THE 1951 FILMED VERSION OF DEATH OF A SALESMAN: A STUDY OF THE THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE FILM AS A RESULT OF THE ADAPTATION OF THE PLAY

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NOTES ON PRIMARY SOURCE

All references to the text of Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman were taken exclusively from Arthur Miller: Death of a Salesman: Text and Criticism edited by Gerald Weales, and copyrighted 1967 by The Viking Press, Inc. of New York, New York. Each reference will be noted by page numbers from this edition.

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INTRODUCTION

Stanley Kramer produced the first filmed version of Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman in 1951 after the play finished a successful run on Broadway. The film, however, did not prove to be a faithful presentation of Miller's original play. The major alteration stemmed from the film's inability to demonstrate the societal pressures that cause Willy Loman to lose his mental balance. Without investigating the social pressures that harm Willy, the film becomes merely the story of a deranged man with whom no one in the audience can identify. Identification with the protagonist became the quality of the play that shook audiences in their seats in the theatre. This thesis will study the 1951 film in relation to its inability to present faithfully Miller's play on film and point out those areas that were altered by the medium of cinema or the textual changes in the script.

The reviews of the premiere performance of Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman at the Morosco Theatre on Broadway attempted to explain the strong emotion felt by the opening night audience on February 10, 1949. John Mason Brown, reviewer for Saturday Review of Literature, called it "an experience at once pulverizing and welcome" (206). Robert Garland, obviously still filled with astonishment at

the audience's reaction, said in his "true report" for The New York Journal-American that:

> As a theatre reporter I'm telling you how that first-night congregation remained in its seats beyond the final curtain-fall. For a period somewhat shorter than it seemed, an expectant silence hung over the crowded auditorium. Then, believe me, tumultuous appreciation shattered the hushed expectancy. ("Even as You and I" 199)

The audience reaction at the professional debut performance proved to be very similar to the reaction of the small, informal audience of three that were fortunate enough to hear the author read Death of a Salesman during a gathering in the country. Arthur Miller recounts the incident in the essay "The 'Salesman' Has a Birthday."

> I remember that night clearly, best of all. The feeling of disaster when, glancing up at the audience of three, I saw nothing but glazed looks in their eyes. And at the end, when they said nothing, the script suddenly seemed a record of a madness I had passed through, something I ought not admit to at all, let alone read aloud or have produced on stage. (148)

Arthur Miller's play, even in the dimly lit atmosphere of a country home, still possessed enough force to shock an audience into silence at the stark realization of the societal norms attacked through the character of Willy Loman.

The force that "shakes" the audiences of Death of a Salesman comprises what Miller calls "the underlying struggle... of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' position in his society" ("Tragedy and the Common Man" 144). He goes on to say that:

> The quality in such plays that does shake us... derives from the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world. Among us today this fear is strong, and perhaps stronger, than it ever was. (145)

In order for this "fear" to be felt as strongly as in the original Broadway production of the play, however, the audience must be privy to Willy Loman's thoughts and come to a recognition of Willy's failures and final triumph. The only way that audiences can achieve awareness, however, is if they can identify with the salesman to the point of empathy for his struggle to, as Miller put it, "leave a thumbprint somewhere on the world" ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 162). The audience must be able to understand that Willy's damaged sensibility derives from the pressures that society has laid upon him to succeed at any cost. His chosen profession of selling, however, proves to be a career where only through sacrifice of soul can he obtain significant monetary achievement. It is the selling of himself that drives Willy toward insanity. The audience must come to understand that, as Miller biographer Neil Carson says, "[Willy] fails because he never understands the inconsistency in his beliefs and that his desire for the emotional security of popularity is at odds with the realities of the profession he has entered" (52). Miller's major theme of Death of a Salesman concerns the dark side of the American Dream where if a man travels down the wrong path he can become lost and unable to turn back because the

light of success that appears at the end of the path shines too brightly to ignore. Yet, in Willy's case, the light at the end blinds him to the fact that his path does not connect to the light, but only runs into a chasm made deep from Willy's inabilities as a salesman. As Neil Carson also points out, "the most fruitful approach to the play... is to see it ...as a drama about self-delusion" (55).

The debate concerning the purity of tragic form and theme in Miller's play will also certainly continue without consensus. Some critics would agree, however, that certain qualities found only in tragedy comprise a major part of Death of a Salesman. Professor of theatre and drama, Ester Merle Jackson, in her essay concerning the "Tragic Myth in the Modern Theatre" writes,

> Death of a Salesman appears to imitate Classic tragedy primarily in its acceptance of the principle of the ultimate responsibility of the individual. (65)

Willy's responsibility, the wrong choices he makes in life and his attempt to redefine the direction in which the decisions of the past have led him, remains the key theme with which Miller's play deals. Willy wants security; both in his job and for his family, but he chose a profession for which he proved ill suited; a major mistake which causes Willy to lose his balance. Miller essayist Thomas E. Porter states, "The salesman's version of the success myth-- the cult of personality-- is shown to be a tissue of false values that lead only to frustration" (41). Instead of becoming a carpenter, farmer, or other hand laborer who

earns his living doing a hard, honest day's work, Willy succumbed to the pressures of society that bombarded him with contradictory messages that spoke louder than his own confused innate nature and chose the profession of selling. Thomas E. Porter, in his essay entitled "Acres of Diamonds: Death of a Salesman," observes "The pressures of economic growth in urban society created the salesman mystique and those same forces punish the unsuccessful inexorably" (37). Willy spent his entire life trying to match his mentor Dave Singleman and gain success in life "on the basis of being well liked" (86). Miller notes,

> The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendous powerful ideals. ...The fact is he has values. The fact that they cannot be realized is what is driving him mad-- just as, unfortunately it's driving a lot of other people mad. ("Family Dreams" 44)

Willy's zeal for justification of his life confirms Miller's definition that modern tragedy "is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly" ("Tragedy and the Common Man" 144). Although the debate concerning whether Death of a Salesman succeeds as tragedy will continue, it cannot be denied that Miller's play, viewed in the context of Miller's own definition of tragedy, successfully portrays a man trying to find meaning for his life, a quality which exists within many of the classic tragedies. It seems clear, through Miller's own emotionally charged essays such as "Tragedy and the Common Man" and "Introduction" to Collected Plays, that he meant for Death of a Salesman to be more than the story of one family's

strife. In editor Robert A. Martin's The Theatre Essays of Arthur Miller, Miller contends,

> If, for instance, the struggle in Death of a Salesman were simply between father and son for recognition and forgiveness it would diminish its importance. But when it extends itself out of the family and into society, it broaches those questions of social status, social honor and recognition, which expands its vision and lifts it out of the merely particular toward the fate of the generality of man. (73)

Additionally, the forces that have shaped and come to destroy Willy Loman must be clearly seen for the audience to understand the scope of Willy's situation.

The falsity of his profession and the constant pressures of conquering territories with the only weapons that a salesman has: "a smile and a shoeshine," has taken its toll on Willy Loman (138). Willy has failed in his attempts to justify the errors of his ways by revisiting his past, so he searches to find another way to become victorious.

Willy looks to his eldest son, Biff, to follow his same path but desires him to reach that path's end. Biff would have followed his father blindly had he not accidentally found Willy having an affair while "on the road." Still, Biff cares deeply for his father, and even he has to try Willy's teachings one last time in an effort to justify his own life. Willy never sees that the infectious nature of his beliefs ultimately eats away at the moral fiber of his family, from Happy's emulation of his father's worst qualities, to Biff's kleptomaniacal impulses, to Linda's

worship of money exhibited in her constant jotting down of Willy's sales the minute he returns from a trip. Neil Carson says, "At its core, Death of a Salesman is a play about the destructive nature of dreams," especially wrong dreams (55). Willy's family demonstrates a living example of this "destructive nature" (55). From this final attempt to succeed using Willy's contradictory philosophies, Biff learns a more valuable lesson concerning who he and his father actually are and gains strength through the acceptance of the truth.

Miller essayist Thomas E. Porter observes that "Biff suspects that perhaps the Lomans have been miscast in their salesman role" (39). Essayist and Miller authority Harold Clurman echoes Porter's sentiment and adds that Miller is not saying "that our economic system does not work, but that its ideology distorts man's true nature" ("Theatre: Attention" 26), perhaps to the point that a man can dismiss his innate abilities. For example, in Act One of Death of a Salesman, Biff declares,

> They 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. (61)

Biff reprises these thoughts at Willy's funeral when he says, "There's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made" (138). Willy acknowledges his son's unconditional love, but for him it proves to be too late to stop his pursuit because, as Miller asserts, Willy "cannot

settle for half but must pursue his dream of himself to the end" ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 168). Instead of the societal system of success being victorious at play's end, Miller countered it with another system called love, which he contends "is the opposite of the law of success" ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 169). Miller finally adds that this law of love

> is embodied in Biff Loman, but by the time Willy can perceive his love it can serve only as an ironic comment upon the life he sacrificed for power and for success and its tokens. (170)

The fact that Willy cannot stop and change the direction of his path provides biting commentary on the entire capitalistic system.

The 1951 filmed version of Death of a Salesman that immediately followed the successful Broadway production fails to present Miller's play as it deals with the theme of an individual, Willy Loman, who makes the wrong choice in life, embraces the wrong dream, and then tries to contend with his unceremonious dismissal by a cruel society who only nurtures those who prove continually viable in promoting the myth of the "American Dream." The film does not effectively demonstrate the societal pressures that upset Willy Loman's mental balance. The audience can see Willy as a crazy man, but cannot see the forces of society that drove him to this state. These forces were evident in the original Broadway production, prompting critic Eleanor Clark to say, "It is, of course, the capitalist system that has done Willy in" ("Old Glamour, New Gloom" 39). Essayist Thomas E. Porter

also makes the point that "Willy's quest for the secret of success is central" to the play (25). Part of the film's failure can be found in the medium's inherent qualities. Cinema deals almost exclusively with the visual image, whereas theatre uses language as its predominant quality of exposition. Certain expressionistic qualities that remain necessary in demonstrating the symbolism that corroborates the theme concerning Willy's wrong choices are lost because of the director's style in the 1951 film. Miller says that in the original play he used an expressionistic set that "reveals symbolic designs which function as overt pointers toward the moral dilemma from the action" (Critical Essays 28). Almost every item on stage in Death of a Salesman could be interpreted as a metaphor, including the play's characters. The play actually uses a combination of what Miller biographer Neil Carson calls "detailed realism and more poetic expressionism," which he said made the realistic stage items appear "filtered through a haze of affectionate memory which muted the colours, softened the lights and made the characters seem larger than life," (45) thus giving them a heightened reality that comprises the essence of expressionism. The realism caused by the constant use of close-up camera shots of Willy Loman in the 1951 version makes him appear so overly psychotic that the audience could not identify with him. The film in no way demonstrates that the play represents the inner workings of Willy Loman's mind as he tries to deal with the social messages that bombard

him. This creates the problem that if Willy appears insane, there can be no recognition scene necessary to establish Death of a Salesman as a modern tragedy. Instead, the film sentimentalizes Willy's predicament so that the audience feels pity for his plight but cannot relate to him in any way because they cannot understand that Willy's hallucinations are supposed to represent not flashbacks, but rather the inner workings of Willy's mind. This creates melodrama that contains a false pathos and sentiment rather than tragedy which elicits catharsis due to the relationship of the protagonist to the audience. The catharsis was present in the Broadway production, as evidenced by the audience reaction to the play's theme, but got lost in the 1951 filmed production.

Certain textual changes also hindered the film from being an honest interpretation of Miller's original intent. Symbolism such as the cellar and the garden motifs, which Miller critically placed to expound upon the play's theme concerning an individual dealing with the choices he has made in his life, were altered due to script edits. Their absence hinders the thematic development of the story. The roles of characters in the play also fell victim to the screenwriter's editing. Happy, who serves in the play as a living reminder to Willy of all the false qualities of life he has embraced, becomes sentimentalized, therefore losing the main purpose of Happy in the play, a character who embodies the degeneracy of society. Edits also alter

certain key scenes that are necessary in the development and growth of Biff toward the recognition of who he and his father are. The unwarranted editing of the play for the movie redesigned Death of a Salesman until Miller's original theme concerning the price of a failed vision in an unsympathetic society becomes lost.

This thesis will show how the film was altered in comparison with the original play's plot concerning the wrong decisions Willy Loman made in his life and its theme about man's searching to find success and his subsequent attempt to justify his wasted life by redefining his past. It will demonstrate how the alterations contributed to the weakening of Miller's theme.

Two other filmed versions have been produced, one in 1968 and another in 1985, both made for television. One chapter will briefly describe how these versions, for the most part, remained faithful to the original play's theme by avoiding the mistakes of the first film and capitalizing on the good examples set by the 1951 film. By comparing and contrasting the 1951 film's strengths and weaknesses to Miller's original text, as it was presented on Broadway in 1949, the first film can be seen in its proper context in relation to Miller's original intent for the play and its influence on subsequent versions.

IMPACT OF THE MEDIUM UPON THE 1951 FILMED VERSION OF DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Anytime an adaptor arranges a play for cinematic presentation, it undergoes certain changes because of the inherent dominant qualities of the different medium. Language dominates the medium of theatre; whereas the visual image dominates the medium of cinema. An image transposed upon a huge movie house screen would almost always command more attention than that same image on stage. Therefore, the manipulation of images, because of their heightened significance within the medium, becomes very important when adapting a play for film.

For several reasons the 1951 filmed version of Death of a Salesman fails to captivate its audience as commandingly as did the original Broadway production. A major contributing factor to the film's shortcomings lies in its vacillation between expressionistic and realistic visual images. Because of the varying styles of the film, Miller's message concerning the ills created by societal pressures of success becomes lost. Most damaging to the play, however, is the film's inability to establish visual simultaneity of past and present. This failure often causes the meaning of Miller's symbols to be left out of the cinematic production. Although the cinematic presentation enhances some of the

images, there remains no consistency of style needed to demonstrate effectively the ill-fated salesman's subjective thoughts, the related thoughts and feelings in the mind of a person that arise from the senses. It is through Willy's subjective thoughts that the audience can identify the social pressures that have divorced Willy from reality. The audience needs to be able to see that, as June Schlueter and James K. Flanagan point out, "the problem with Willy-- aside from his self delusion, his ineptness, his self pity, his misplaced pride, and his fraudulent morality-- is that he has dreamed the wrong dream" (56). If this fact is not evident, the major theme of Miller's play becomes obscured. The film denies the audience the opportunity to understand that Willy was not always unbalanced, but that society changed him and made him what he is at the play's onset.

Laslo Benedek, the film's director, reveals a misunderstanding of his own medium. He claims that he envisioned the film in theatrical terms and did not approach it on a level of realism ("Play into Picture" 84). He also admits that he depended primarily upon the dialogue and the power of the performances to carry the film ("Play into Picture" 84). He failed to take into consideration the fact that his medium brings to the play a stronger sense of reality by virtue of its own conventions. His indecision about using film techniques to their full advantage, however, produced a confusing movie. The presentation of Willy's memories and hallucinations illustrates part of the

1951 film's problems, which film critic Robert Warshow points out "were awkward enough on the stage... [but] at least belonged to an accepted framework of theatrical convention" (275). To date, Death of a Salesman succeeds on film only as a filmed representation of the theatrical production. Although extremely cinematic, through its inventive use of screens and lighting to simulate scene fades, Death of a Salesman still remains a highly theatrical play. The expressionistic details are important in exposing Miller's various symbols which contribute to Miller's theme concerning the harshness of societal pressures on an individual to succeed at any cost. When the play's actors become lifted from the hardwood floors of a stage and located on film, realism pervades the production and symbols lose their meaning by becoming two dimensional. This excessive literalism proves catastrophic to a play whose message relies upon the pervasive use of symbols which become clear only in the context of the expressionistic staging of the play.

Warshow says that "the very fluidity of the medium [of cinema] favors simpler and more direct exposition" (276). When Benedek adapted Death of a Salesman into the medium of cinema, much of the visual imagery exaggerated on stage should have been reduced. The play needs exaggeration on stage, but on film it appears as overacting. Critic and Miller scholar Edward Murray illustrates with a good example of Benedek's mishandling of visual image. Murray points to

the hotel scene where Willy falls on his knees and begins to pound the floor "histrionically" (76). While this action may be necessary on stage to convey Willy's frustration to "the play goer in the last balcony," Murray says, "it is both redundant and ludicrous on the screen" (76). On film the smallest gesture in close-up can provide the audience a wealth of information about the character, but the constant use of Willy's enlarged, exaggerated face overemphasizes his unbalanced state. It takes the audience's attention away from the pressures of society that brought Willy to the edge of his sanity and focuses only on the result. Critic Robert Hatch, in his review of the film, said that Fredric March,

> behaves as though he had watched Leo Cobb's stage work closely and determined to go him one better at every point. More exhausted at the beginning, more phony in the flashbacks, more insane in the present. (22)

In actuality, March did not exaggerate his acting more than did Lee J. Cobb on Broadway, but because March did not tone down his acting style for the cinematic performance, he appears overly dramatic, even melodramatic, on film. For example, in all of the hallucinatory episodes, the director insists on having the camera remain for long periods of time in close-up of March's face. Instead of being able to view the action around Willy, as it relates to him, Benedek forces the audience to watch Mr. March's enlarged rolling eyes and grimacing expressions as he responds to the unseen action surrounding him.

Since March was a seasoned movie actor, as well as

theatrical performer, he knew the difference in acting styles for the two media. The film's director must have decided to direct March to continue to play the role in an animated manner, as it would have been played on stage. The resulting performance appears too insane for any audience member to identify with Willy Loman. Without identification, the audience never looks beyond Willy's abnormal behavior to see the social factors that contributed to his instability. English Professor Neil Carson makes the observation that Willy's actions should be seen as "misguided rather than insane" (46). After all, Willy only acts the way in which he feels society wants him to act. The episodes concerning his past prove that he had the same dreams and desires of anyone who wants to be a successful entrepreneur and family man. Willy made the wrong choice, however. Instead of choosing employment that suited his innate ability to work with his hands and earn an honest living, he chose a profession in which he could be successful only through dishonesty and ignorance of moral responsibility. Miller biographers June Schlueter and James K. Flanagan submit that "Willy does not know how to function in an aggressively success oriented world" and cannot come to the realization that in a modern technological world "sales have little to do with friendship and personal style" (64). Willy's imbalance, as it should be viewed, stems from the years upon years that he has fought against the falsity of his chosen career by attempting to justify it.

Ultimately it destroys him and his family as it steeps into their value system. In the end only Biff survives to change the direction of the Loman path.

The handling of the first hallucinatory episode in the film illustrates Benedek's ineffectual presentation of Willy's inner turmoil. The scene occurs just after Willy learns that Biff has returned home. Benedek, for the 1951 version, moves from present to past by moving in for a close-up of Willy's face and then pulling the camera back slightly, to suggest that the scene has shifted into the past. He then has the cameraman move back into a close-up of Willy and remains in close-up for most of the scene. Benedek never uses a panoramic camera shot to show the set in its relation to Willy. His technique leaves no visual stimulation to remind the viewer that Willy never actually moves to the locale of his past. Miller sees this as a key failing point for the 1951 movie. He says, "the dramatic tension of Willy's memories was destroyed by transferring him, literally, to the locales he had only imagined in the play" ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 159). The theatre audience at the Elia Kazan production remained constantly aware of the Loman house on stage and its significance as the rotting fruit of Willy's labor because they could view the past as it converges upon Willy's present. Willy seeks out his past to try and find justification for his life. The reality of the present must be visually identifiable to illustrate that Willy's search for defense of his choices

proves to be in vain because the events of his past still lead to the place in Willy's life that he now stands as a failure. No matter how he tries to defend his past actions by idealizing their memories, he cannot escape the fact that he has made mistakes in his life that cannot be changed. Willy escapes into his past to try to find justification, but at each instance he finds none and must return to the reality of his present life. Because the 1951 film does not present Willy's past and present on the same visual plane, the viewer cannot see how Willy's present forces him to examine his life and the choices he has made. Arthur Miller says,

> The setting on the stage was never shifted, despite the many changes in locale, for the precise reason that, quite simply, the mere fact that a man forgets where he is does not mean that he has really moved. ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 159)

Willy's hallucinations imply an escape, but only a mental escape, not a physical one. The original stage set demonstrates this fact; a fact lost in the 1951 version due to Benedek's ineffectual handling of the expressionistic scenes in his movie.

To see Willy actually transported to the locales of his previous experience rather than seeing him hallucinate about his past while always having his house looming ominously in the background as a constant reminder of his failed dream proves confusing for the audience. The manner in which Benedek filmed Willy's hallucinations causes the audience to be unsure whether the director is replaying Willy's past

instead of the character visualizing it in his mind. Miller explains that,

> There is inevitable horror in the spectacle of a man losing consciousness of his immediate surroundings to the point where he engages in conversations with unseen persons. The horror is lost- and drama becomes narrative- when the context actually becomes his imagined world. ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 159)

The 1951 film loses any incentive for the audience to consider carefully the forces that altered Willy's awareness. Willy's sense of claustrophobia, the feeling of his present world caving in on him, forces him to seek out the world of his past, before the landlord leveled the trees and before the construction company's built the surrounding apartment buildings. Dennis Welland, in his study of Miller's plays, points out that "keeping us visually aware of those physical walls simultaneously suggests the metaphysical walls as well" (46). The absence of this crucial visual image robs the audience of the full symbolic effect of the set as Miller intended. The metaphoric meaning of Willy's house representing the failures of his life remains a necessary element toward establishing Miller's point concerning the wrong choices that Willy made in his life. When Willy first built his house, it lay in the country where Willy could work with his hands. But now the sun cannot shine in the back yard because of encroaching apartment buildings. Yet, he will not give up on the idea of planting a garden. Willy resents that he now lives in an urban area rather than rural just as he resents any

suggestion that he is a failure as a salesman. The 1951 movie does not illustrate this relationship because it does not give the needed visual imagery of the Loman house which, Dennis Welland points out, "is dwarfed by the omnipresence of the towering apartment houses all round which... are a visual equivalent to the terrible claustrophobia of the play's theme" concerning the wrong choices Willy has made and society's cruel dismissal of him now that he proves no longer vital (45).

Also contributing to the ineffectual presentations of the past, the handling of the cinematic medium incorporates too much realism into the hallucinatory sequences of the early film. The "other woman" primps in front of a pretend mirror in the Broadway production, while in the 1951 movie the mirror actually appears in front of her. The same is true of the scene where Biff and Happy are polishing Willy's car. In Miller's script of the play, the boys only carry rags that suggest the car they are polishing offstage, while in the 1951 movie the car appears. Edward Murray claims that these considerations are merely "practical" rather that "theoretical" (72). However, returning to Miller's argument concerning "literally" being transformed to the locales, the scenes lose some expressionistic quality by infusing too much reality within the hallucinations. The 1951 version never gives any visual clues to demonstrate the past and present appearing together, as it does in Willy's mind, so the additional realistic items only further justify that the

scenes present flashbacks designed merely to narrate with no deeper meaning concerning Willy's attempt to revisit and restructure his past in an effort to justify his present. Instead of being what Miller intended, a heroic man grasping for some meaning of his life, Willy appears in the 1951 film as solely a loser who has lost his senses.

Benedek also infuses too much reality in the scenes where he incorporates extras posing as people in the street and on the subway. After Howard fires Willy, Benedek's film shows Willy walking to Charley's office through the streets of New York. As he walks, he acts out an argument that he had years before with Charley. This action stuns the other people walking by who witness Willy yelling at the top of his lungs and boxing frantically at the air. One extra even intervenes and asks, "Hey buddy, you all right?" (Roberts). Willy appears too much out of control. His actions cause several reviewers of the film to wonder why no one had ever committed him to a mental institution. Edward Murray's comments concerning the 1951 film's heightened reality are representative of a large consensus among movie critics.

> To see an actor talking to himself within the highly conventional setting of a play is one thing; to see that same actor's face enlarged on the screen, revealed against a background of other faces- and still talking to himself- is vastly different. The movie Willy seems much more psychotic than the stage Willy, with the result that credibility is damaged by asking an audience to believe that such a man had not yet been confined to a mental institution. (Murray 75)

Benedek infuses an element of reality that makes Willy appear excessively unbalanced by having other people notice

him. Benedek forces attention away from the reasons that Willy has become unstable causing the audience to feel only pity for this insane man. Additionally, if Willy appears as insane, there can be no recognition scene when Biff shows Willy that he loves him despite his failures. A man who cannot respond to reality cannot acknowledge Biff's identification of the truth.

Benedek continues this episode with Willy riding on the subway. The subway passengers also react to Willy's ravings by staring at him confusedly. Benedek then moves in for a close-up of Willy's face before pulling back to reveal that the original subway riders have disappeared and in their place are Biff, Happy, Linda, Charley, and Bernard who are, supposedly, riding the subway to Ebbets Field for Biff's championship football game. Because the scene fluctuates so severely from realism, it fails to develop its symbolism. Once the camera pulls back to reveal the family and neighbors on their way to the game, it becomes a flashback sequence because no visual clues remain to illustrate that this does not represent the actual subway car that existed in Willy's past. If Benedek had only infused some visual reminder of the present during the flashback episode, the sequence could have worked as an effective metaphor for Willy and Biff's wasted lives that have travelled down a dark tunnel, like the subway car, without their control. Ultimately, the sensational image of the disappearing subway riders, replaced by Willy's family, overpowers any thematic

inference that could be made concerning the scene.

In the other hallucinatory scenes, after transforming from present to past, Benedek continually uses close-up camera shots of Willy responding to the unseen action around him. As director, Benedek should have manipulated the images of the house and surrounding buildings, instead of Willy's face, giving the set the predominant visual significance needed to allow the audience to understand their symbolic meaning of Willy's immediate world closing in around him and forcing him to come back to the reality that he can not escape. Thelma Altshuler and Richard Paul Janaro in Responses to Drama: An Introduction to Plays and Movies argue that "the setting became a constant, brooding fatalism that was implied in the writing but obviously required visual reinforcement" (323). Without benefit of the simultaneous visual clues of present and past, the metaphoric meaning of the house and the apartment buildings remains lost.

Benedek, in one scene concerning Willy's past, does achieve what Edward Murray calls "filmic fluidity of the original" play through simultaneity of images (72). In the first episode concerning the woman with whom he had an affair, Willy talks to his wife Linda about how lonely he gets on the road. The conversation causes Willy to reminisce about the time that he gave in to his loneliness and sought the comfort of another woman. Willy steps into a hallway, whose walls disappear, revealing the "other woman"

primping in front of a mirror. For an instance all three characters-- Willy, Linda, and the "other woman"-- remain held within a single framed shot, allowing the film goer to see the past and present at the same time, much as Willy sees them. In essence, this scene allows the audience inside Willy's head to see his thoughts. However, because Benedek does not continually join past and present in the subsequent transitions, much of the meaning concerning Miller's idea of the past as it lives within us in the present ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 156), becomes lost in the movie.

These scenes, as Miller himself points out, are not "flashbacks in this play but only a mobile concurrency of past and present" ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 158). Benedek, in most of the other scenes, "tried to turn the memory sequences into flashbacks," according to Brian Parker in his criticism on the play's point-of-view (29). Flashbacks are designed merely to narrate the story; whereas the scenes concerning Willy's past in Death of a Salesman were designed to demonstrate the mental workings of Willy Loman and show the audience why Willy behaves as he does through the subjective demonstration of Willy's thoughts. Through the expressionism of these scenes, Benjamin Nelson says that "the play extends the borders of realism without straining credibility because it is mirroring the processes of a distorted mind" (505). The viewer needs constantly to be aware that Willy does not actually move from the present,

but that his movement into the past represents a last minute attempt to justify his life. Willy cannot control his present any longer, so the past in which he once felt comfortable converges with his present in an effort to survive. Benjamin Nelson also stresses that Willy "is trapped by his adherence to two contradictory ways of life" (506). He goes on to emphasize his point that Willy is on

> a quest for a kind of simplicity and innocence. ...On the other hand, he is fervently determined to succeed in his contemporary competitive society. ...Unable to reconcile the dualistic nature of his quest, he has become a man divided, the agonized victim of an existence which offers him two impossible alternatives: a regression to memories of the past, or the narcotic elation of hoping for future miracles. The past and future consume him because the present has become a vacuum. (121)

By turning these episodes into typical flashback sequences, Benedek made the story of Willy Loman merely the melodrama of one man who "landed in the ash can" (132). Brian Parker makes the observation that,

> Obviously, Death of a Salesman is a criticism of the moral and social standards of contemporary America, not merely a record of the particular plight of one man. (31)

But without the expressionistic technique of showing past and present upon the same visual plane, thereby demonstrating the inner workings of Willy's mind, the past sequences appear as only realistic narrative of his earlier life. The 1951 movie does not demonstrate Miller's idea that a man "is his past at every moment and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to" ("Introduction" to Collected Plays

156). Without this cause and effect relationship, the viewer cannot understand why Willy has lost his balance. The presentation of past and present existing together demonstrates that Willy has lost his sensibility due to the choices that he made in his life. The emphasis, when using the expressionistic quality of seeing two time frames intertwined, reveals the inner workings of Willy's mind. The narrative aspect, which Benedek supplies, remains important because through these scenes the audience becomes aware of the factors that contributed to Willy's demise; however, as author and critic Benjamin Nelson says, the expressionistic "form is integral to the theme... of the play" because of the major reason that "it indicates the agonizing intensity of the salesman's search for the meaning of his life" (506). Nelson also makes the point that a clear understanding of Miller's theme "depends upon our clear awareness of the limitations of Willy's life and vision" (507). The expressionism heightens the significance of these scenes and gives them the importance they deserve. Benedek never establishes the deeper, thematic significance of the past episodes as they relate to Miller's theme concerning Willy's choosing the wrong career and his futile attempts to try and change the outcome of his past.

An example of how Benedek loses the full symbolic effect of simultaneity of images occurs in the scene where Willy prepares for bed, charged with the news that Biff will be going to see if his former boss will stake him in a

business venture. In Miller's text, Willy, reliving Biff's most glorious day at Ebbets Field, talks about,

> A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away! (60)

But as he finishes his speech, downstairs in the kitchen Biff lights a cigarette revealing the ironic juxtaposition, as Edward Murray suggests, "Upstairs, Willy recalls Biff as hero: downstairs, Biff reveals the nonhero" (73). Willy's refusal to let go of his past emphasizes, as Benjamin Nelson states, "his greatest mistake is living far too long with the wrong dreams" (505). The imagery of "light," which magnifies Miller's theme concerning the falsity of Willy's dreams, is lost in the movie because of the director's inability to demonstrate the visual simultaneity of action between Willy and Linda in their bedroom, and Biff downstairs. Miller notes in the text that "a golden pool of light" floods the stage (68), representing both the moonlight of the present and the symbolic light of Biff's past glory day at Ebbets Field. This light overpowers the small flickering light of Biff's cigarette, which symbolizes the lost intensity of his glory. The light on Willy then fades, replaced by the "blue flame" of the gas heater in the cellar (68), creating strong symbolic transposition of meanings of life and death. These images add to the exposition of Miller's theme that deals with Willy's wrong choices in life. Just because Biff was an outstanding football player does not mean that he will, likewise, be a successful entrepreneur.

The effect remains lost, however, in the 1951 film because Benedek shot the scenes separately, losing the significance of the parallels between dialogue, light, and metaphor. It would not have been impossible for the film to have mimicked the original stage design of this scene where the audience sees all action concurrently. A split screen, wide angle shot, or, as Edward Murray suggests, "some inspired and sensitively paced crosscutting by Benedek might very well have served the playwright's intentions" (73). Still, neither of these techniques can provide a presentation as stunningly powerful as a live theatrical performance where the action reveals itself at the same time.

Benedek does effectively use the image of the rubber tubing that Biff retrieves from behind the water heater. The camera focuses a close-up shot of Biff's hands holding the tubing. This shot then fades into a close-up shot of Willy's hands holding a flower that he has pulled from the back yard the next morning. Murray points out that this inventive use of imagery improves upon Miller's own images of death and life (73). The technique also reminds the viewer of Linda's warning to Biff earlier in Act One that Willy's "life is in your hands," creating an even stronger symbolic image through the use of techniques of the cinema, while at the same time enhancing Miller's theme concerning Willy's mistaken choices in life and his desire to use Biff as justification.

Benedek, in the last scene of the movie, effectively enhances another of Miller's symbols. After Willy recognizes that Biff loves him, he goes to his car and drives toward his dream of twenty thousand dollars. The 1951 film travels with Willy on his doomed drive. Willy begins to whisper, "diamonds-- diamonds." The camera then changes to Willy's vantage point to show that the stars, street lights, and neon signs are twinkling in the sky like diamonds. While his eyes remain fixed hypnotically upon the shiny images, the car skids out of control and the audience can hear it crashing into a barrier. This presentation emphasizes that since Willy cannot stop the pursuit of his dream, and because his dream remains unattainable, he has no other place to run except into a physical wall, which emphasize the metaphysical walls that have been closing in around him.

There are other scenes in the 1951 film that compare to or improve upon the exposition of Miller's theme concerning a man weary from leading a wasted life and trying to find justification for his decisions. Benedek frames the opening shot behind the salesman as he drives his car slowly across the George Washington Bridge. The sample cases, set up in the back seat of the car, tower across the screen in the foreground. Their close proximity with the camera magnifies them unrealistically. The image of the salesman, in the top left corner of the screen, looks pitiful in comparison with the massive cases. Visually they command the same symbolic

effect that the house and buildings should, in that they create an image of hugeness closing in around the salesman. Additionally, his bowed shoulders show the effect of carrying the sample cases for many years. Immediately the audience senses how Willy's entrepreneurial quest has drained him of his lifeblood, corroborated when Willy later tells Linda, "I'm tired to death" (13).

While the sample cases loom in the background, Willy struggles painfully to keep his car on the road, constantly moving closer to the steering wheel because of his failing vision and wandering mind, while the other cars, like his life, pass him by. Willy barely moves in comparison with the other motorists. He appears as someone merely in the way of others, which echoes Howard's later statement that he needs Willy out of his way in order to see the "line of people" who are waiting for interviews with him (84). Robert Warshow says that the early "sequence represents the film's most intelligent use of March's body," which he says, unfortunately, later has a "constant overemphasi[s] on bowed shoulders, worried eyes and forehead, [and] middle aged belly," turning Willy more into a caricature than character (275). The presentation of Willy as a caricature causes him to lose respectability so that an audience member would not seriously consider his plight as relating to any normal member of society. Benedek does his best work in this scene where Willy's environment relates to his body, showing both cause and effect, instead of just the effect,

which Benedek offers through most of the film. In this scene and in the film's final scene, Benedek offers the viewer the chance to see things from Willy's vantage point.

Benedek, by shooting the salesman from behind, gives the viewer a chance to not only view the salesman, but also to experience his perspective through the front windshield of the car. The camera angle puts the viewer in Willy's back seat. The traffic, representing Willy's world racing past him, proves to be an effective metaphor. The viewer in Benedek's production can see the road ahead of Willy, stretching to an endless point somewhere at the horizon, a point that seems impossible for Willy to reach in comparison with the other cars quickly moving toward it. The literal bridge that Willy crosses reflects the symbolic bridge in Willy's life where he can no longer go out on the road. For the first time, Willy had to turn around and come back home. He can no longer move forward. No more the vital salesman of the past, he later confesses to Linda that the problem is not the car.

> 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. (13)

This episode in the text proves to be one of his few moments Willy recognizes the truth. The opening scene, more than any in the film, provides the viewer with a visual example of why Willy has begun to lose his mind. The viewer can understand and empathize with Willy in this scene because Benedek concurrently presents visual clues of both the cause

and effect of Willy's predicament on screen.

Willy fights to deny the recognition of the harsh truth of his present life in the restaurant scene. He listens to Biff, who tries to tell the truth about the meeting with Oliver. He has now come to the point where even the past cannot tranquilize his thoughts. He says, "I haven't got a story [read lie] left in my head" (107). During this scene, Linda and Bernard act out the truth concerning Biff's failing math. The 1951 film handles the past episode by panning to one side of Willy's close-up face and revealing, through the use of a split screen, the action of Bernard telling Linda that Biff has failed math. The film technique effectively demonstrates the concurrency of past and present. It remains obvious that the scene does not represent a flashback due to the expressionistic style in which Benedek presents it. The scene shows Willy's loss of control over his past. The very next scene concerning Willy's past is the Boston hotel sequence that ruined Willy's facade in the eyes of Biff.

Unfortunately, the Boston hotel scene, like most of the past scenes of the 1951 movie, resembles a flashback sequence. The viewer easily forgets that Willy remembers this sequence while in the restaurant washroom. In order for the irony of the washroom-- a place where one goes to clean his or herself-- to be effective, the audience must be continually aware of its presence during the scene. The 1951 movie wipes this image from the mind of the viewer once

the flashback overtakes the scene. This scene especially needs to remain intact as Miller intended because it represents Willy's coming face to face with what he has been hiding from all these years; the falsity of his life and how it was discovered by Biff. The bathroom scene becomes Willy's start toward recognition of his failures and sets up the next scene in which he can accept that Biff loves him despite a lack of entrepreneurial stature by societal standards. The alteration of this scene, because of the loss of symbolism and absence of concurrency of past and present, weakens its value toward exposing Miller's theme of the harshness of entrepreneurial endeavors upon a man ill-suited for the falsity of the profession. The filming in a manner which suggests a flashback prevents the viewer from seeing that the events represent a portrayal of Willy's thoughts.

Miller says that his original title for Death of a Salesman was The Inside of His Head, and notes that,

> The first image that occurred to me which was to result in Death of a Salesman was of an enormous face the height of the proscenium arch which would appear and open up, and we would see the inside of a man's head. ("Introduction" to Collected Plays 155)

A major failing point of the 1951 film lies in its inability to allow the audience to see symbolically inside of Willy's head, to experience, visually, the mental workings of the aged salesman. In short, the objective viewpoint inherent in a movie's design, the exposition of that which is external to the mind, hinders the exhibition of Miller's

theme concerning a character battleworn from the pressures of trying to gain success in a cruel society that dismisses those who have become useless in providing material gain, a theme which demands that the viewer see the mental battles in which Willy Loman engages.

The simultaneity of past and present prevails as the key element in fully establishing the symbolic meanings of Miller's play. The proven style of effectively presenting past and present on a concurrent plane remains the expressionistic design that Miller originally conceived in his text. Much of the effectiveness is lost, however, when trying to make a movie out of Death of a Salesman. The inherent tendency of cinema is to portray its images realistically, thus altering the story to make it appear as an objective portrayal, while the play in which it is adapted remains a subjective story and represents the presentation of the inner thoughts of Willy Loman. Although film techniques can visually enhance some of the symbols in the play, the 1951 movie adaptation ultimately fails because of its inability to demonstrate visual concurrency of past and present and its weakness in sustaining expressionistic qualities throughout the story. Miller's theme concerning the harshness of society on an individual who proves ill-suited for his career choice is lost in the 1951 film because of its lack of effective imagery. This flaw, combined with a lack of simultaneous images from Willy's past and present to demonstrate the futility of Willy's

attempt to recreate his past, provided an unfaithful production of Miller's Death of a Salesman. The next chapter will discuss how the textual changes also contributed to the 1951 film's ineffectual presentation of the original play.

ALTERATIONS OF THE TEXT OF DEATH OF A SALESMAN IN THE FILMED VERSION OF 1951

When Columbia Pictures transferred the play to the cinema in 1951, the changes made to Miller's text of Death of a Salesman alter various symbols that contribute to the main theme concerning Willy's misguided career goal and his subsequent attempt to deal with his mistake. The text changes in the 1951 film also alter the roles of many of the characters, thus changing their significance in supporting Miller's theme concerning the fate of a man who chooses the wrong dream in life. Combined with the distortions caused by the inherent quality of the medium, the text changes violate Miller's original intent to create a modern tragedy concerning a man blinded by the entrepreneurial qualities of society, which cause him to choose the wrong career, into a melodrama dealing with the last day in the life of a mentally unstable man.

Certain symbolic motifs play an important role in the exposition of Death of a Salesman. Miller used them to develop essential parts of the main theme concerning the effects of a man trying to deal with the wrong choices he has made in his life and his subsequent striving to justify what he comes to realize has been a wasted existence. The alteration or absence of these motifs alters the author's

original design. For example, in the play the Loman's cellar represents both life and death for Willy and his oldest son Biff. The first mention of the cellar comes in the first act during Willy's initial episode concerning his past. Linda informs Biff,

> you better go down to your friends, Biff. The cellar is full of boys. They don't know what to do with themselves. (34)

This scene reveals Biff as a leader of his peers and the cellar becomes a training ground for his pseudo-monarchy. Biff tells his father, "I think I'll have them sweep out the furnace room," to which Willy replies, "Good work, Biff" (34). The irony of this episode lies in the fact that Biff does not become "a leader of men," as he comes to realize in the final act of the play (132). Willy's suggestion to Biff that getting others to do work for him exemplifies "good work" demonstrates Willy's warped work ethic perpetuated by the society in which he lives (34). William Beyer points out that "Willy has brought up his sons to follow the same superficial approach to life and has encouraged them in petty dishonesty and duplicity to gain their ends" ("State of the Theatre" 229). Beyer also says that,

> Obviously a neurotic love between father and son is the basis of Biff's social maladjustment, for, since he worships and seeks to emulate his father, he, too, never matures and so gambles on false illusions. (228-229)

The 1951 film, however, deletes the first mention of the cellar, thereby losing its full significance as a training ground for Biff to practice his father's teachings. When

Linda, in the original text admires, "The way they obey him," Willy replies, "Well, that's training, the training" (34). Yet, Willy's "training" only pulls his sons into the same predicament in which he has become stuck and begins to force his sons down the same wrong path (34).

While the cellar becomes the birthing ground for Willy's warped work ethic to be passed from father and son, it also represents death since his teachings are tainted with qualities that have no substance in the real world. The audience can only view the full significance of the cellar, as Miller originally intended, when its subsequent appearances in the play are contrasted with its first appearance. When the movie audience learns that Biff burns his college inscribed shoes in the cellar furnace, they are unaware of the original appearance of the cellar as a victorious place for Biff. The audience can not, therefore, contrast the incident with the original significance of the cellar which would give additional tension to the incident of Biff's burning his shoes, symbolically burning his college future. Where once he ruled, Biff later has to fight, as he does with Bernard after he learns the falsity of Willy's life. The cellar represents death for Willy as well, revealed in the fact that Linda finds the rubber pipe behind the cellar furnace. The cellar becomes symbolic of a place where the notion "like father, like son" exists in a corrupted manner. The irony of the cellar parallels the irony of Willy's life which has been because of the wrong

choices he has made.

Not by coincidence, Miller continually uses the word "cellar" instead of basement. "Cellar" rhymes with the word "seller," the occupation of Willy Loman. The work ethic of the "seller" becomes a crucial element in the play. Willy battles his entire life with the falsity of his profession. After Charley tells him, "the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that," Willy replies, "I've always tried to think otherwise, I guess" (97). Harold Clurman calls Death of a Salesman "a challenge to the American dream" ("Success Dream" 212), but by lessening the impact of the symbolism of the cellar through the deletion of its critical first appearance in the play, it becomes hard to make the connection between the "American dream" and the resulting "death of a salesman."

Another important symbol that screenwriter Stanley Roberts alters in the 1951 film weakens the garden motif. This symbol remains an important element in establishing Miller's theme concerning Willy's ill-chosen profession because it demonstrates Willy's innate need to return to the type of work with which he feels more comfortable and better suited. In the original text, after Willy remembers the hotel incident in Boston, he comes out of the restaurant washroom to find that his sons have abandoned him. Heartbroken, he asks the waiter, Stanley, "Tell me-- is there a seed store in the neighborhood?" (122). Willy needs seeds because, as he says in the text when he exits the restaurant,

> 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 anything in the ground. (122)

Willy's declaration that "I don't have anything in the ground" reflects his feeling of rejection at his sons' cruel actions (122). His anxiousness represents his realization that his life is spent. He, therefore, reverts to the basic, intuitive need to return to the earth. The placement of this action immediately after the abandonment of his sons is critical to demonstrate effectively the full symbolic implication of the garden motif. Its absence in the film leaves what Miller calls a "flatness" in the story (Timebends: A Life 314). When Stanley goes into the washroom to see if Willy needs help, the original text and the movie shows him in the midst of a hallucinatory episode telling Biff,

> I gave you an order! Biff, come back here or I'll beat you! Come back here! I'll whip you! (121)

The irony of the scene exists in the fact that Willy's "order" to Biff no longer has any meaning (121). From Biff's uncovering his father's charade, Willy has had no authoritative control over his sons. He realizes, when he comes out to find his sons gone, that he has lost control of his family. No longer can he hide within a pleasant moment from the past. Even the past no longer offers sanctuary from the reality of his life. He must now face the fact that he has made mistakes in the past. The need to plant, to leave something behind that will survive and grow,

intuitively enters Willy's mind. He begins to purge himself of his worldly goods. He tells Stanley in both the movie and original text,

> Here-- here's a dollar. ...Here-- here's some more, I don't need it any more. (121-122)

Willy begins to divorce himself from the world and its trappings. Thomas E. Porter points out that "Willy, who was going to mine diamonds in Brooklyn, reverts to hoeing and planting, but the urbanization of his world has already defeated him" (40). Additionally, Stuart B. James says that Willy's "planting of the seeds... is his bumbling attempt to reestablish some lost relationship with the earth, some rapport with an order of nature long lost to urban man" (45). Willy yearns to return to the natural state of man in a world devoid of mortgages, inner city crowding, and broken fan belts, and inappreciative sons. The film keeps all this but loses one of the best symbols for making clear Willy's mental state at the end.

The 1951 film's screenwriter, Stanley Roberts, also omits the washroom in the hotel scene that occurs just before Willy's sons leave him babbling in the toilet. During the scene in the movie, instead of hiding the "other woman" in his room's washroom when Biff knocks unexpectedly, Willy sends her through the door of an adjoining room. This makes the scene much less forceful than in the original text where the girl enters from the washroom and must exit down the hall while scantily dressed. It also weakens the irony of the washroom. The washroom customarily represents a

place where one cleans oneself. For Willy, however, in the original text it is the place where his life was soiled after the "other woman" reveals herself to Biff and exposes the falsity of Willy's life. By having the woman emerge from her own room, the film supplies Willy a valid opportunity to explain the woman's sudden appearance to Biff. He begins to tell his son that "she's just a buyer" (120). With Willy's gift for coming up with a good story, it seems implausible, given the circumstances created in the movie due to addition of the adjoining door, that Willy would have given up so easily in explaining why the woman suddenly came into his room. The producers may have requested the change in the story in order to mitigate the sexual situation of the scene. Whatever the reason, lessening the sexual nature of the scene makes Biff's accusations against his father appear unwarranted.

Even more baffling, however, is why the screenwriter omits mention of Willy's inventor father who left Willy, his mother, and brother Ben when Willy was very young. In the play, Willy's father becomes a character in his own right through the refrain of the flute music. The flute music remains intact in the movie, but without the audience knowing Willy's father played and sold the instruments, the music has no meaning for the viewer. It remains an important part of the story, however, for the audience to understand that Willy compares the success of his life to the idealized, delusional example of his pioneer father who,

Ben says, "With one gadget made more in a week than a man like [Willy] could make in a lifetime" (49). In the process, however, Willy's father broke up their family. Never able to settle for mediocrity, like Charley, Willy strives at being the best father and the best salesman he can and fails miserably at both because of his belief in the superficial qualities of society. Willy's father remains a crucial element that Miller placed in the story to explain part of Willy's drive that keeps him "way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine," as Charley observes in the requiem (138). The flute music, besides being identified with Willy's father, also has a lilting, dreamlike quality that echoes Willy's unstable behavior, and because the film omits mention of Willy's father, the flute music heightens his instability. Additionally it represents, as Brian Parker reveals,

> the rural way of life, ...telling of "grass and trees and the horizon;" it is heard only by Willy when he dreams of the life he should have led or of the early days when his suburb was still in the country. (28)

The success of Willy's father represents for Willy what could have been had he stuck to his frontier nature and tried to build a future working with his hands.

Whistling also plays an important symbolic role in the play. The 1951 film, however, deletes many of the instances where whistling occurs in the original text. In the play, when Howard turns on his recording machine, the first sounds are of Howard's daughter, and then Howard, whistling. This

comes after a scene in which Happy berates Biff's business sense for whistling in the elevator, saying, "You don't raise a guy to a responsible job who whistles in the elevator?" (60). Later, Willy echoes Happy's assertion by pointing out that "Bernard does not whistle in the elevator" (61). Bernard does whistle, though, while he waits in his father's office, as Miller's text reads, "Bernard, now mature, sits whistling to himself" (90). By condemning whistling in the work place, Willy demonstrates the superficial nature of what he incorrectly deems as appropriate social behavior. He feels that whistling demonstrates irresponsibility, yet, as Miller reveals through the other characters, a successful person can certainly whistle. Biff points out that Willy also has been guilty of whistling in the elevator (61). Even Willy's boss and children whistle. The sound represents contentment and success. Willy resents the practice because it reminds him of his failure. The 1951 film deletes the comments, however, that Willy makes about whistling and replaces it on Howard's recorder with singing thus losing the ironic connection between Willy's ill-chosen ideas about whistling and his tendency incorrectly to dwell on minor, insignificant matters.

The scene with the recorder also serves to demonstrate the oddly parallel lives of Willy and his boss, Howard. Not only does Howard's whistling parallel Willy, the badgering of his wife, which Roberts also cut from the movie, and the

adulation of his children that Willy hears coming from the recorder also demonstrate the similarity of lives of the two businessmen. Benjamin Nelson says that Howard represents "a younger embodiment of [Willy's] own traits" (510). The recorder shows that the two men are still human beings on the same level. Their difference lies in the fact that Howard appears suited for the business world because he is willing to sacrifice his soul for the return of a profitable business. Howard is able to dehumanize his workers, see them as only sales margins that appear on business reports that indicate their profitability on the road. Howard's preoccupation with the recorder while Willy bares his soul to him about his bad predicament displays what Benjamin Nelson says represents "Miller's bitter commentary on a society in which man's involvement with the machine has replaced responsibility to his fellow man" (510). When Willy knocks the recorder and accidentally turns it on, the voices that come from the speakers appear frightening to Willy because they emulate his life at home. He then observes the callousness of Howard and does not want to see himself as the same. The accidental bump of the machine not only wakes Willy from the hallucinatory episode into which he escapes after Howard fires him, but also demonstrates the mechanization of society with which cannot deal. The loss of humanity motivates Willy to lecture Howard with great lucidity:

> In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude

> in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance to bring friendship to bear-- or personality. (81)

The encounter with Howard frightens Willy so excessively that it prompts his mental breakdown and reveals that breakdown's cause. Benjamin Nelson also makes the observation that "Willy's hysterical inability to switch [the recorder] off suggests his helplessness before a life that has careened out of control" (510). The absence in the film of the elements of whistling and the demonstration of Howard rudely prodding his wife on the recorder denies a crucial symbolic demonstration of the reason for Willy's suffering; the fact that he does not fit into the world in which he has chosen.

Roberts also leaves out the scene in which Linda receives a phone call from Biff after he and Willy each go out to try to make business deals. Like the scenes concerning whistling, this scene also demonstrates the irony in Willy's life. When he and Biff leave, Willy actually believes they both will be successful in their respective bids concerning business ventures. The phone call demonstrates the falsity of this belief. Linda answers the phone pleased that Biff has called because she "was just dying to tell" him that when she went down to get the rubber pipe that Willy connected to the gas heater, it was gone (75). Linda assumes that Willy removed it. Her hopeful assumption is shattered, however, as Biff reveals that it was he who removed the pipe and not Willy, thus

foreshadowing self-deception that characterizes the Loman household, particularly Willy's view of himself as a businessperson. Instead of giving Willy a new job, Howard fires him. Instead of Biff getting Oliver to stake him in the "Florida idea," Biff reverts back to his kleptomania and steals Oliver's fountain pen (104). The absence of the phone call ruins the effect of a crucially placed scene that enhances the original play by keeping the audience constantly aware that Willy's confidence and dreams are unrealistic.

Not only do the text changes to the play alter certain symbols created by Miller, but they also redefine the roles of certain characters. The text changes most affect the role of Happy. Edward Murray says that he found "the more sympathetic handling of Happy in the film" to be "puzzling" (71).

In altering the character of Happy, Roberts dismisses many of the sexual innuendos that exude from him. Because of this, Happy does not resemble Miller's description which says, "Sexuality is like a visible color on him, or a scent that many women have discovered" (19). The restaurant scene most reflects the gross alteration of his character. In this scene, Happy picks up a young woman sitting at another table. He asks her to call a girl friend so that Biff will also have a date. In Miller's text, the girls return and Biff introduces them to Willy, who has arrived in the meantime. Willy begins to hear his name called over a loud

speaker and asks directions to the washroom. After he leaves, Happy gathers up the girls to leave the bar. When they ask about his father, Happy denies Willy as his father and instead says, "He's just a guy" (115). In the 1951 film, however, Willy never sees the girls and so the opportunity for Happy to deny his father never materializes. However, Happy's denial of his father remains a necessary link in understanding Miller's theme concerning the wrong choices Willy has made in his life. Happy and Willy mirror each other in the dark aspects of their characters. Willy has denied Happy all of his life because Happy presents a living reminder of Willy's mistakes, for he embodies all the worst qualities of Willy, the philandering, the lying, the cheating. Happy's denial of Willy remains a crucial element because it emphasizes the sins of the father being revisited upon the son. Happy's denial of his father epitomizes the wasted life that Willy has led.

This scene is important also in demonstrating the contrast in the growth of the character of Biff and the stagnation of the character of Happy. Biff, in the original text, introduces his father proudly to the girls saying, when Willy goes to the washroom,

> Miss Forsythe, you've just seen a prince walk by. A fine, troubled prince. A hardworking, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion. Always for his boys. (114)

This scene demonstrates Biff's developing respect for his father despite Willy's denial of his true self and embracing the wrong choices in life. Its absence from the 1951 film

is unfortunate because it denies the viewer of an integral part of the growth of Biff's character.

Stanley Roberts also alters another critical scene involving Biff's growth toward recognizing himself and appreciating his father. In the first act, Miller's text includes a conversation that Willy has with Linda concerning Biff's attitude toward work. In the film, however, Willy talks directly to Biff about these concerns. The rearrangement of this scene ruins the suspense of having the characters contemplating their relationship independent of one another before coming face to face. Biff's first impression of his father should reveal itself as Miller originally intended. In the text, Biff first sees his father babbling to himself in the midst of one of his hallucinatory episodes. It proves important that Biff's first vision of his father, after his return, causes him to begin to feel pity for Willy. Biff has fought an ingrained resentment against his father for a long time, and it must be counterbalanced by the visual image of his father on the edge of his sanity in order for Biff to begin to grow toward respect for Willy and to pursue the businessman's dream when he visits Oliver. In the 1951 movie, since Willy's first confrontation with Biff comes face to face, Biff sees his father as the same uncompromising fake as when he first left. It becomes a much different scene having Biff and Willy face off on the issues of Biff's laziness rather than allowing Biff merely to overhear the conversation. Face to

face disallows objectivity and keeps Biff on the defensive. By keeping Biff physically apart from Willy as the play opens, Miller presents Biff with the opportunity to consider objectively his father's problem and allows him to begin to establish some compassion for his father's predicament.

In the same scene, Biff first explores the idea of asking his old boss, Oliver, about staking him in a business deal. Biff is caught between the dichotomy which Miller authority Neil Carson says is "Willy's determination to make Biff into a success in capitalistic terms, and [Biff's] search for a more valid life as a man who works with his hands" (47). Biff must take one last shot at applying the things that Willy has taught him before he can realize the mistake of putting value in lies. Biff justifies to himself that Oliver will not remember that he "stole that carton of basketballs" (26). It takes sitting in the lobby all day long waiting for Oliver to see him for Biff finally to take time to think clearly and sort out the lies that he has lived in his life, and come to realize who he truly is. In the waiting room, where Biff sits waiting for an opportunity to walk through the door and shake Oliver's hand, he comes to realize that people must make their lives what they want by using the skills and knowledge that they possess. It takes one more attempt by Biff to grasp at the unattainable for him to realize he could wait his entire life and never become what he thinks society and his father expect of him. Roberts also cuts out the lines where Biff tells Happy of his contentment working on a ranch.

> There's nothing more inspiring or-- beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. (22)

Although he did not make much money working on farms around the country, at least he felt content with himself and could identify the true values in life. Roberts deletion of this information as the play opens denies the viewer with crucial information necessary in understanding the degree to which Biff is pursuing a lie when he goes to see Oliver and his following recognition scene. Roberts may have cut certain lines in this scene and rearranged the conversation between Willy and Linda to include Biff in order to speed the action of the film and keep the running time of the movie to around two hours. By altering it, however, he denies the audience needed information in seeing the development of Biff's respect for his father. Miller laid a map of crucial paths for Biff to follow to come to a recognition of the truth about himself and his father. By changing Miller's design, Roberts leaves a hole in Biff's path toward the growth of his character, making the recognition scene less believable.

Still, by far, Roberts handling of the role of Ben, Willy's adventurous brother, whose refrain "-- And, by God, I was rich!" (52), illustrates the quality of Ben's success, proves the most unusual alteration. Willy admires Ben's simplistic description of his success and never questions what happened between the years that Ben was seventeen and twenty-one. Rather, Willy wants to "imbue" his children with the same superficial "spirit" as Ben (52). Because of the absence of Willy's father in the movie, Ben takes on a

distinct significance as a replacement father-figure for Willy. In the movie, when Willy finally decides to kill himself, Ben pushes Willy toward his death; whereas in the original play, he at first tries to bring him around to reason. Stanley Roberts accomplishes this by rearranging portions of Willy and Ben's lines, reversing their respective roles. In the original text the lines read,

> Willy: ...What a proposition, ts, ts. Terrific, terrific. '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?
>
> Ben, standing still, considering: What's the proposition?
>
> Willy: It's twenty thousand dollars on the barrelhead. Guaranteed, gilt-edged, you understand? (125-126)

The movie script, however, reads,

> Willy: Ben, there must be something I can do. There must be some solution. She's suffered. The woman has suffered, you understand me. And, Biff. He'd be different if he only had something to take hold of. It's up to me, Ben. A man's got to add up to something.
>
> Ben: William, there is one proposition.
>
> Willy: Tell me, Ben, tell me.
>
> Ben: Twenty-thousand-dollars on the barrelhead, guaranteed. (Roberts)

The movie has Ben provide Willy with the "proposition" rather than Willy initiating the scheme concerning the

insurance money. This alteration forces the movie audience to think that the idea of suicide come from a combination of Willy's deranged hallucination and Ben's prodding rather than out of his thoughtful consideration of having no other alternatives and the suicide being his only last attempt to justify his wasted life. The movie makes Willy appear to be merely a psychotic individual who succumbs to the pressures of his insanity as embodied in the ghostly visage of Ben. The film continues in this scene to alter the characterization of Willy and Ben. The original text continues,

> Ben: You don't want to make a fool of yourself. They might not honor the policy.
>
> Willy: How can they dare refuse? Didn't I work like a coolie to meet every premium on the nose? And now they don't pay off? Impossible! (126)

The film, however, continues,

> Willy: Guilt-edged! Terrific-- terrific! Only-- only they might not honor the policy.
>
> Ben: Impossible! You've paid all your premiums religiously. (Roberts)

In the film, Willy questions Ben about the likelihood of the insurance company not paying off on the policy. The film, however, portrays Ben as a more commanding influence on Willy as he asserts that it would be "Impossible!" for the insurance not to pay off. Ben's releasing Willy of responsibility causes gaping holes in the original play as being a contemporary example of tragedy. The film cannot produce tragedy because all accountability for Willy's actions is cut short due to Ben's dominance over Willy's

decision. The movie continues in the scene to avert liability of action away from Willy. Miller's original text continues,

> Ben: It's called a cowardly thing, William.
>
> Willy: Why? Does it take more guts to stand here the rest of my life ringing up a zero? (126)

The film again reverses the speakers.

> Willy: It's wrong, Ben. It's the wrong thing to do. Cowardly.
>
> Ben: Why? Does it take more courage to stand here and ring up a zero? (Roberts)

The alteration hinders a good example of Willy's awareness that his life has been wasted. Ironically, in the original text the passage also demonstrates the limitations of Willy's vision because he cannot see that this final act, like all of his others, will also "ring up a zero." The film falters in showing the lucidity of Willy's decision. Ben, in the original text, continues to warn Willy about the consequences of his actions.

> Ben: coming down to the edge of the garden: ...He'll call you a coward.
>
> Willy: suddenly fearful: No, that would be terrible.
>
> Ben: Yes. And a damned fool.
>
> Willy: No, no, he mustn't. I won't have that! He is broken and desperate.
>
> Ben: He'll hate you, William. (127)

Stanley Roberts script, however, continues to have Ben push Willy toward his suicide.

> Willy: I don't know, Ben. Once this house used to be so full of life and comradeship-- and good

> news. They never even let me carry my valises into the house. Polishing that new car-- polishing. No, if only I had something to give him-- that boy could be so great!
>
> Ben: William?
>
> Willy: Huh?
>
> Ben: Twenty-thousand is something you can feel with the hand. It's there.
>
> Willy: He might hate me for it, Ben. Why can't I give him something and not have him hate me. I don't know, Ben. I'll have to think it over.
>
> Ben: Don't waste time, William. It's a sound proposition.
>
> Willy: You're sure I wouldn't be making a fool of myself? (Roberts)

The shifting of roles causes serious problems concerning Willy's motivation to kill himself. In the original text Willy asks Ben's advice concerning the "ins and outs" of the "proposition" (125). Ben becomes the embodiment of reason for Willy during this scene. Ben warns Willy that the idea may have the opposite effect of what he desires in the end. He suggests that Biff may hate Willy for the sacrifice rather than respect him.

Miller points out in the original text that Willy has choices and it remains his decision as to what choices he should make. He does realize that his actions go against social standards because he tells Ben, "I've got nobody to talk to" (125). He makes his decision based on the idea that the ends will justify the means. In the film, however, Willy actually has no other choice but to commit suicide because not only does he feel the pressures of society

pushing him toward his death, he has no voice of reason to warn him of the consequences of his actions. The Willy of the 1951 film has no voice of reason because he appears too insane to identify it. Because of the absence of sensibility, the death of a salesman in the film has no deeper meaning. Willy does not elicit catharsis but only pity. He does not convey Miller's original intent to present "a very brave spirit who cannot settle for half but must pursue his dream of himself to the end" (168). Roberts denies Willy the significance of nobility he deserves. Willy ends his life as he lived it, by making the wrong choice. For Miller's indictment against the American system to become evident, however, the scene must show Willy making up his mind independent of Ben's influence. In the original play, Willy argues against Ben's warning and tries one last time to succeed, still trying to justify his wasted life. The movie, however, shows Willy making the right choice and has Ben, who is in Willy's mind, push Willy to change his mind and commit suicide. This only corroborates the presentation of Willy as insane without regard to the factors that made him unstable.

Still, more than anything, the text changes that Stanley Roberts made to the original script of Death of a Salesman lessen the importance of several symbols as they relate to the main theme concerning the wrong decisions Willy made. The reasons that he weakened the play's message remains unclear. Miller blames the director and

screenwriter who he says were "afraid of the subject matter at that time" (Interview 1). The movie did come out at the beginning of the cold war era, and the movie's producer, Stanley Kramer, even produced a short propaganda film, that was to be shown at the beginning of Death of a Salesman, which included interviews with business professors extolling the trade of salesmanship. These supposed experts point out that, contrary to the ideas of the film the viewer will see, selling remains one of the most respected professions that a man could pursue. Miller refused to let the studio show the short film to the public and later called an it an example of "cultural McCarthyism" (Interview 1). Whatever the reasons, Miller's assertion that he "can't approve of [the 1951 movie] as expressing the play" seems understandable considering the ill considered editing that Stanley Roberts made without regard to the damage caused to Miller's original theme concerning the entrepreneurial pressures American society exerts on man (Letter to author).

THE 1966 AND 1985 TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS OF DEATH OF A SALESMAN

To date the only other filmed versions of Death of a Salesman aired on television in 1966 and in 1985. For two main reasons these adaptations prove more faithful in the exposition of Miller's theme concerning the failed American dream. First, where the 1951 film shows weaknesses in the development of Miller's theme, the two television versions avoid the mistakes of the first film. Second, where the 1951 film contributes to the theme, the later versions tend to follow the good example set by the earlier film.

Arthur Miller maintained a close involvement with the television productions. Whereas he remained busy working on the writing of other plays during the making of the 1951 version, he made time to oversee the development of the two television films of his play. Both directors of the later productions filmed Death of a Salesman as a play instead of adapting it into a movie, replete with the realism that pervades most film productions. Both presented it on stage with the camera following the action. The result proved to be two versions that were much more faithful interpretations of the original play.

Like the 1951 film, the screenplay writer of the 1966 television version of Death of a Salesman made certain edits to the play. Miller says that "about forty minutes was cut from the stage play" (qtd. in Frank 8). The difference between the two films lies in which sections the screenplay

writers cut. Whereas Stanley Roberts, the screenplay writer for the 1951 version, edited certain crucial dialogue and symbols that relate directly to the exposition of Miller's theme, Alex Segal, the screenwriter for the 1966 version, only deleted parts of scenes and dialogue that were not thematically significant. Miller said in a TV Guide interview that he approved of each cut that Segal made to the play and insisted that "instead of changing it for TV, [Segal] made the medium fit the play" (qtd. in Frank 8, 10). Instead of merely chopping off sections of scenes to reduce the running time of the play for television, and allow more room for commercials, Segal carefully chose only those edits that would not hinder the play's powerful theme. Miller also says,

> Another important point is that the force of the play was not weakened or compromised for a sponsor's approval (qtd. in Frank 10).

After dealing with producer Stanley Kramer's fear of black listing from the McCarthy forces in 1951, Miller knew how the capital investors could be moved to attempt to weaken the play's message because of fear of retaliation from certain groups, especially those groups affiliated with the selling profession.

For the 1985 television production, Miller remained even more closely involved in the production, this time working as an unpaid screenwriter. Miller, with this production, may have presented his play as close to his original intent as any of the film productions to date. The

1985 version remains the only filmed document identified as "Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman," rather than "Death of a Salesman, based on a play by Arthur Miller." Like the 1966 adaptation, the 1985 film presented the play as it exists on stage. Miller accepted director Volker Schlondorff's visual style, which Schlondorff describes,

> I thought we could film inside the play, not at the play, so to speak, as long as the camera was able to roam and follow the action as it unfolded on stage (Strick 232).

Schlondorff was careful to maintain all visual images that were necessary in establishing symbolic significance related to Miller's theme. Very few close-ups were used so that the environment surrounding the actors could establish their symbolic importance in relation to the actor. For example, the camera pans back, in a wide angle shot, during the hallucinatory scenes to demonstrate that Willy remains stuck in his wasted present, despite his mental lapses into the past. Miller made only minimal edits and The Columbia Broadcasting System allotted an hour longer than with the 1966 version which also played on CBS.

Whereas director Laslo Benedek diminished the effect of the expressionistic set in the 1951 film by not giving it the visual significance needed to demonstrate its relationship to Willy, both directors of the television plays provided effective presentations of the stage set. The set has its greatest importance in the scenes concerning Willy's past. Both television versions effectively adapted the same visual image as the 1949 Broadway play by using a

wide angle camera shot during the episodes concerning Willy's past, as opposed to the close-ups used in 1951. The viewer needs to visualize constantly what Miller termed "a mobile concurrency of past and present" ("Introduction to Collected Plays" 159). He realized that on film "the movie's tendency is always to wipe out what has gone before" ("Introduction to Collected Plays" 159-160). The only way that film consistently draws the viewer's attention to a particular visual image is through a continual showing of that image on the screen.

Miller acknowledges the swiftness that film can tell a story but also makes the point that "neither is there a more difficult medium in which to keep a pattern of relationships constantly in being" ("Introduction to Collected Plays" 160). Both television versions deal with this problem by refraining from the excessive use of the close-up camera shots used in the 1951 film that eliminate the relationship of the surroundings to the actor. The relationship between the past converging with the present, Miller says, "was the heart of the play's particular construction" (Introduction to Collected Plays" 160). The tension of the ominous present against Willy's idealized past provides the viewer with a visual clue that enhances the futility of Willy's belief that he can change the present by redefining his past.

To retain the expressionism of the play, the 1966 production used a stage set extremely similar in design and

function to the original 1949 Broadway production set designed by Jo Mielziner. Likewise, the set for the 1985 version retains the same expressionistic bareness that emphasizes the metaphoric meaning of the house and surrounding buildings. The walls of Willy's house do not meet in these versions, and there are no ceilings, allowing the audience to see both inside and out at the same time. Directly behind the house lie the apartment buildings, large and massive, ready to swallow up Willy's modest home. The set demonstrates the food chain of the city, where only the big can survive. Like his house that once stood alone, Willy at one time may have been a shining "big shot" salesman opening "up unheard-of territories" to his business's "trademark" (62, 56), but now he has spent his usefulness and he must make way for new, vital salesmen, just as his house must make way for city expansion. Willy's house once securely lay in the country surrounded by trees and green hills, but now the concrete walls of apartment buildings surround the Loman house. Similarly, Willy was once secure in his job, but now feels the pressure of others crowding him out. The encroaching apartment buildings mirror Willy's inner turmoil of being pushed out. To see the cause and effect situation, this visual image must remain intact in the transitions of past and present for the viewer to identify the relationship between the symbolic visual image of the inner city crowding that reflects the inner turmoil of Willy Loman being forced out of his job.

The 1951 version clearly lost this important image by using cinematic techniques; the later versions kept it by altering the medium to fit the play.

Other effective uses of expressionism allow the later films to achieve a clarity of symbolism that was lost in the early film. For example, the 1966 version retains the significance of the washroom in the Boston hotel scene by using a set design that conforms to the author's aim to present the past and present on the same plane. In the 1966 film when Willy goes into the restaurant washroom, the lights fade in sections of the restaurant and illuminate other areas of the stage to reveal the Boston hotel. The washroom of the restaurant then doubles as the washroom of the hotel. The visual transformation takes place in full view of the audience so the fact that Willy does not actually move to the hotel of the past is evident. Similarly, the ironic symbolism of the washroom that stains Willy's life remains intact because of the presentation of the scene as originally conceived in Miller's text. Whereas the 1951 version omits the symbolism of the washroom by having the "other woman" emerge from an adjoining door, both the 1966 and 1985 television productions keep the washroom's symbolic significance intact.

Another example of how expressionistic staging embraces Miller's theme occurs in the scene where Willy walks to Charley's office after being fired from his job. The 1951 version infuses an unnecessary element of reality during the

scene by having the extras notice and respond to Willy's disturbed behavior during the hallucinatory episode he experiences as he walks. The extras responding to Willy's actions reinforce the impression of Willy's psychotic posture. There are no extras in the 1966 version, just as there were none for the original 1949 Broadway production. For the 1985 version, Schlondorff films the same scene almost exactly as the 1951 film, but with subtle changes that create a major difference in the way audiences perceive the scene. Schlondorff also uses extras, but instead of having them notice and respond to Willy's actions, they look straight ahead and continue walking. Because it rains in Schlondorff's film, the extras carry umbrellas covering their faces and wear dark overcoats giving them an expressionistic quality in the loss of individuality. Willy does not carry an umbrella, demonstrating that he has been thrust out into the elements unprotected, mirroring the way he feels in society after Howard fires him. Instinctively, he reverts back to a time when he could take on the world. Instead of yelling at the top of his lungs, however, Dustin Hoffman, who plays Willy in the 1985 version, mumbles his lines, and does not perform his boxing gestures as disturbingly as did March. The 1985 version depicts Willy closer to Miller's definition that,

> He was the kind of man you see muttering to himself on a subway, decently dressed, on his way home or to the office, perfectly integrated with his surroundings excepting that unlike other people he can no longer restrain the power of his experience from disrupting the superficial

> sociality of his behavior. ("Introduction to Collected Plays" 158)

The focus of attention remains fixed on the forces that drive Willy to the point that he escapes into his past; whereas in the 1951 film the viewers remain too disturbed by Fredric March's histrionic portrayal of Willy that they never see beyond the realistic images to find the deeper meaning evident with the expressionistic portrayal in the original stage production and later film versions.

The expressionism remains the key element that allows the audience to understand that the visions on stage represent the inner thoughts of Willy Loman. The 1951 film fails to demonstrate this by infusing too much reality. The 1966 version, for the scenes concerning Willy's past, uses implied rather than actual objects during the presentation of Willy's memories. The 1985 version, however, does use an actual car in one scene, but because the director continually shows the scene with a wide-angled camera shot, demonstrating that Willy remains in his present and has not actually moved to his past, this small inclusion of reality does not alter the significance of the scene.

Some of the examples first used in the 1951 film that expound upon Miller's theme concerning the injustices of a capitalistic society were continued in the later films. Laslo Benedek, the director of the early film, first shows Willy driving his car home after being unable to continue during a business trip. In this scene the viewer can see the effect that Willy's job has had on him. His slumped

shoulders demonstrate the effect of the huge weight that he has carried for so many years, and the towering sample cases that stretch across the screen provide simultaneous visual example of the cause. Volker Schlondorff adds a similar opening scene to the 1985 version. He, however, gives a different perspective. Instead of being framed from behind, as in the 1951 film, Willy appears in front angle shots. The viewer can see the pain in Willy's face as he struggles to contend with the traffic, represented by horn blasts whose volume rises and falls to indicate cars passing the salesman's car which creeps at only "ten miles and hour" (13). Both presentations illustrate Willy's inability to keep up anymore.

Also following the example set by the 1951 film, both the 1966 and 1985 versions effectively demonstrate the simultaneous presentation of past and present during the restaurant scene where Willy begins to remember Biff's failing math. The 1951 film pans to the side of Willy's face and using a split screen shows Bernard running to the Loman home to tell Linda about Biff's not passing his math class, which kept Biff from graduating from high school. This scene, more than any in the 1951 film, demonstrates the inner thoughts Willy Loman has about the past while at the same time providing visual clues of the present. By comparison, the 1966 version emulates the original 1949 Broadway production in its presentation of the same scene. When Willy remembers the events, the stage to the side which

still includes the Loman house, brightens with lights and the action unfolds. The audience can visualize the past that Willy conjors up in his mind. Similarly, in the 1985 version, Willy stands up, beginning to remember the events, and walks by a window in the restaurant. As he passes the window, the camera shot reveals the action of Bernard and Linda at the Loman house occurring on the other side of the window. Each version, although handled somewhat differently, demonstrates the same dichotomy of time necessary to show that Willy is lost in his painful past. The event does not serve as an idealized memory for Willy to console him in his present. Biff's failure in math represents an event that Willy has been hiding from for years. The next scene then moves to the Boston hotel incident and to signify Willy's reaching the end. He has now come full circle. By searching his past, trying to reestablish it, to change it, to reorganize his life, he has found that his life cannot be altered as all of his struggling to relive his mistakes still lead him back to what he was trying to deny. Each film version capably uses film techniques that enhance the memory scene with Bernard and Linda and effectively serves as a precursor to the hotel scene which reveals the falsity of Willy's life.

Of the filmed versions of the play, the 1985 treatment appears to be the most faithful to the original play. Miller's close involvement with the production proved to be a major contributing factor in producing an honest portrayal

of Death of a Salesman. He was quick to see that the mistakes of the past which occurred with the first version would not be revisited. The producers of the later television productions also were not closed-minded concerning those aspects of the first film which contributed to the effective exposition of Miller's theme. By having the early film to study and see the mistakes and good examples, the producers of the television versions were fortunate to have a model on film that helped guide their own productions toward a true representation of Miller's play.

CONCLUSION

The 1951 filmed version of Death of a Salesman fails to present a faithful interpretation of Arthur Miller's play because it does not capably develop the play's theme concerning Willy Loman's wrong choices in pursuit of the American Dream. There are two major reasons for this failure; one is the impact that the change of medium had upon the script when it was adapted from the theatre to cinema, and the other follows from alterations of the text. The reason that the change in medium hindered development of the play's theme was a combination of many things. One problem was the director's vacillation between expressionism and realism, especially in the set design which destroyed much of the symbolism which was predominant in the original play. There is little visual simultaneity of past and present in the 1951 film that also ruins both symbolism and character development. Instead of presenting the past as an external demonstration of Willy's mind, the movie presents the past as merely flashbacks that only narrate Willy's previous life. The text changes that hindered development of the play's theme also included alterations of certain symbols through the deletion of key dialogue. Additionally lines that were cut or altered in the play redefined many of the characters and lessened their importance as they relate

to the play's theme. In short, the 1951 movie becomes merely the melodramatic story of a crazed man who has little meaning for the audience.

Arthur Miller was extremely disappointed in the outcome of the 1951 movie. In 1959 he wrote a letter to the Radio-Television Editor of The New York Times stressing his views concerning the adaptation of works of art into mediums such as television and cinema. The major point in the letter centered on his concerns regarding "the propriety of [adaptors] laying hands on classic works without investigating the full depth of responsibility entailed" (19). In light of what happened to his play, when it was adapted for cinema in 1951, it seems understandable that Miller would raise his voice in defense of the purity of art. Miller makes a profound statement concerning the audience of plays today when he says,

> The vast majority of viewers has not read or seen these works in their original forms. Therefore [adaptors] must face the fact that [they are] really presenting not adaptations of them but, in reality, the works themselves-- as far as the public knows (Letter 19).

In his letter to The New York Times, Miller urged adaptors to produce plays as they were intended to be presented by the author-- the creator of the art-- and not present the public with watered down interpretations altered because of protests from big money sponsors and producers worried about public reaction to a play's message which might be construed as political attack against certain factions of society.

Although this thesis predominately investigates the

1951 film's treatment to the original play, the reasons why the play was altered are also mentioned. A viable follow-up study could examine the social climate of the period during the 1950s, especially the influence of the McCarthy forces, that caused the film's producer, director, and screenwriter to alter the play for mass public consumption. The study could also examine the social climate of the 1960s and the 1980s and attempt to explain why those eras produced much more faithful interpretations of the play. Certainly Arthur Miller's close involvement was an important factor in producing an effective presentation, but there had to be social elements that contributed to the television network's allowing a viable portrayal of the play to be aired without the alterations that hindered the 1951 film.

Although Miller was not closely involved with the creative processes of the first film, he has gained the television and video rights to the original film. As of the date of this study, the 1951 film is not available for syndication on television, and there are no plans to have it produced on video tape. Only one location was found in which the film could be viewed, The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Miller, in correspondence with the author wrote, "Afraid I don't know of any other place than M.O.M.A. where you can see it" (Letter to author). Miller asserted in his letter to The New York Times, "We are breaking the continuity of culture by passing on its masterpieces through mutilated distortions" (19). Returning to Miller's earlier

statements regarding the mishandling of plays by certain adaptors, it seems appropriate that he would consider a museum as a fit place in which to study the 1951 filmed version of his play.

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