CHAPTER - V

ARTHUR MILLER'S DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

So begins Arthur Miller's *Death of Salesman*, a play conceived and presented imagistically in compelling dramatic symbols. Miller's play penetrates the outer layer of surface reality, the domestic career failures of an exhausted drummer. It opens up the Salesman's head, allowing the audience to view the innermost workings of Willy Loman's mind. Miller explained his conception of dramatic form in an article detailing the symbiotic relationship between theme and the vision of reality a play establishes. In "The Family in Modern Drama," he asserts that-

"The form a playwright selects, his manipulation of dramatic constituents, is as the content of the work. In his view, those plays dealing exclusively with the family and family relationships predominantly adopt a selectively realistic form, whereas those works concerned primarily with social themes employ nonrealistic devices."

However, Miller's qualifications of Ibsen far exceeded the perimeters of realism, points to his perception of the juncture of these two elements. He observed that in certain instances the familial and the cosmic, the social, were united to encompass the emergence of new form rooted in realism. This form utilized objective detail and causality, yet stretched beyond its restrictions to project a psychological reality. This subjective perception of reality associated with individual consciousness was akin to modern man's spiritual longings and the nature of his existence in a technological, material mass society. Miller explained the juncture of the seemingly opposing forces of realism and social concerns by pointing to Ibsen's inclusion of social themes in plays like *A Doll's House*:

*Ibsen was writing not simply to photograph scenes from life. After all, at the time he wrote *A Doll's House* how many Norwegians or Europeans women had slammed the door upon their hypocritical relations with their husbands?*
Miller's observation, qualifying his designation of realistic family dramas on the one hand and nonrealistic social-dramas on the other, explains his own preference for a form using the family, its environment and relationships to project certain social concerns. He employed these forces to dramatize the negative aspects of society which impinged upon the individual, the "common man", and his sense of dignity. These social inequities, Miller felt, deprived the individual of his ability to imprint his existence in an impersonal world. Miller continued to explain his position in a number of articles addressing his conception of dramatic form. He stated that Ibsen's later works moved away from the realistic format of his earlier plays. The later plays, Miller believed, migrated toward a more symbolic drama distinguished by emphases upon social values. They relied less upon "photographic" detail. He commented in a similar fashion upon O'Neill's experimentation with dramatic form and the symbolic nature of many of O'Neill's dramas:

It ought to be noted that O'Neill himself described his preoccupation as being not with the relations between man and man, but with those between man and God...

O'Neill, however, seems to have been seeking for some fate-making power behind the social force itself. He went to ancient Greece for some definition of that force; he reached toward modern religion and toward many other possible sources of the poetic modes. My point here, however, is that so long as the family and family relations are at the center of his plays his form remains--indeed, it is held prisoner by--Realism. When, however, as for instance in The Hairy Ape and Emperor Jones he deals with men out in society, away from the family context, his forms become alien to Realism, more openly and self-consciously symbolic.  

Miller's insistence upon establishing a recognition of a particular dramatic form relying on a family orientation and a concentration upon the individual, yet expanding this relationship to include the individual's perception of his own existence in the world, reconciled these two thematic abstractions. Miller's perception of this dramatic form dictates a condition contingent upon a social connection, relatedness with the family as the
microcosm and society as the macrocosm beyond. The family is employed as an extension, a condition of the individual's being. Family relationships are not emphasized as the primary factor of the drama, only as a concrete means of presenting the individual's psyche in conflict with hypocritical social standards. Miller believed these inauthentic values have been absorbed and promoted by the family group. Expressing the symbiotic relationship between content and form as well as his joint presentation of the familial and the social in one united, uniform presentation, Miller describes man as a being deriving his identity from both entities. He stated:

"Society is inside of man and man is inside of society, and you cannot even create a truthfully drawn psychological entity on the stage until you understand his social relations and their power to make him what he is and to prevent him from being what he is not."  

Miller continued to explain the relationship between these concepts and his development of dramatic form in his dramatic presentation of the interior of Willy Loman's mind. As important as Miller's connection between family orientation and form is his belief that the greatest plays to date seek to translate the values, needs, and the intimacy of the family environment to a broader context. Miller believed that twentieth century man was striving to forge a place in society for himself, a niche as secure and as meaningful as his familiar surroundings. Miller stated:

"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 then open up, and we would see the inside of man's head. In fact, The Inside of His Head was the first title."

Miller refined his original physical concept of the drama, integrating more carefully his theme of a "private man" lost in "a world of strangers," to include the mitigating factors responsible for that demise. This is an indication that Miller's intent was to present Willy's way of thinking in concrete form. Miller sought to dramatize the conflict of a man at odds with himself, at odds with the values which precipitate his demise. This conflict evolved as
Willy Loman's perception of his own being in the world and the dichotomy of the dual value system he is seduced and destroyed:

I was convinced only that if I could make him remember enough he would kill himself, and the structure of the play was determined by what was need to draw up his memories like a mass of tangled roots without end or beginning.6

The "structure of the play" which Miller refers to is indelibly connected to memory. But this involvement with the past is not a mere rehashing of old failures and unfulfilled dreams. The dramatic form Miller employs in his Death of Salesman evolves as Willy brings to mind and consequently relives the most significant moments in his life. The dramatic collage unfolding on state is one unstuck in time, unfettered by the linear restrictions of past, present, and future. It is not however, a loosely organized or abstract venture into hallucination and madness. As Miller has stated, he has "opened up the Salesman's head," so that we may view the externalization of Willy's psyche. This dramatization of a man struggling to "leave a thumb print" somewhere in the world, a man struggling with the shoddy values which have undermined his existence, constitutes a crystallization of the existential perspective into dramatic form. In no other modern American play have the basic tenets of an existential philosophy been so carefully translated and transported to the stage. Miller has presented a unique vision of reality, Willy's reality which is synonymous with consciousness, angst, and inauthentic values. He combined these tenets and a development of theme, dramatic action, characterization, dialogue, set design, lighting design, sound, and symbol. An examination of Miller's manipulation of these dramatic constituents and their combined effect verifies his employment of an existential-familial dramatic form in his Death of a Salesman.

An examination of the critical literature addressing Miller's Death of a Salesman also provides a useful tool in assessing Miller's employment of existential tenets. Various articles or texts deal exclusively with the playwright's development of theme or characterization, or
his treatment of the stage environment. By gathering these scattered fragments in the critical literature and combining them in a comprehensive study of Miller's presentation of dramatic form, a clearer picture of the specific form he develops can be pieced together.

"The Melody," which opens the drama, "small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon," is synonymous with Willy's recollection of his father, a carefree and artistic man always on the move. This fragile melody is an audible reminder of the much discussed, but never seen, father who made and sold these delicate instruments for a living. But it is also a representation of Willy's search for origins and his desire to know more about himself and "the stock" he came from. Miller has introduced his drama with a melodic symbol to immediately evoke the sense of Willy's haunting search for himself and for meaning in his life.

"The Salesman's house," dwarfed by the angular encroachments of the surroundings modern apartment buildings, cannot be separated from the Salesman himself. Indeed, we are told that Willy has built much of the home himself, just as he has manufactured his own identity. Both are fragile structures, real at the core, but losing their essence as they meet the impersonal world beyond. There is an aura, a hint of blue light falling on the small house which removes it from the realm of objective reality. "An angry glow of orange" is thrust up against it, as though the Salesman and his home, both an endangered species, were about to be overrun by the "solid vault of apartment house." Miller's use of the word "vault" to create this visual picture is particularly appropriate, for it signals the death knell of the Salesman and his tenuous existence. There is a commingling here of the real and the subjective, for the world Miller has presented is Willy's subjective, perception of his own world. It is the quality and the sum total of his existence as a human being.

Every aspect of the physical design Miller has presented is meticulously coordinated to project Willy's consciousness, he has dictated this orchestration of the stage environment
to project the mind of this "private man", albeit a waning, a restricted consciousness reduced in proportion to his reliance on the glib and slick illusions of success. The impersonal world beyond towering over the Salesman is also included in this design. The Salesman's ethic is a perversion of the American Dream, just as Willy's perception of his existence is a distortion of objective reality. The flashy catch phrases have subverted the real Willy Loman. The authentic Willy is a man at home with his family, working on the front stoop; he is a private man who can no longer distinguish illusion from reality. He has become a mass of contradictions. "I'm very well like in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me."

Miller initiates an almost topographic plot of dramatic action, connecting each occurrence on stage with Willy's way of thinking. Miller puts in motion a series of actions to make this intangible locality of Willy's mind concrete. In Act I, Willy returns home exhausted after a sales trip. He confesses to his wife Linda that he "couldn't drive any more. The car kept going off onto the shoulder." Miller's direct reference to Willy's inability to carry the baggage of his own life anymore is made explicit as the aging Salesman lays down this burden. He is no longer able to drive himself on the brash hopes and promises of success in the future. Willy also tells his wife he cannot keep his mind on the present task at hand. "No, it's me, it's me. Suddenly I realize I'm going sixty miles an hour and I don't remember the last five minutes. I'm--I can't seem to keep my mind on it."

Linda suggests that Willy ask his young employer to relocate him in the New York area, so that at sixty he will no longer have to face the stress of working on the road. Happy and Biff, the Loman sons, have returned home. Draped across their old beds upstairs they overhear their father talking out loud to himself downstairs. They begin to discuss their father's mental health and their own lives:

\[BIFF\]
Hap, I've had twenty or thirty different jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realize it lately. In Nebraska when I herded cattle, and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It's why I came how now, I guess, because I realize it... I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not getting' anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old, I ought to be making' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself. I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and every time I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life.10

Both brothers confess their own failures in life, as well as sharing their own dreams for the future. These confessions occur simultaneously with Willy's internal conversation downstairs. Biff and Happy listen as Willy begins to relieve the past. Willy obliterates the artificial barriers between then and now, making the past the present. His existence as presented by Miller's development of dramatic action is an orchestration of the subjective nature of I-time:

WILLY

I been wondering why you polish the car so careful. Ha! Don't leave the hubcaps, boys. Get the chamois to the hubcaps. Happy, use newspaper on the windows, it's the easiest thing. Show him how to do it, Biff?...

(YOUNG BIFF and YOUNG HAPPY appear from the direction Willy was addressing. HAPPY carries rags and a pail of water. BIFF, wearing a sweater with a block, "s", carries a football).11

It is significant to note that Miller has designed the scheme of dramatic action to include these instance. (They are not hallucinations, fantasies, nor illusions, as some scholars have referred to them.) These are integral actions in a through line of dramatic action. As Willy begins conversing with the YOUNG BIFF and the YOUNG HAPPY, he relives this moment and both boys appear on stage so that we as an audience view what Willy is experiencing. Miller infuses the action with a sense of detail, a vitality which also makes this simultaneous existence of Willy in the past and the present as real and as immediate as the presence of the adult Biff and Happy upstairs.
As the action continues, YOUNG BIFF tells his father he swiped a football from school and Willy exonerates him. In the ensuing discussion Willy conveys his value system to his son who is impressed with the notion that success is equated with how well one is liked:

BIFF
Did you see the new football I got?

WILLY
Where'd you get a new ball?

BIFF
The coach told me to practice my passing.

WILLY
That so? And he gave you the ball, heh?

BIFF
Well, I borrowed it from the locker room.  
(He laughs confidentially)

WILLY
(Laughing with him at the theft)
I want you to return that.

HAPPY
I told you he wouldn't like it!

BIFF
Well, I'm bringing it back!

WILLY
Sure, he's got to practice with a regulation ball, doesn't he? Coach’s probably congratulate you on your initiative.¹²

Willy begins to counsel his young son, advising him about his options for the future and the tactics of success. He explains a scenario for getting ahead in the world. He shares this version of the American Dream with an impressionable Biff. These exchanges between father and son develop a thematic focus dealing with Willy's reliance upon shoddy values concerned with physical appearance and popularity. Miller uses these discussions as a type of conduit connecting the family members with society at large and with those values which impede each of the Loman's quests to realize a sense of self worth:

WILLY
Bernard is not well liked, is he?

BIFF
He's liked, but he's not well liked.

HAPPY
That's right, Pop.

WILLY
That's just what I mean. Bernard can get the best marks in school, you understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonis's. Because the man who creates personal interest is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait to see a buyer. 'Willy Loman is here!' That's all they have to know.  

These exchanges between Willy and the Loman sons integrate the vision of reality Miller develops, Willy's perception of I-time; and the playwright's theme of a family man dwarfed by the mechanistic society overtaking him. The type of dramatic synthesis Miller presents is indicative of him employment of an existential dramatic form distinguished by its reliance upon existential tenets of consciousness and inauthentic values. These two primary existential tenets along with Willy's feelings of angst and his dependence upon his family for some sense of spiritual fulfillment, are translated into both dramatic form and the play's thematic thrust. These two dramatic constituents as Miller has presented them cannot be separated and evaluated as two distinct entities. Willy Loman is defined by his perception of reality, just as he is defined by the values he professes. Miller's characters begin to evolve from the chain of action the playwright has put in motion. As Francis Hodge observes in his book *Play Directing,* "A character takes shape and is revealed in the course of the action." Miller presents Willy as a walking personification of the subjective nature of individual consciousness. Willy contradicts himself, he exaggerates his abilities as a salesman, he embellishes Biff's past glory on the football field:

WILLY
I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston.

LINDA
No! Wait a minute, I've got a pencil. That makes your commission... Two hundred--my god! Two hundred and twelve dollars!

WILLY
Well, I didn't figure it yet, but...

LINDA
How much did you do?

WILLY
Well, I--I did--about a hundred and eight gross in Providence. Well, no--it came to--roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip.\textsuperscript{15}

Willy's sense of consciousness and his values merge as interlocking elements in a uniform design. It is this symbiotic relationship between the dramatic constituents of dramatic action, theme and characterization in Miller's play which critics have ignored. In addressing all of these elements of dramatic form separately; scholars have been unable to ascertain the common existential base giving each constituent of the drama and the combined constituents, their distinctive existential-familial design. Miller's play proceeds as Willy's synchronistic existence in the past and the present. But this existence is also determined by Willy's sense of values and the feelings of guilt which haunt him:

WILLY
I'm fat. I'm very--foolish to look at, Linda. I didn't tell you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F.H. Stewarts, and a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer, I heard him say something about--walrus. And I--I cracked him right across the face. I won't take that, I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that.\textsuperscript{16}

Following this speech THE WOMAN is heard laughing and then appears behind the scrim. It is in this act that Willy's sense of guilt emerges and he relieves an adulterous incident in Boston in which he gives THE WOMAN stockings meant for Linda. The event is triggered by an action in the present as Linda attempts to reassure Willy that the laughter of the salesman at Stewart's was not meant for him. Each of these events brings with it the tremendous feelings of loneliness which pervade Willy's life:
(The laughter is loud now, and he moves into a brightening area at the left, where THE WOMAN has come from behind the scrim and is standing putting on her hat, looking into a 'mirror' and laughing)

WILLY

Cause I get so lonely--especially when business is bad and there's nobody to talk to. I get the feeling that I'll never sell anything again, that I won't make a living for you, or a business, a business for the boys...¹⁷

Perhaps no other facet of Miller's drama has so confused, so baffled critics and scholars alike in their attempt to evaluate Miller's Death of a Salesman, as has his unique treatment of the play's dramatic action. In The Face of Illusion in American Drama, A.D. Choudhuri addresses Miller's personal affinity for political and social concerns. The playwright's development of dramatic form is all but ignored, as Choudhuri separates Miller's theme dealing with a disintegrating American Dream from the manner in which this statement is presented:

This moral and sociological passion to visualize men's thoughts and activities as part of social experience is carried on by two contemporary playwrights, viz., Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. While they refine their technique and shift the area of emphasis from the strictly straightforward economic statements, their desire to dramatize the conflict of illusion and reality assumes a central position in their portrayal of the contemporary American ethos.¹⁸

Choudhuri's statement, similar to those made by other scholars, is too general and fails in its capacity to shed any light upon Miller's design. Although it touches on one facet of the playwright's complex theme, it cannot be reconciled with Miller's development of dramatic action in the play. For Miller has established a dramatic design emphasizing Willy's perceptions as concrete happenings on stage. He has presented consciousness in concrete form, objectifying Willy's growing inability to distinguish truth from illusion, reality from those hollow images perpetuated in advertising slogans. Miller had dictated an alignment, an ordering, and a relationship between Willy's consciousness, his values, and the vision of
reality the play presents. As Miller has stated in his article "Death of a Salesman," which appears in Playwrights on Playwriting:

The Salesman image was from the beginning absorbed with the concept that nothing in life comes 'next' but that everything exists together and at the same time within us; that there is no past to be 'brought forward' in a human being, but that he 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.19

An overriding concentration upon theme by various critics has diverted their efforts to analyze Miller's development of a distinct dramatic form. This form is synonymous with an existential perspective concerned with consciousness, concrete experience, the subjective nature of I-time, alienation, inauthentic values, angst, the individual's responsibility for his own being, and the capacity of human relationships to stimulate spiritual growth. Several critics have addressed Miller's unconventional treatment of the time structure in the play, although no study to date has offered an explanation of how this aspect of the drama is directly related to each constituent in the play.

Daniel E. Schneider comments upon Miller's unique orchestration of time in the play. In his "Play of Dreams", Schneider dismisses the notion that Miller has adopted a realistic form, only modifying it slightly to include Willy's reversion to the past. Schneider states that Miller has combined the past and the present in order to externalize the forces operative in Willy's mind:

The form of the play is not that of 'flashback' technique, though it has been described as such. It is rather the same technique as that of 'Hamlet': the technique of psychic projection of hallucination, of the guilty expression of forbidden wishes dramatized.

Willy Loman, exhausted salesman does not go back to the past. The past as in hallucination comes back to him; not chronologically as in flashback, but dynamically with the inner logic of his erupting volcanic unconscious.20
In a similar vein, Mary Beth Dakoske's study of the play addresses Miller's handling of scenes bridging the past and the present. Dakoske precedes a step further in explaining Miller's integration of I-time with dramatic action:

*In many ways, Death of a Salesman might also be called a 'memory play.' The past is revealed in the present time of the play through memory. These memories are not described in the dialogue of the play as memories; but rather, they are dramatized before us with all the immediacy and detail that they have in Willy's mind. Painful memories are held in abeyance until they come rushing in, triggered by some concrete event in the 'now'.*²¹

Article like Schneider's and Dakoske's study demonstrate that scholars have connected Miller's treatment of specific dramatic constituents to an existential-familial perspective. As these observations have not been previously collated with a comprehensive examination of each of the play's constituents, the existential foundation of the play has yet to been diagnosed. Certainly the physical setting Miller delineates at the play's opening leaves little doubt about the existential foundation of *Death of a Salesman*. His concrete presentation of "The Inside of His Head" and existential notions of consciousness and existence cannot be ignored in even the most casual investigation of the drama. Miller's references to the temporal nature of the play and his direct translation of this abstraction into dramatic form in the nature of dramatic action, presents an explicit connection between this philosophical base and an emerging existential-familial dramatic form.

Existential philosophers provide valuable critical observations which coincide with Miller's treatment of constituents in the drama. For example, in the first act of the play Miller develops a series of related actions which define Willy as an individual existing simultaneously in the natural world which he cannot control and in his subjective world of relevant experience. Willy also exists in a world of relationships. Willy's ability to see and to know himself truly is connected to the quality and the depth of his emotional bond to the family. This relationship gives him some sense of his own identity and determines his
capacity for both consciousness and spiritual growth. Miller has translated Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of existential time into dramatic form. Sartre explains this temporal design not bound by public or clock time in his Being and Nothingness. This explanation coincides with those moments in Willy's past which exert a profound influence upon his present condition and which are called to mind, experienced once again in the present:

The three so-called 'elements' of time, past, present, and future, should not be considered as a collection of 'givens' for us to sum up--for example, as an infinite series of 'knows' in which some are not yet and others are no longer--but rather as the structured moments of an original synthesis.22

Working in conjunction with this aspect of the existential perspective is Sartre's idea of human relationships and their capacity to encourage spiritual growth. As Sartre states:

Presence to--is an internal relation between the being which is present and the being to which it is present. In any case it cannot be a matter of a simple external relation of contiguity. Presence to indicate existence outside oneself near to--. Anything which can be present to--must be such in its being that there is in it a relation of being with other beings.23

Willy is dependent upon the members of his family for some sense of his own identity and primarily upon his son, Biff, for the vicarious reinforcement he lacks. This relationship has been demeaned by Willy's adulterous affair with a woman in Boston. Because Biff blames his father for this breach in family loyalty and remains distant from Willy, the aging Salesman is incapable of cementing his disintegrating psyche:

WILLY
Well, better get going. I want to get to the school first thing in the morning.
Get my suits out of the closet. I'll get my valise.
Biff doesn't move.
What's the matter?
Biff remains motionless, tears falling.
She's a buyer. Buys for J.H. Simmons. She lives down the hall--they're painting. You don't imagine--
He breaks off. After a pause:
Now listen, pal, she's just a buyer. She shows merchandise in her room and they have to keep it looking just so ...
Pause. Assuming command!
All right, get my suits.
Biff doesn't move.
Now stop crying and do as I say. I gave you an order. Biff, I gave you an order!²⁴

Miller has combined the existential notion of relatedness, the dependence of one human being upon another for some sense of who he is and what he might become, with a primary function of the family. Miller has used this capacity of the family to encourage spiritual growth, consciousness, drawing upon what sociologist Ruth Nanda Anshen has identified as the existential nature of the modern American family. As Anshen states in her article "The Family in Transition":

The concept of family pervades all civilization--nay, all human life--and the human family itself becomes manifest as the immediate substantiality of the mind receiving its specific and definitive characterization through love. And it is through such love that the mind becomes conscious of its own intrinsic unity and power. The possession of the self-awareness-consciousness of one's individuality--within this unity as the essence of oneself results in the recognition that one exists in the family not as an isolated, independent person, but rather as a member of the microcosmic pattern of the dynamic world community.²⁵

Miller develops interplay between these family disputes which impede emotional contact and Willy's struggle to find himself. Linda confesses to her sons that Willy has tried to kill himself. With this disclosure, Biff promises to make good in the business world. He acknowledges his responsibility for Willy's well being. In Act II, Willy agonizes that the family's funds cannot keep pace with household costs. This disclosure is particularly important in illuminating Willy as a spiritual being with longings and dreams that his material surroundings and his family have failed to gratify. He is in essence devalued by these gadgets which reduce value to a price tag:

WILLY
Whoever heard of a hasting refrigerator? Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it's broken! I'm always in a race with the junkyard!
I just finished paying for the car and it's on its last legs. The refrigerator consumes belts like a god damn maniac. They time those things. They time them so when you've finally paid for them, they're used up.26

Willy has echoed William Spano's plea by crying out against those forces in society which dehumanize man, which tear at his spiritual fiber. These forces rob him of his being and reduce him to a thing among things. As Spanos states:

According to the existentialists, scientific rationalism and its counterpart in practical life; the technological society, locate reality in the objective realm of measureable matter, and value in the production and utilization of objects. In so doing, they subordinate man to the tool, consciousness to efficiency, and the individual to the social and productive organizations (including educational institutions). By the inescapable logic of this system of valuate, the individual becomes dehumanized. Defined according to his function and evaluated by the degree of his utility, he is reduced to the status of an object like other objects in nature, or to use Martin Buber's term, a manipulated It (Jean-Paul Sartre's I'en soi, or the in-itself).27

In Act II, Willy feels compelled to ask his young employer for a position in New York because at sixty years of age he can no longer stand the rigors of the road. Howard is preoccupied with a mechanical recording device and all but ignores the frustrated Willy. When Willy finally asserts himself, Howard tells Willy he has no place in the company, a signal that he no longer belongs. Willy has no place in the business world, and with his growing confusion between his own subjective existence and the actual world, he no longer belongs to himself. He has lost the fragile thread of identity allowing him to discern who he is. willy Loman has become the dramatic personification of alienated man:

WILLY
Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week.

HOWARD
But where am I going to put you, kid?

WILLY
Look, it isn't a question of whether I can sell merchandise, is it?

HOWARD
No, but it's business, kid, and everybody's gotta pull his own weight.28
Willy argues with Howard, telling him that he has put his entire life on the firm. He yells at Howard and at the entire impersonal system which uses a man and then tosses him aside "like a piece of fruit." Following this sequence, Willy visits with Bernard only to learn that the boy Willy once berated as "anemic" has matured into a successful lawyer. Bernard has accomplished the things Willy longed for Biff to achieve, not through popularity or good looks, but as the result of hard work and dedication. Willy then talks to Bernard's father, Charley, and Charley gives Willy a lecture on the way the real world operates. Charley chastises Willy for asking for another loan. Willy's neighbour is prepared to offer him a job— not a position, but a job—paying fifty dollars a week. Miller has articulated a characterization of this aging salesman which constantly reminds us of this search for the self and of the shoddy values which deprive him of any lasting sense of self worth:

WILLY
Charley, I'm strapped, I'm strapped. I don't know what to do. I was just fired.
CHARLEY
Howard fired you?
WILLY
CHARLEY
Willy, when're you goanna realize that the things don't mean a thing? You named him Howard, but you can't sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that.

These exchanges between Willy and Charley and the disputes between Willy and Biff are carefully integrated as if Miller were playing a variation upon the same theme. He has developed a central characterization to augment his concern with the "private man", addicted to and yet at odds with a disheveled remnant of the American Dream. Biff attempts to draw this to his father's attention, but to no avail:

BIFF
I stole myself out of every good job since high school!
WILLY
And whose fault is that?

BIFF

And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!

WILLY

I hear that!

LINDA

Don't, Biff?

BIFF

It's goddam time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it!¹¹

Willy's decision to commit suicide is yet another indication that he has become displaced in this world of objects and monetary values. He sees the insurance premium as something concrete, something tangible he can leave behind for his sons. He views this as his last chance to achieve some degree of dignity in life. However convoluted Willy's thinking, Miller's characterization is consistent with the existential design he has implemented. For Willy has succumbed to the inauthentic values which have demeaned his existence. As a being concerned with the quality of his life, Willy has generated a sense of anxiety which can only be terminated by an action somehow verifying the worth of his existence. It is also significant to note that his last act will in some way provide for those he loves. Miller has employed the existential tenet of inauthentic values and William Barrett's concept of anxiety. As Barrett states, "Anxiety flows from the fundamental trait of man: that he is a being whose being is characterized by the fact that he is concerned about his own being."³² Miller presents this emphasis in dramatic form in Willy's final discussion with Ben:

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?

BEN

That's a point, William. And twenty thousand, that is something one can feel with the hand, it is there.
WILLY

Oh, Ben, that's the whole beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shinning in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand...\(^3\)

Claudia Cassady's review of the original production which appeared in the Chicago Tribune identifies the cumulative effect of the dramatic action and Miller's development of characterization in the play. Cassady points to Miller's treatment of the family and Willy's reliance upon inauthentic values as key elements in the drama:

> You know about him by now, of course, this defeated travelling Salesman who has made such a mess of his life he crashes his car so his fiercely loyal wife will at least salvage the insurance. You know how he loved his sons and how he corrupted them with the big-shot taint of something for nothing. You know how desperately he tried to justify himself...\(^3\)

Miller's play, an externalization of Willy's consciousness, is a frantic search through the commonplace and the daily events that make up a man's life. It is Willy's quest to justify his own existence, to leave some sign of himself behind and to get some seeds into the ground. It is as though this tired Salesman with his bag of cliché success schemes has finally run aground. In one last look through the whys and wherefores of his life, he prepares for his own death. As he tells Ben near the end of the play, "A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something."\(^3\)

The fact that the action of the play is characterized by a confessional quality is also significant. Such disclosures steer Miller's play even closer to an existential perspective, as the characters expurgate the conditions and the quality of their lives, striving to find something fuller, richer, more fulfilling in a spiritual sense. As Miller has stated:

> As I look at the play now its form seems the form of a confession, for that is how it is told, now speaking of what happened yesterday, then suddenly following some connection to a time twenty years ago ...\(^3\)

Willy's sense of loneliness, his separation from the impersonal world outside his door, is made apparent early on in the play. Miller reinforces the design he has implemented in the
play's development of dramatic action with an infusion of references in the dialogue which serve to reveal Willy's sense of anxiety and isolation:

WILLY

Figure it out. Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it.

LINDA

Well, dear, life is a casting off. It's always that way.

WILLY

No, no, some people--some people accomplish something.  

Biff reiterates this same uneasiness, this same feeling that time marches on and one must hurry to leave a thumbprint somewhere in the world. He feels, like Willy, that he does not fit in, that he has not measured up in society's eyes. Biff feels that his opportunities are rapidly fading and that he is not getting any younger:

BIFF

I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not getting' anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old; I ought to be making' my future.

Miller converges this impression of a material society and the demands it makes on a small man with Willy's longings for something worthwhile in his life. By so doing, he presents the quintessential existential man, a spiritual being searching for some evidence of his own existence, dwarfed by the world of objects surrounding him:

WILLY

They should've arrested the builder for putting these down. They massacred the neighborhood. (Lost) More and more I think of those days, Linda. This time of year it was lilac and wisteria. And then the peonies would come out, and the daffodils. What a fragrance in this room!

Miller has translated Soren Kierkegaard's epithet from "concerning the Dedication to 'The Individual' into dramatic form, presenting this social and resulting psychic disconnection and the disparity between the individual psyche and a material mass society. As Kierkegaard describes this phenomenon:
Hence where there is a multitude, a crowd, or where decisive significance is attached to the fact that there is a multitude, there it is sure that no one is working, living, striving for the highest aim, but only for one or another earthly aim; since to work for the eternal decisive aim is possible only where there is one, and to be this one which all can be is to let God be the helper—the 'crowd' is the untruth.40

Existential philosopher William Spanos describes the sense of alienation pervading Willy's life when he characterizes the dehumanizing affect a material society exerts upon conscious man and his desire for connection with the infinite. Spanos states:

*By the inescapable logic of this system of valuation, the individual becomes dehumanized. Defined according to his function and evaluated by the degree of his utility, he is reduced to the status of an object like other objects in nature...*41

Drama critic Kennet Tynan recognized this quality of alienated man in many of Miller's plays and in *Death of a Salesman* in particular. In his "American Blues: The plays of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams," Tynan stated, "Miller is a rebel against, Williams a refugee from the familiar ogre of commercialism, the killer of values and the leveler of men."42 In Miller's own account, he has organized these converging elements of consciousness, the loss of the self and the perpetuation of inauthentic values with his use of the family as subject. According to Miller and existential philosophers alike, this entity controls to a great extent, the individual's ability to define himself and to recognize those authentic values akin to his true being. As Miller stated:

*Now I should like to make the bald statement that all plays we call great, let alone those we call serious, are ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this: How many a man make of the outside world a home?*43

Miller has utilized this concept of the existential family, promoting or inhibiting consciousness and values, in his development of an existential-familial dramatic form in his *Death of a Salesman*. Miller has stated in his many essays addressing his presentation of dramatic form that the family is intimately involved with individual identity, with the
inculcation of values. He characterizes the type of search Willy is involved in as a quest for "safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of the soul, the sense of identity and honor which evidently all men have connected in their memories with the idea of the family." 

Gerald Weales explains this relationship between self and family, values and society, in his "Arthur Miller: Man and His Image." Wales identifies this relationship between identity and the family unit as central to Miller's drama:

His plays are family centered obviously, because our drama the last few years has been uncomfortable in any context larger that the family; his heroes however, are more than failed husbands and fathers because he has recognized that the most impressive family plays from Oedipus through Hamlet to Ghosts, have modified the concept of family and of the individual under the pressure of society.

Each of his heroes is involved in one way or another in a struggle which results from his acceptance or rejection of an image that is the product of his society's values and prejudices, whether that society is as small as Eddie Corbone's neighborhood, or as wide as the contemporary America that helped form Willy Loman.

As Weales explains, Willy is a man in conflict with the crass values of material society and its capacity to seduce the individual with its promise of success. He has become a man in conflict with his own image of himself. And it is here that the family plays a primary role in Miller's employment of an existential-familial dramatic form and in Willy's search for self worth:

The distance between the actual Willy and the image Willy is so great when the play opens that he can no longer lie to himself with conviction; what the play gives us is the final disintegration of a man who has never even approached his idea of what by rights he ought to have been.

Given Miller's treatment of the family and its function to humanize the individual on the one hand and to socialize him on the other hand, it is apparent that the conflict necessary for Miller's existential drama resides here. Willy is defined by his connection to the family and the values promoted within it, just as he is defined by his sense of consciousness. Gerald
Weales alludes to Miller's union of existential ideologies and sociological theory when he states, "From the conflicting success images that wander through his troubled brain comes Willy's double ambition, to be right and to be loved." Both are indelibly connected to Willy's reliance upon inauthentic values and his perception of his own being in the world. A walking contradiction, Willy is torn between the sensitive man who longs for the love of his sons, the man who notices the wisteria and remarks, "Gotta break your neck to see a star in this yard," and the man who encourages Biff and Happy to steal lumber and supplies from a neighborhood building site. It is this promotion of a perverted version of the American Dream which not only undermines Willy's capacity for self knowledge, but his sons' ability to know themselves truly. Miller has manipulated the dramatic constituents of theme, subject, dramatic action, symbol, and characterization, combining them with primary existential tenets to present the internal probing of this Salesman who no longer knows who he is. Miller develops the characters of Biff and Happy to compliment the existential format of his drama.

For Happy recognizes a vacuum in his own life which leaves him feeling uncertain about himself:

**HAPPY**

*Sometimes I sit in my apartment--all alone. And I think of the rent I'm paying. And it's crazy. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I'm lonely.*

The loneliness Willy, Happy and Biff experience is directly related to the family and its absorption of the meanest of society's mass values. As existential theorists have stated, it is this conformity which smothers the self. The lies, pretense, and illusion of their lives have kept father from son. Consequently, each of the Loman men has lost any sense of his true identity. In adopting the mass values of an impersonal society each one has committed spiritual suicide:

**BIFF**

*To HAPPY*

*The man don't know who we are! The man is gonna know!*
To WILLY
We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house! And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!50

Several critics have recognized the primary importance of Miller's use of the family in his Death of a Salesman, particularly in regard to his manipulation of theme and characterization. For Miller has invested Willy with the shoddy values which keep the family members separate and which doom each to a lonely existence as they struggle for some sense of self worth. Willy and Biff are driven "not to waste a life," but to uncover the dusty fragments of their own identity. Harold Clurman identifies Miller's perception of the familial and the social bond operative in the play, and Miller's emphasis upon consciousness and identity:

The family is pivotal, but beyond the family is the family of mankind. The family has its extension in the community, the social body--the polis, as it was once named. Here, then, is where Miller locates the focus of responsibility.51

Just as each sequence in the action reveals a search for origins, a quest for the self and consciousness, Happy and Biffs' return home signals their need to return home to a sense of self. Once again Miller has invested a dramatic constituent with the symbolic overtones capable of communicating his existential concern with existence and consciousness. These characterizations present Miller's thematic emphasis of the Salesman and his sons who have lost their identity in concrete form on the stage. Early in Act I, Willy shares his concern for Biff and his lack of success with Linda, and she confides in her husband. She tells Willy that Biff is trying to find himself:

WILLY
How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farmhand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought well, a young man, it's good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But it's more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week!

LINDY
He's finding himself, Willy.\textsuperscript{32}

Biff expresses this same sense of alienation when he tells his father that he has lost himself in the pursuit of the status and wealth Willy has promoted within the family group. Just as the real Willy has been subverted by the tawdry shambles of the American Dream he clings to, Biff has lost contact with his own identity:

Biff

Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out of there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy?\textsuperscript{33}

It is Biff's recognition of his father's worth as a human being, Willy's love of the home and his sons, his ability with tools, and Biffs' knowledge of his father's limitations that provides the powerful summary of Miller's dramatic statements in the Requiem. For it is the concrete experience of Willy's life, the daily event and not the aggrandizement of his fulfilled potential that Biff recognizes as his father's true being. In so doing, he comes to a dawning of self knowledge that eludes Willy:

Biff

There were a lot of nice days. When he'd come home from a trip; or on Sundays, making the stoop; finishing the cellar; putting on a new porch; when he built the extra bathroom; and put up the garage. You know something, Charley, there's more of him in the front stoop than in all the sales he ever made.

Charley

Yeah. He was a happy man with a batch of cement.

Linda

He was so wonderful with his hands.

Biff

He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.

Happy

Don't say that!

Biff

He never knew who he was.\textsuperscript{34}
Miller has presented a man inundated by the crowd, overcome and obsessed with the values of a mass society. And it is this obsession which robs him of this dignity and prevents him from realizing any sense of his own being in the world. Miller manipulates the dialogue in the play to coincide with the same design he has initiated in terms of symbol, theme, dramatic action and characterization. In no other component of his *Death of a Salesman* has Miller so manipulated a constituent of drama to project his theme of the Salesman who has lost his job, lost himself, as he does in his development of language in the play. Miller explains this capacity of the interchanges in the work as they relate to Willy's growing inability to separate his authentic self from the Salesman Willy. The latter is puffed up by the cheap and hollow commercial slogans of a public concerned only with a man's productivity, his status, and not the quality of his character:

*When one is speaking to one's family, for example, one uses a certain level of speech, a certain plain diction, perhaps, tone of voice, an inflecting suited to the intimacy of the occasion. But when one faces an audience of strangers, as a politician does for instance--and he is the most social of men--it seems right and proper for him to reach for the well turned phrase, even the poetic word, aphorism, metaphor.*

Willy has bought into a mass produced American ideal as illusory as the phrases he chooses to describe it, "the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want." Miller has so structure language in the play that the character's concern for a lost self and their reliance upon inauthentic values are combined. Miller has presented a man and his sons who have been overtaken by the "solid vault of apartment houses," towering over them. They have relinquished their identity for the illusive promises spawned in a materialistic society. When asked what merchandise Willy is selling in the play, Miller has replied, "and when asked what Willy was selling, what was in his bags, I could only reply, 'himself.'" It is this inseparable connection, Willy's reliance on shoddy values and his quest for his own being in
the world which shapes the nature of Miller's drama and makes it such an exemplary offering of American existential dramaturgy. He has characterized Willy's quest as "above all, perhaps, the images of a need greater that hunger or sex or thirst, a need to leave a thumbprint somewhere in the world."58

Daniel Schneider addressed Miller's treatment of the dialogue in the play, its capacity to encapsulate the playwright's theme, in an article with appeared in a 1949 issue of Theatre Arts. Although Schneider provides a summary statement of Miller's drama coinciding with existential tenets of consciousness, angst, inauthentic values and the capacity of human relationships to encourage spiritual growth, he does not identify existentialism by name as the central force giving the play its content and its form:

*The maniacal refrigerator, the life-sentencing mortgage, the ironic insurance: these things take on the aspect of sardonic gods of the mountain. They are symbols of one theme of the play--that describing a society in which man is a wandering peddler lured from reality by the pink clouds of magic sales talk; a world in which the burden of parenthood is enormous and where the common man has nothing to sell but himself, his pride, his youth.*

*The form of the play is not that of 'flashback' technique, though it has been described as such. It is rather the same technique as that of 'Hamlet': the technique of psychic projection, of hallucination, of the guilty expression of forbidden wishes dramatized.*

Willy Loman, exhausted salesman, does not go back to the past. The past as in hallucinate comes back to him; not chronologically as in 'flashback', but dynamically with the inner logic of his erupting volcanic unconscious.59

A type of moral inertia presented in the dialogue creeps in over Willy and his sons. This is evoked in their many contradictory statements regarding their own lives or their perception of each other. "The trouble is," Willy moans, "he's lazy, goddammit! Biff is a lazy bum!"60 In the next breath, recalling Biffs' prowess on the athletic field Willy states with great pride, "There's one thing about Biff--he's not lazy."61 Miller orchestrates the dialogue in the play to reinforce his conception of the Salesman who no longer knows who he is. And it is in
the exchanges of the dialogue that Miller provides a rational for the spiritual displacement in Willy's life and in his sons' lives. For the catch phrases, the clichés, have separated Willy from the reality of his existence. His refusal to accept the unadorned and uninflected true sense of his life has left him wandering through the meaningless clutter of clichés and advertising slogans. Biff attempts to explain this to his father when he describes his visit to Bill Oliver to ask his former employer for money to finance a business venture:

  BIFF
  I'm going to tell you everything from first to last. It's been a strange day. I had to wait quite a while for him, and--
  WILLY
  Oliver?
  BIFF
  Yeah Oliver. All day, as a matter of cold fact. And a lot of--instances--facts, Pop, facts about my life came back to me. Who was it, Pop? Whoever said I was a salesman with Oliver?
  WILLY
  Well, you were.
  BIFF
  No, Dad. I was a shipping clerk.
  WILLY
  But you were practically--
  BIFF
  Dad, I don't know who said it first, but I was never a salesman for Bill Oliver.
  WILLY
  What're you talking about?
  BIFF
  Let's hold on to the facts tonight, Pop. We're not going to get anywhere bullin' around. I was a shipping clerk.62

Willy's perpetual exaggeration of his own selling ability and his aggrandizements of Biff's business efforts present a man out of touch with reality. He is torn between images and seeing himself truly. It is also in the dialogue that Miller introduces the almost omnipresent sense of anxiety pervading the play. Willy acknowledges this threat of nonbeing in his conversations with his dead brother, Ben:
WILLY

Can't you stay a few days? You're just what I need, Ben, because I--I have a fine position here, but I--well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel--kind of temporary about myself.\(^{63}\)

With the mental review of his life offering little solace to quiet his fears, Willy is left with an abiding sense of dread. "A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got on add up to something."\(^{64}\) It is this fear of nonbeing, of forfeiting his identity and become a nonentity not the fact of death that wracks Willy's faltering constitution. It is fear so abhorrent that he chooses to commit suicide in deference to maintaining the death-in-life existence of his life:

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?\(^{65}\)

It is this drive to imprint his existence, to leave something tangible behind his that drives Willy to complete the last act of his life before he crashes the car. He must get some seeds in the ground, put down roots and leave a reminder that he was here. In one last act, Willy strives to let the world at large know that he worked and sold, that he fathered two sons and that he ultimately failed to realize the unreasonable goals he accepted as his own:

(BIFF moves outside, LINDA following. The light dies down on them and comes up on the center of the apron as WILLY walks into it. He is carrying a flashlight, a hoe, and a handful of seed packets. He raps the top of the hoe sharply to fix it firmly, and then moves to the left, measuring off the distance with his foot. He holds the flashlight to look at the seed packets, reading off the instructions. He is in the blue of the night.)\(^{66}\)

Existential philosopher William Spanos describes these feeling of angst in the following manner. "Stripped of the ethical guides deduced from theological or rational systems, the individual is left asked and along to face in fear and trembling the great void, and to adopt King Lear's words, to decide whether to make something out of nothing."\(^{67}\)
Miller himself, has characterized this quality in the drama stating, "And always throughout, the image of a private man in a world of strangers, a world that is not home nor even an open battleground, but only galaxies of high promise over a fear of falling."

Just as Miller has organized the dramatic constituents of symbol, theme, dramatic action, characterization and dialogue to coincide with an existential perspective, he has structure a physical environment indicative of Willy's way of thinking. Miller has employed the devices of the theatre: set design, lighting, sound, along with his admonitions concerning performance techniques, to reflect his development of existential dramatic form. Miller had taken great care to present a setting with all the necessary and actual accoutrements of the home, "The kitchen at center seems actual enough, for there is a kitchen table with chairs and a refrigerator." And as Willy Loman is a "private man surrounded by strangers," so is the Salesman's house menaced by the hard edge of society beyond. The set spreads towards this impersonal periphery, becoming more abstract and more diffused as it moves from the family's private world to the social world outside. Several critics have aligned Miller's designation of the stage environment with Willy's sense of consciousness and his values although no belaboring upon the consistently existential treatment of other dramatic constituents has been developed. Mary Beth Dakoske provides the most comprehensive analysis of Miller's use of a philosophical perspective dealing with consciousness although she does not identify existentialism by name:

In the stage directions, "the Salesman's house" is described in a way that connects the house with "the Salesman" himself. 'Before us is he Salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides ... As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile--seeming home' The surrounding mass of a apartment buildings intensifies the feeling of the house's fragility. Dwarfed by the 'towering, angular shapes behind it,' the house seems all the more miniscule and insignificant. The metaphor here is clear. "The Salesman's house" and the Salesman are one. Like his home, Willy is hedged in from all sides."
It is important to note that Miller has included in this design all the devices necessary to realize Willy's internal journey. He has presented a concrete stage environment and organized the abstract notion of time to reflect the pattern of Willy Loman's consciousness. As Miller has stated:

*Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scene of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping "through" a wall onto the fore stage.*

Because "The entire setting is wholly, or, in some places, partially transparent," the inside of Willy's mind and the subjective nature of his existence, is objectified in graphic detail. Miller's original concept of the Salesman's head, roughly the size of the proscenium arch, is no longer necessary. Such as establishment and consistent use of convention removes the play from realism, migrating toward a psychological reality concerned with consciousness and a quest for the self. Orem Overland addresses Miller's treatment of the play's setting and the playwright's creation of a specific dramatic form. Overland viewed Miller's dramatic presentation as a means of uniting the two forms Miller had discussed in his many theatre essays, namely realistic-family dramas and nonrealistic social-dramas. In analyzing the production format of *Death of a Salesman* Overland viewed Miller's approach, employing realistic set pieces and a somewhat expressionistic skyline, as Miller's unification of the two forms on stage:

*Indeed, for Miller synthesis has largely been a question of dramatic form, and the problem for the playwright has been to create a viable form that could bridge the deep split between the private life of a man and his social life.*

Occasionally dismissed as a mere consequence of production costs Miller's spares design had angered some critics and some have persistently ignored the relationship between the play's form and its physical expression. As Eric Bentley writes in his The Theatre of Commitment:
Nowhere more than in stage design is the matter of expense the decisive one. America spends a lot on stage design and doesn't get very much for its money ... The chief new-fashioned one is the interior-and-exterior-combined (Death of a Salesman, Rose, Tattoo, Streetcar), of which the porch-and-surroundings is a variant (All My Sons, Picnic). Some sets of these two types have been very fine pieces of composition, but the possibilities of variation are limited; and the alternatives to the standard modern patterns seem also to run to type.74

Jo Mielziner crafted Miller's physical specifications and added a great deal to Miller's concept. He created a set design for Miller's Death of Salesman in accordance with Miller's vision of reality and his development of dramatic action. The designer viewed the final product as a migration away from selective realism. As he stated:

When I used leaf projections in Death of Salesman to suggest the passing of the seasons, audiences easily accepted these symbolic images of time passing. I have found that timidity is not as prevalent in audiences as it is in authors, directors, and producers. Most designers worth their salt are eager and able to use this approach--they are all convinced that literal realism is the least creative of all approaches to the visual style of living theatre. It may be dangerous and dogmatic to prophesy tomorrow's theatre trends but I can say safely that the purely illusionary approach of the past has little to contribute to tomorrow.75

Gerald Weales comments upon Miller's integration of theme, setting, and dramatic form in The American Theater Today. Weales recognized Miller's turn from realism toward a form projecting individual consciousness:

Although the version of Salesman that finally reached the stage has objective scenes as well as subjective ones, both Salesman and After the Fall make use of the ideas and the devices of expressionistic theatre. The barriers of time and space disappear. The skeletal set of Salesman and the free form set of Fall were conceived to let Miller's heroes step freely from the present to the past, or, particularly in the case of Quentin, from one moment in the past to another. Both plays are designed to let the playwright (and his characters) escape the restrictions of conventional realism.76

Nowhere in the scheme of dramatic action is the connection between Miller's dramatic form and the structure of the physical environment more explicit that it is in the
Requiem. For as Biff declares, "He has all the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong. He never knew who he was," the stage is bathed in semi-darkness. The light signifying the light of consciousness has flickered and is fading fast with Willy's final descent into nonbeing. "Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage, as over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus and The Curtain Falls." Miller's "private man" had been destroyed by "the strangers beyond his home." John MacNicholas offers an added explanation of this convergence of theme, action, and setting in his Dictionary of Literary Biography:

Mielziner's set played a major part in making the journey into Willy's memory believable. After The Man Who Had All the Luck, Miller became convinced that shifting scenery was one of the quickest ways to turn the audience's attention from the dramatic focus of the play. He wanted a set where characters could move through time and space without moving props. As he conceived of the play, exposition would become part of the action on stage and not a story told by one of the characters. Mielziner, who had just come from designing the set for A Streetcar Named Desire, where lighting had played an important part in distinguishing the brutal Stanley Kowalski from the fragile Blanche Dubois, constructed a set in which the skeleton of Willy's house become all the place called for in the play ...

Both lighting and sound also played an integral role in establishing a framework conducive to Willy's way of thinking. MacNicolas describes Mielziner's use of lighting to coincide with his set design reflecting consciousness:

The lighting of the play, particularly the use of various kinds of magic lantern shows, allowed instant changes in time and place that would have taken minutes in a conventional set. The return to the glory days of Biff's' youth, for example, was signaled by projecting a spring like, leafy green pattern on walls and furniture. The apartment houses that hem in Willy's home in his old age were produced by back lighting so they could be removed to suggest the earlier, more hopeful days.

The fragile melody of the flute which opens the drama and which fades in the darkness following Willy's death is a haunting reminder of Willy's father and the Salesman's
search for his origins. Like the unfettered and fragile soul of the man it plays on through the darkness, its solitary tune reflecting something of the loneliness, something of the displacement of this "common man" with the "turbulent longings" which cannot be fulfilled. The final image of Willy spiritually broken, with his pathetic packet of seeds and his flashlight, surrounded by the "the blue of night", posits Miller's existential man in concrete from. For Willy is groping in the darkness of unconsciousness hoping to find some measurable trace of his true self.

All of the characters' actions present real human beings responding in a recognizable manner. Their responses to one another, their gestures, movements and focus betray none of the surrealistic or expressionistic tendencies mentioned by some critics. The dramatic format as a whole, its externalization of Willy's mind, allowing us to see "inside his head", moves Death of Salesman beyond realism or naturalism into the subjective realm of existential drama. Drama Critic Walter Kerr characterized the play as Willy's perception of his existence in the world:

There was much savagery in Mr. Scott's performance—he came on like the last bald American eagle dead set for a final reckoning—but it was more than the quite normal savagery of his customary stage deportment, it was a savagery uncovered in the near-manic, electrifying shifts of mood, boast and bile back to back, of Arthur Miller.81

Kerr describes an almost intangible quality of the play in performance, a quality which connects the play with realistic elements, yet serves to direct it toward the more subjective, the internal and highly personal region of psychological realism. To Kerr, the play took its impetus from the nature of this perception. He observed that the play's form was connected to Willy's perception of his own life and to the values which both sustained and destroyed him:

I remember assuming that Willy Loman had once been a successful salesman, had once done well by his wife and his sons, had once made 'a smile and a shoeshine' work for him. Mr. Scott's Willy had always had to compensate, to
inflate his indeterminate place in the scheme of things, to substitute for his sickened hollowness and equally hollow image in which only others--only his adoring sons--could possibly have believed. He had been a shell from the beginning, filling himself with borrowed life, life that could be borrowed from successful salesman he'd admired, life that might be borrowed--on a kind of promissory note--from the envisioned success of his two boys.⁸²

Linda's summary statement, her simple, eloquent perception of her husband's existence, rings out loud and clear amid the tangle of lies and illusions. She leaves an unforgettable picture in the mind of the audience of a small man buffeted by the "turbulent longings" within his soul, and his attachment to the crass values which formed a type of ase exterior. Linda's description refers to a man possessing a degree of consciousness which hints at something more profound just around the corner, something genuine. But Linda's Willy never possessed sufficient self knowledge to pluck his life from the "junk yard" he was in constant battle with:

LINDA

I don't say he's great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person.⁸³

Miller's own explanation of the play leaves an indelible impression in the mind. He describes a partially conscious man, a man who in the face of "ringing up a zero", chooses the only avenue he has come to understand. Willy decides to commit suicide and thereby leave something concrete behind for his sons and wife. Celebrating his son's love, but still gladdened with the old illusions of money and success he has carried for the duration of his life, Willy terminates his death-in-life existence. He invests his hopes for the future and his affirmation of a more meaningful life in the potential he believes his sons possess. As Miller has stated:

As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character why
is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—this sense of personal dignity... Tragedy then, is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly.
23. Ibid., p. 121.
29. Ibid., p. 1039.
30. Ibid., p. 1043.
38. Ibid., p. 1023.
39. Ibid., p. 1022.
43. Miller, "The Family in Modern Drama," p. 73.
44. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p. 171.
47. Ibid., p. 170.
49. Ibid., p. 1024.
50. Ibid., Act 2, p. 1052.
52. Miller, *Death of Salesman*, in Masters of Modern Drama, Act 1, pp. 1021-1022.
56. Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, in Masters of Modern Drama, Act 1, p. 1026.
57. Miller, "Death of a Salesman", in Playwrights on Playwriting, p. 266.
58. Ibid., p. 267.
60. Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, in Masters of Modern Drama, Act 1, p. 1022.
61. Ibid.
63. Ibid., Act 1, p. 1031.
64. Ibid., Act 2, p. 1050.
65. Ibid.
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69. Miller, *Death of Salesman*, in Masters of Modern Drama, Act 1, p. 1020.
71. Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, in Masters of Modern Drama, Act 1, p. 1020.
72. Ibid.
77. Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, in Masters of Modern Drama, Requiem, p. 1054.
78. Ibid.
80. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
82. Ibid., p. 229.
83. Miller, Death of a Salesman, in Master of Modern Drama, Act 1, p. 1032.