All the Loman men have been the victims of such distortion. So, as a kind of defense mechanism or protection against unadurable reality, each one of the Willys’ tries to escape. They look for relief and solace in world dreams to mitigate their pains. Their escape from the limitations of time and its demands plays a pivotal role around which the action of Death of a Salesman revolves.

Light and colour are artistically used to illustrate and enhance the various moods of the play. When the curtain rises in act one, “only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house” and the surrounding area is shown in an “angry orange”. Here, the blue light represents the purity of nature which is not distorted by mechanization of life. In contrast with ‘angry orange’, which is product of mixing two colours, yellow and red. Both of them are artificial and stand for sickness and hatred. In most of Willy’s memories, leaves cover the stage , creating a pastoral and seemingly happy atmosphere. While the scenes in the restaurant and the hotel room are characterized by a red glow. The colour red, again, symbolizes passion and anger. In other words, it is a symbol of corruption . Throughout the play, lighting is used in this way to define the atmosphere in which the characters exist, in the absence of settings and props to do so.

Lighting is also used to indicate the location on the stage in which relevant action is occurring. When Willy moves into his memories, a different type of light or location of light appears which indicates the difference between his location on the space-time continuum as different from that of those around him. For example, light is used to express Willy’s memories about the woman while Linda remains sitting in the kitchen. We are not confused about Linda’s involvement or lack thereof in the scene, because light indicates that the action occurs where she is not. Expressionistic use of light is also made at the end of act one when Linda and Willy dream of the golden days as they turn in for the night. Biff takes a stroll outside in a golden pool of light. The golden colour stands for originality and shinning past which is lost. The entire scene is ironically highlighted by the glow of the gas heater a blue flame beneath red coils . It is a bad omen of the end of Willy’s dreams. The moonlight that Willy admires through his window at the end of this scene is gone by the end of act two, ‘Gee look at the moon moving between the buildings’ when he tries to read instructions on the seed packets with the help of a flashlight. The light is going out of Willy’s life too and despair looms about him as he sees all doors closing in his face.

Miller often uses sound and light together to indicate transitions between Willy's mind and reality, and in the case of the woman's laugh becoming Linda's, the truth becoming lies, as Willy travels from day dream to reality. Other transitions, between times and places, are indicated similarly. Atmospheric music, presence and absence of light, and incidental sounds create movement between past and present. For example, as Willy is lost in remembering Biff's visit to Boston, persistent knocking pulls him entirely into the memory and away from the current physical scene, the restaurant. Slightly later 'the light follows him' from the hotel room to the hallway, making clear to the audience his movement from one surrounding to another without change of set elements.

Conclusion

Miller makes use of all these expressionistic devices to create a unified stage picture, which form the essential part of an orchestrated set. These are blended together into a harmonious unit. It increases the emotional impact of the play on the audience. Miller depends on stage designs to portray a despairing mind. He uses the memory sequences not as flashbacks but distinctly as events in the past that have a very real value in the present for Willy. Death of a Salesman remains most prominent in the mind for its emotional impact. The subtle blend of expressionism and symbolism gives the play its particular meaning. Also the creative employment of stage directions acquires thematic value concerning the hero. The different reaction makes the audience look to Willy Loman differently. Some believe that Willy deserved to die while others look to him as a sympathetic character. The real tragedy of the story ultimately is Willy's failure to see or appreciate his family's anguished but real love for him. Instead, he is blinded by fantasies of wealth and grandeur. He drives himself to suicide through his destructive self-reflection which is fuelled by his guilt feelings regarding his son. It is noteworthy that the play begins and ends with the sound of the flute. It symbolizes Willy's delusional, blind faith in the American Dream. Willy ends up with fruitless death. Despite being a salesman, he does not understand that the only thing you get in this world is what you can sell. Willy's tragic mistake is his denial of the fact that a failure in society and business has no right to live according to the principles of capitalist society. Willy accepts the rules of such society but is unwilling to accept its judgment. Even the house where he inhabits, is 'a dream rising out of reality' and Willy cannot face that reality. When the system alienates him by showing him that he is no longer needed, he desperately tries to reintegrate. Therefore, he retreats deeper into the past and is completely overwhelmed by it. He finally understands that it was Biff's discovery of his adulterous act that drove father and son apart. His sudden realization that he had betrayed his son drives him to his death, for which he had been preparing from the beginning of the play.

Throughout his early career, Miller remains torn between a firm commitment to social drama and an impulse to explore psychological states and to delve into ultimate meanings. Although he insists on the importance of social drama and of viewing the individual as a social product, Miller invariably depicts the tragedy of the loss of private integrity in the face of social pressure. His focus is social, but his perspective is always individualistic.

Concerning, Miller's stage directions, they are concise, clearly interpreted, and easily translated into physical effects. However, some of them are more metaphorical and open to interpretation. They may be intended primarily to convey the author's meaning and themes.

As we know most plays are written to be acted on the stage more than to be read. Miller takes this fact into his consideration when he wrote Death of a Salesman. So, it is the director's job both to provide his own interpretation of a text, and to convey the playwright's original concepts. Miller successfully uses stage directions to help the audience to understand the play. He had painted characters through these stage directions.

Notes

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