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PSYCHOLOGICAL DISCOURSE IN MILLER'S *A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS*

Arthur Miller's one-act play *A Memory of Two Mondays* was produced in 1955, as a double-bill with *A View from the Bridge* in its original one-act version. *A Memory of Two Mondays* is one of the few modern American plays that takes place in an industrial work environment. Actually, it focuses on a group of manual workers inside their work-space, thus providing the various socio-critical *topoi*¹ of the drama. When it was first performed, the play was dismissed so thoroughly that, as Miller informs us, in one of the most important reviews it was not even mentioned as having been performed.² Later, dramatic critics were not as concerned with this play as they were with the playwright's other works. Even in longer critical studies of Arthur Miller's work, the treatment of this play is relatively limited and often incidental. Furthermore, *A Memory of Two Mondays* has been called one of Miller's lesser plays, although a number of scholars would not readily agree and, on the contrary, point out some of its fine qualities.³ In my estimation, this play justifies Miller's considerable esteem for it.⁴ In retrospect, seeing it against the background of his dramatic output up to now, I believe that this is one of the playwright's best achievements and one of the most important one-act plays in modern American drama. It is my contention then, that this play has been underestimated and has not been given the attention it deserves.

In an effort to understand the play's meager critical reception, one cannot fail to observe that it exhibits certain characteristics which have led critics to view it as a play that stands apart from those works that established Miller as an important figure in the world of American dramatists. This discrimination prevents full-fledged inclusion of *A Memory of Two Mondays* among the representative American drama in which Miller stands as a major playwright. Made to stand apart in this way, this play is rarely analyzed in depth; consequently, certain of its qualities have not been revealed and properly appreciated. Therefore, my basic purpose here is to support a twofold

1. For the term "socio-critical *topos*" I am indebted to Prof. John Chioles who read a first draft of the paper and made a number of useful comments. Another term for which I am indebted to Prof. Chioles is "transvaluation" (used later in this paper) which fully describes what I had been wanting to express but had not found a word as precise and accurate as this.

2. *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*, with an introd. (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), p. 48.

3. See for example Dennis Welland, *Arthur Miller* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), pp. 92-96; Leonard Moss, *Arthur Miller*, rev. ed. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pp. 49-52.

4. See *Collected Plays*, p. 49.

argument: that the play belongs to the main body of Miller's work, and that it should be considered as an integral part of Introspective Realism which characterizes modern American drama.⁵ Basically, *A Memory of Two Mondays*, which has been called a "social play" in the strictest sense of the term,⁶ reflects the complex psychological discourse and orientation of the American realistic theater. My aim will be to explore this notion and, in so doing, I hope to contribute to a reappraisal of the play, giving it the attention that is due.

The main characteristic of *A Memory of Two Mondays* is, on the one hand, related to its thematic concerns which are thought to deviate from the dominant themes generally treated by Miller. Thus Benjamin Nelson states:

A Memory of Two Mondays does not fit into any plan that neatly traces the thematic development of Arthur Miller. A play... basically departing from the major themes and conflicts that had interested him in the past and would again preoccupy him in future endeavors. The play does not deal with ethical problems; it contains no strong moral conflicts nor does it present the need for self-recognition, free choice, or commitment. It is not about family strife... It does not advocate, condemn, polemicize, or even judge.⁷

On the other hand, this play is believed to be of a different type. Thus Leonard Moss, distinguished Miller scholar, asserts:

The work was not, like those that had immediately preceded it, a psychological study with social connotations; it could be labeled a "social play" in the strictest sense of the term.⁸

This statement, which suggests an exclusion of psychological discourse as a fundamental structural and thematic element of the play, lacks critical acumen. And this because, although I do believe that the basic goals of the play are social it is also true that the concurrent psychological discourse — less on the surface than in the other works of Miller — is nevertheless of primary importance in terms of the play's structure and meaning.

An examination of the thematic content and the structure of *A Memory of Two Mondays* in reference to the principles of American Psychological

5. The thesis that Introspective Realism is representative of Modern American Drama has been supported in my doctoral dissertation: "Αμερικάνικο Θέατρο: Κοινωνικο-πολιτιστική Διαλεκτική στο Ρεαλισμό του 20ού Αιώνα" (Αθήνα, 1987).

6. Moss, *Arthur Miller*, p. 49.

7. "A Memory of Two Mondays: Remembrance and Reflection in Arthur Miller," in *Arthur Miller: New Perspectives*, ed. Robert A. Martin (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), p. 157.

8. *Arthur Miller*, p. 49.

Realism and, especially, to the method of composition of Introspective Realism will be instructive. According to this method of composition, a playwright relies on the revelation of a strictly subjective reality in order to portray what is objectively real and by that proceed to express a philosophical position. The starting point for the play's action is a personal psychological crisis, the motivation and the development of which shape its subject matter and determine the formation of its structure.⁹

Unlike other plays of Miller conforming to this method of composition, in *A Memory of Two Mondays* the development of the sociophilosophical problem with which the writer deals is not revealed through the force of a personal situation. The sociophilosophical position becomes manifest through the investigation of a common problem faced by a representative social group. In other words, the protagonist and the source of the action here, contrary to what happens in most of Miller's well-known plays, is not the individual but the group. The choice made by the dramatist has led him to the use of appropriate dramatic techniques which enabled him to present the nature as well as the cause and effect of the social problem under consideration, and to project this as a problem common to the members of the group so that the gravity of its consequences is emphasized. In this framework, the play's composition is based primarily on the prismatic presentation of the common problem faced by the dramatic characters on whom the development of the action depends — a technique which necessarily allows limited room for a detailed psychological investigation of the characters' sayings and doings. Moreover, in dealing with a group of people, rather than one protagonist, it becomes essential to assign each one a common role through which any distinctive element that could minimize their representativeness is avoided by the playwright. It is, in fact, for this reason that although the characters in *A Memory of Two Mondays* are not in a conventional sense fully developed, we could not possibly consider that this is a dramatic defect or inefficiency. On the contrary we could maintain that the degree of the characters' roundness is consistent with the structural rules of the play and contributes to its balance and economy.

Turning our attention now to the setting and the dramatic situation in which the characters of the play are involved, we could say that they are largely determined by the social nature of the problem that is set by the play which, unlike *Death of a Salesman* and *A View from the Bridge*, for example, "speaks not of obsession but of rent and hunger and the need for a little poetry in life," as Miller explains.¹⁰ These dramatic situations illustrate the

9. For a more extended discussion concerning the method of composition of Introspective Realism see my doctoral dissertation (cited in n. 5), pp. 211-15.

10. *Collected Plays*, p. 49.

painful and often tragic consequences of the social problem which Miller wants to expose to the audience, hoping to guide them, as he himself asserts, into realizing "that men live this way because they must serve an industrial apparatus which feeds them in body and leaves them to find sustenance for their souls as they may."¹¹ This statement that Miller makes, in relation to the influence of the social system on the human soul, displays an interest which leaps over the sociopolitical sphere and plunges into the concerns of Psychology and, to a lesser degree, the concerns of Metaphysics. Actually, a close reading of the play, brings to the surface a synthetic process which is unorthodox for social plays. This process is based largely on a psychological approach to the social problem. More specifically, the theatrical expression of the social problem, which the audience is led to become conscious of, and perhaps give a solution to, is done through the projection of the psychological consequences on the lives of those people who Miller sees as "that sub-culture where the sinews of the economy are rooted, that darkest Africa of our society."¹²

Determined by the particular approach to the central problem, as posed above, some basic themes of the play depict psychological states, as is true in all of the major plays by Miller and other important playwrights representative of Introspective Realistic Drama — such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee and Sam Shepard. The theatrical development of these themes rests upon the function of the psychological element as a structural tool, serving the formation of the dramatic characters and the human relationships through which the dramatic action is built and the play's atmosphere is created. It should be stressed at this point that this is a basic technique commonly encountered in the best plays of Introspective Realism, belonging as much to Miller as to a score of other American playwrights.

Among the basic themes depicting psychological states, then, the one that predominates is the theme of frustration which shapes the lives and personalities of the characters that suffer from it. It is of particular importance to the play's meaning to understand that frustration constitutes a state in which all the play's characters are found; all except Bert who is generally differentiated by Miller not only to serve as a contrast but also so that through this differentiation he may express some hope and optimism.

In order to create the conditions for the state of frustration prevalent in his play, Miller relies first of all on the setting, the social *topoi*, in which the action is carried out. The time is the period of the Depression while the place is "the shipping room of a large auto-parts warehouse... in an industrial section of

11. "On Social Plays," in *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller*, ed. Robert A. Martin (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 65.

12. *Collected Plays*, p. 49.

New York."¹³ And, as Miller warns, "the place must seem dirty and unmanageably chaotic, but... it is also romantic. It is a little world, a home to which... these people like to come every Monday morning despite what they say" (pp. 232-33). This superficially contradictory element is psychologically and theatrically justified since the play's characters, a miscellaneous group of "marginal" people, are brought together by this very work environment. Moreover, the fact that they are fated to lead a common filthy life creates a link that unifies them. In reality, their repetitive and uncreative labor causes painful boredom while at the same time it establishes a stultifying sense of security since it provides them with an income, minimal but vital in this difficult period of the Depression. Hence, in order to retaliate against their social estrangement (an unavoidable result of the anti-intellectual, dehumanizing manual work) they tend to transform this depressing warehouse into a home and their co-workers into members of the family. Therefore, the feelings of solidarity that are established among them, in essence, express their deep psychological need to deal with the loneliness and despair which is an outcome of the alienating and frustrating conditions in which they are trapped because of the socioeconomic structure of the cultural milieu.¹⁴

In order to stress the conflicting feelings originating from the specific labor conditions, Miller chose as the particular time of his play two Mondays, the first in midsummer and the second in winter of the same or perhaps a different year. This choice is especially well-aimed since Monday denotes not only the beginning of an endless, monotonous working week but, also, the return to a place that creates a feeling of belonging.

In addition to the above, the function of the setting extends to the action itself as has already been implied. It is interesting to observe that in *A Memory of Two Mondays* Miller makes use of a technique not frequently encountered in the theater since the setting usually serves as a background to the action or, sometimes, functions as a symbol that underlines or interprets it. On the contrary, in this play, the setting seems to actually bring the action into being as it shapes the characters' psychological condition, determines the content of the dialogue and motivates the scenic events. The latter are finally shown as consequences of the frustration of these socially wronged individuals. The socio-critical *topos*, therefore, functions in a transvaluational manner, moving from the physical setting to the psychologically discursive to the socioeconomic and finally to the character's action itself.

From the very first scenes of the play, where the exposition is made, we

13. Miller, *A Memory of Two Mondays*, in *Collected Plays*, p. 332. All further references to this work are cited in the text by page number.

14. Concerning the theme of work alienation in Miller's plays see Paul Blumberg, "Work as Alienation in the Plays of Arthur Miller," in *Arthur Miller*, ed. Martin, pp. 48-64.

observe the characters reacting to the boredom that their job entails and to the miserable environment. Furthermore, a good part of the dialogue expresses the effort that most of the characters make to escape from the monotony of their work by conversing about cars, women and drink. This effort is also reflected in their naive and often dirty jokes — characteristic of individuals in their situation. It is important to note here that this joking gives a comical dimension to the dialogue. This dimension is also responsible for Miller's calling this play a "pathetic comedy"¹⁵ — a description which is perhaps appropriate, the emphasis being on "pathetic." Because, this comical element (which we rarely and only incidentally encounter in other plays by Miller, does in no way stimulate any real feelings of gaiety, for they display no wit or humor; their jokes are coarse, loud, tasteless jests that stimulate feelings of pity. In fact, it seems that the quality of this pathetic drollery emphasizes the bitter reality, the social and psychological deadlock in which the working class is trapped.

As the play unfolds, Miller centers the action around the consequences of the escape mechanisms used by frustrated characters in order to face reality. Among the ways of escape that the characters resort to, the one that Miller mainly concentrates on in this play is drinking. The dramatic development of this form of illusion is achieved primarily through Tom Kelly and Kenneth by means of the dramatic devices of antithesis and parallelism, used most effectively here by the playwright. However, the full development of this theme is accomplished through additional characters who use the same means of escape. We may refer to Gus and to Jerry, also Willy to a lesser degree. By making this repetitive presentation of the drinking habit and its effects, through several characters, Miller succeeds, first of all, in giving a global picture of the issue and, secondly, in identifying a problem common to this social group.

Tom is the central character of the climactic dramatic episode, in the first part of *A Memory of Two Mondays*; an episode, which both serves the emotional tone of the play and creates suspense. Moreover, through this episode, Miller develops not only the themes of frustration and illusion but also the theme of solidarity — a theme we come across frequently in other plays by Miller, such as *All My Sons*, *A View from the Bridge*, and *Incident at Vichy*.

In *A Memory of Two Mondays*, the action (which is considered minimal according to conventional standards) begins as Tom comes to work late, in a condition that is more like a retreat from reality than a state of utter drunkenness. This condition makes his fellow workers anxious while it intrigues the audience who are eager to see what will happen at the arrival of

15. Miller, *Collected Plays*, p. 49.

the owner of the warehouse, with the label name Mr. Eagle. A basic source for the anxiety and suspense is the fact that Tom's appearance indicates an internal conflict. In other words, even though he has managed to come to work and, actually, fairly presentable, he remains silent and still on a chair. As Agnes observes, "Oh, he's awake. Somewhere inside, y'know. He just can't show it, somehow. It's not really like being drunk, even" (p. 348). However, the cause of Tom's condition is identified by Kenneth who, in contrast with Tom, at this stage, does not yet show his having been influenced by the environment.

KENNETH (to Larry): Ah, you can't blame the poor feller; sixteen years of his life in this place.

LARRY: You said it.

KENNETH: There's a good deal of monotony connected with the life, isn't it?

LARRY: You ain't kiddin'.

KENNETH: Oh, there must be a terrible lot of Monday mornings in sixteen years. And no philosophical idea at all, y'know, to pass the time? (p. 347)

Thus, as becomes obvious from the above dialogue, intoxication is in this case a desperate expression of the need to escape from an empty, weary, meaningless life.

Finally, at the crucial moment, when Tom is about to confront Mr. Eagle, he manages to overcome the paralyzing influence of alcohol and, with the help of his co-workers, to keep his position, at least for the time being. Later, in the second part of the play, Tom has quit drinking altogether — perhaps under the threat of his being fired — and shows that he has undergone a complete change in character. This change is revealed through cold rationalism that touches the boundaries of cynicism. For example, referring to Bert's goal to go to college, he says: "College guys are selling ties all over Macy's. Accountancy, Bert, that's my advice to you. You don't even have to go to college for it, either" (p. 362).

These reactions cost him dearly, of course. His fellow workers, who have not yet really lost all hope, start losing the affection and sympathy that they had for him. Larry, for instance, says: "You know, Tommy, I'm beginning to like you better drunk? (Tommy laughs, beyond criticism). I mean it. Before, we only had to pick you up all the time; now you got opinions about everything" (p. 362).

We observe that Tom's change is not presented by Miller as positive. On the contrary, it demonstrates a complete resignation from any sort of reaction against his depressing job and his life, in general. This signals firstly his passing from the state of frustration to that of despair, and, secondly, his

total alienation as an individual and as a member of society.¹⁶ Alienation seems to be considered by Miller as destructive for the individual as illusion is, because, in essence, what it does is to cripple the human being completely, transforming him or her into a passive instrument of the system in modern capitalist society. This view of Miller's is illustrated, where Tom is concerned, by the consequences of his transformation which affects the way he relates to his environment. More specifically, it is reflected in the ironic effect that Tom's response has to Kenneth's comment:

KENNETH:... Oh, Tommy, you're the first man I ever heard of done it.
How'd you do it Tom?

TOM: Will power, Kenny. (He walks to his desk, sits.) Just made up my mind, that's all. (p. 361)

This response brings out the irony of the fact that Tom is finally able to stop escaping from his miserable reality, without having made any steps towards changing it. Indeed, Tom's advice to Bert, as the latter is leaving the warehouse for good, has the same effect: "Well, keep up the will power, y'know. That's what does it" (p. 374).

Another character in the play, who ends by giving up, surrendering to wretched reality, is the Irishman, Kenneth. Through the development of this character, Miller illustrates how the frustrating and alienating effects, caused by the particular reality confronted, gradually dominate a life. In contrast to Tom Kelly, who is already forty years old when the play begins (and who after sixteen years of work in this warehouse, is at the peak of his psychological crisis that will lead him to surrender), Kenneth is twenty-six, and came to the United States only six months ago, obviously seeking a better way of life. He is well in body and soul; he spends his Sundays in the park; and he often recites poems that sparkle with hope:

"Courage, brother! do not stumble
Though thy path be dark as night;
There's a star to guide the humble:
Trust in God, and do the Right." (p. 339)

He is disgusted with the repelling environment — the rats, the dust, the incredibly dirty windows that block the view — and he tries to make improvements. In other words, he reacts normally to his frustration which has not yet become a psychological state. Nevertheless, in his confessional monologue (with which the transition of the action from the first to the second

16. This observation about the alienating effects of wage labor on Tom's character might complement Blumberg's examples from *A Memory of Two Mondays*. In fact, in his article "Work as Alienation in the Plays of Arthur Miller," Blumberg focuses on Kenneth's character in order to support his argument.

Monday occurs) he describes, with an evident tone of anger, his life which is full of loneliness, deprivation and boredom (see pp. 358-59). Already, we see the signs of the environment's catastrophic influence — signs which become more marked as the action progresses. When the second part of the play begins, Kenneth is starting to forget the poems that he used to know. What is more important, he has already submitted to the most common means of escape from reality; that is, he has taken to drink as a consequence of his sense of frustration. Shortly before the play ends, he confesses to Bert the humiliating consequences of his having gotten drunk the day before, and shows the first symptoms of his being ready to compromise:

KENNETH: It's disgraceful, what I done. I'm standin' there, havin' a decent conversation, that's all, and before I know it I start rockin' the damned thing, and it toppled over and broke every glass in the place, and the beer spoutin' out of the pipes all over the floor. They took all me money; I'll be six weeks payin' them back. I'm for the Civil Service, I think; I'll get back to regular there, I think.

BERT: Well — good luck, Kenny. (Blushing): I hope you'll remember the poems again.

KENNETH (as though they were unimportant): No, they're gone, Bert. There's too much to do in this country for that kinda stuff. (p. 375)

So, Kenneth, like Tom before him, will give in to things as they are rather than suffer complete loss of his integrity. His decision to be hired as a guard in an insane asylum is equivalent to a total resignation from any sort of hope and dream for a better life. He, himself, is conscious of it as he says: "There's one thing you have to say for the Civil Service; it seals the fate and locks the door. A man needn't wonder what he'll do with his life any more" (p. 365). And, it is definite that this compromise will not be easy for Kenneth, as his comment to Bert shows:

But it's sixteen hundred a year, Bert, and I've a feelin' I'd never dare leave it, y'know? And I'm not ready for me last job yet, I think. I don't want nothin' to be the last yet. Still and all... (p. 360)

As becomes evident above, Kenneth's development in the play illustrates Miller's stance that making compromises, as Tom and Kenneth do, signals as much despair and depression as illusion does — the difference being that illusion is at least some sort of reaction (however passive a form it might take in the case of intoxication), whereas compromise reveals resignation, and this is much more tragic. Wishing to stress this very tragedy, in fact, Miller devotes the last scene of the play, after Bert's departure, to Tom and primarily Kenneth who has become so alienated that he has turned his own resignation into a philosophy of life (see p. 376).

One of the most important characters for the structure and the philosophy of *A Memory of Two Mondays* is Gus who shows similar symptoms of frustration and illusion with Tom and Kenneth but who develops differently from these two. First of all, from the beginning to the end of the play Gus is in a continuous search for some sort of gratification which is manifested, despite his sixty-eight years, through the manic hung up of chasing after women. It comes out in his teasing of Patricia — "You let me get my hands on you I give you King Kong" (p. 336) — and in his flirting with Agnes:

GUS (going for her): Aggie, you make me crazy for you!

AGNES (laughing and running from him toward the toilet door): Gus!

GUS: Agnes, let's go Atlantic City! (p. 336)

However, his monomania becomes even more apparent when he is conversing with Jim (another "belated" lover in his mid-seventies), in the first part of the play, about their having had fun the previous evening — with "darn nice girls" (see pp. 337-38). From the conversation it is revealed that this particular evening he has abandoned his seriously ill wife to enjoy himself. Hence, it is apparent that this behavior shows his effort to escape an unbearable reality: a dying, old wife and physical as well as psychological weariness — the only compensation he has after having worked in the appalling warehouse for twenty-two years.

Despite his attempts to escape, during the first Monday of the play, Gus, is portrayed as a person who has realized how futile it is to try and improve his job conditions. This is why when Kenneth complains about the mice, for example, Gus responds with a "leave them mice alone" (p. 342). In the second part of the play, however, Gus is significantly changed, just like the other two characters discussed earlier. In fact, like Tom in the first part of the play, Gus is now undergoing a decisive psychological crisis. The fact that this crisis is resolved with Gus's death plays an essential role in both the emotional tone and the meaning of the play. Unlike Tom and Kenneth, however, during the second Monday, Gus has a desperate reaction to deprivation and misery. It becomes evident in what he says when he comes into work drunk: "I don't give one goddam for Eagle! Why he don't make one more toilet?" (p. 364) and "Why them goddam mice nobody does nothing?" (p. 364). It is also obvious as he decides to quit his job and spend all his insurance money in order to enjoy all the things he has been deprived of in his life. This reaction that Gus has is due to the realization that he has come up a dead end, and it is revealed to Bert with a tone of mild aggressiveness before he leaves the warehouse for good:

GUS (swaying, to Bert): Twenty-two years I was here.

BERT: I know, Gus.

(Larry, enters, watches).

GUS: I was here before you was born I was here.

BERT: I know.

GUS: Them mice was here before you was born. (Bert nods uncomfortably, full of sadness.) When Mr. Eagle was in high school I was already here. When there was Winton Six I was here. When was Minerva car I was here. When was Stanley Steamer I was here, and Stearns Knight, and Marmon was good car; I was here all them times. I was here first day Raymond come; he was young boy; work hard be manager. When Agnes still think she was gonna get married I was here. When was Locomobile, and model K Ford and Model N Ford — all them different Fords, and Franklin was good car, Jordan car, Pierce Arrow, Cleveland car — all them was good cars. All them times I was here.

BERT: I know.

GUS: You don't know nothing. Come on, Jim. (He goes and gets a fender. Jim gets the other.) Button up you coat, cold outside. Tommy? Take care everything good. (p. 370)

Gus's crisis that brings him to full consciousness is most probably caused by his wife's death after which he found himself completely alone and without any reason to continue putting up with his way of life: "What for I put in bank? I'm sixty-eight years old, Larry, I got no children, nothing. What for I put in bank?" (p. 364). Finally, Gus's last reaction, his choice to drive himself to his own death, denotes his decision of a total refusal of reality. The fact that Gus actually desired to die is exposed in Jim's narration of how his friend died (see pp. 372-73). This inner wish to end his life is implied in his efforts to communicate with his brother in California and in his words which, according to Jim, Gus kept repeating all through that last night: "I'm gonna do it right, Jim."

By deciding to die, Gus — like Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* — is granted some qualities of a hero. Furthermore, his conduct basically distinguishes him from all the other characters in the play who have compromised and places him next to all those characters in the American theater that fight against giving in and adapting themselves to the American "nightmare."

One more character of the play who strongly reacts to the feelings of frustration is Larry who makes a desperate effort to fulfill his dream. His case is typical. It is like the case of thousands of people who are frustrated because of too much poverty and too many family responsibilities which prevent them from enjoying the goods of an affluent society. Larry's problem takes shape in his desire to own a luxurious car and his reaction is seen in the first part of the play by his buying an "Auburn," without caring that this car is too expensive for him. To Gus, who comments that it will be difficult to

sell such a car, he says: "I'm sick of dreaming about things. They've got the most beautiful laid-out valves in the country on that car, and I want it, that's all" (p. 342). In fact, however, the purchase of a car — which is his dream come true — makes his financial difficulties more intense and this, in turn, increases his psychological problem:

Two years I'm asking for a lousy five-dollar raise. Meantime my brother's into me for fifty bucks for his wife's special shoes; my sister's got me for sixty-five to have her kid's teeth fixed. So I buy a car, and they're all on my back — how'd I dare buy a car! Whose money is it? (p. 349)

In the second part of the play, as was to be expected, Larry has to sell the car:

PATRICIA (catching up with Larry at the edge of the stage, quietly):
What's Ray sayin' about you sellin' the Auburn?

LARRY: Yeah, I'm kinda fed up with it. It's out of my class anyway. (p. 367)

Larry's response depicts his disillusionment while, at the same time, it illustrates his realization of a bitter social reality. This realization will obviously prevent his way out into dream and bring him into the same hopeless situation of the other characters in this play.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that Miller chose an unorthodox technique to project the illusory nature of a dream: its short-lived fulfilment. This same technique has also been used by Tennessee Williams in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. More specifically, Blanche's dream to marry Mitch and thus overcome her painful loneliness had almost come true; but it collapsed because it was unattainable. And it was unattainable because the possibilities for its realization were based on the false image of herself that she had presented to Mitch. Therefore, her dream collapsing is a natural consequence of the inescapable exposure of the truth.

In order to complete our observations on Larry, it is interesting to note that the way in which the theme of frustration is developed through this character, constitutes a dramatic portrayal of the deprivation of the possibility to dream. This deprivation contributes to a multifaceted presentation of utter despair. It is also worth remarking that escape into dream, in contrast with escape through intoxication, is very rare in this play because the life of its characters is so flat that even the possibility of dreaming is extinguished. Moreover, these people are indeed not allowed to dream. Dreaming for them is a luxury which they may not indulge in since they cannot even cover their fundamental needs. Hence, the conflicts of the frustrated characters in *A Memory of Two Mondays* seem to concentrate basically on the struggle they are carrying out within themselves to accept the lack of possibility for a better

way of life — a struggle which, as we have seen, is bound to result in hopeless compromise, in psychological pain and despair, or in total refusal of life and its reality through self-willed death.

The psychological approach to the social problem treated by Miller in *A Memory of Two Mondays* is not restricted to the portrayal of the psychological effects of the problem on the characters. It is extended to a narrative element which he uses; an element that gives this play the form of nostalgic memory and permits the use of different dramatic techniques which determine its style, described by Miller as "abstract realism."¹⁷

In *A Memory of Two Mondays* Miller presents the characters and the dramatic events as recollected by Bert; thus, the action of the play is definitely filtered through the point of view of Bert, the narrator, who is himself a character in the play. This technique has also been used by Tennessee Williams in *The Glass Menagerie*. In contrast to Williams, of course, Miller does not reveal the narrator of his story from the start, even though the existence of a narrator is implied by the title which also serves to underline how significant the narrator's point of view is for the content and the structure of the play. Furthermore, unlike Williams, Miller restricts his narrative element to only two confessional monologues by Bert — one in the middle of the play (p. 358) and the other towards the end (pp. 370-71).

In his use of this narrative element Miller does away with the realistic convention of the fourth wall and achieves an alienating effect which objectifies the problem that the action reveals. What plays a most essential role in the objectification of the problem, however, is the decision to present the dramatic events as experienced by a boy of eighteen. And, as Benjamin Nelson observes, "Bert's is the story of a boy's initiation into maturity, the bumpy voyage from the deceptive surety of innocence to the doubt and anguish bred of experience."¹⁸ In other words, since Bert is still on his way to maturity, and has not yet formed a particular socio-political ideology, he can still function as an innocent and, therefore, objective observer. Thus, Bert's narration becomes a successful technique chosen by Miller so that he can directly express his sympathy for these people and, at the same time, indirectly attack the social system.

The presentation of the dramatic events through Bert's recollection also serves, though less successfully, one more of Miller's aims: to deliver his optimistic message about the importance of hope. As already mentioned earlier, Bert is the only character that Miller differentiates. He is the only person who has a different fate. He succeeds in escaping from the miserable environment and achieves his initial goal: to save the money for his tuition to

17. "On Social Plays," p. 65.

18. Nelson, p. 152.

college. Judging by his overall behavior, and by the fact that he finally manages not to be affected by the alienating force of routine, his achievement is due to certain qualities in his character; more specifically, it is due to his intellectual and social interests, to his concentration on his goal which he pursues systematically and especially to his will power (values prevalent in the American society). These qualities are noted by Kenneth:

I suppose he's just got some strong idea in his mind. That's the thing, y'know. I often conceive them myself but I'm all the time losin' them, though. It's holding on — that's what does it. You can almost see it in him, y'know? He's holdin' on to somethin'. (p. 340)

As a character Bert is an extension of Bernard in *Death of a Salesman* whom Miller contrasts with Biff especially so that he stress the idea that social and material success is feasible for those individuals who systematically pursue the intellectual goals they are devoted to. However, in *A Memory of Two Mondays* Bert's success, presented as a result of the aforementioned personal qualities, is contrasted with the failure of all the other characters that do not have similar qualities. It is my contention here that, inspite of Miller's intentions, this contrast does not emphasize his optimistic message concerning the importance and power of hope. I believe that it underlines the contradictory reality of American society and places the failures of the play's microcosm next to the innocent victims of this society.

In essence, Bert's recollection, as a narrative technique, contributes to attributing certain heroic qualities to "All the Ones that Stay" (p. 371). These qualities are emphasized by the fact that the recollection is a fulfilment of Bert's promise to his co-workers and particularly to Kenneth: "I'll come back sometime. I'll visit you" (p. 375). We agree with Benjamin Nelson who believes that the play *itself* is a fulfilment of that promise. "Bert" Nelson adds, "returns, in love and in sorrow, in respect, and with a certain wonder, with a hail and a farewell. And by so doing resurrects them all."¹⁹

The rounded picture that Miller creates in *A Memory of Two Mondays*, which may not respond to all of his initial aims, is very close to the truth of social reality and human existence. One basic factor that contributed to his achievement is the fact that the playwright, in composing his work — despite his obvious social aims — used a tool very familiar to him and his age: the knowledge of psychological discourse. Hence, as I have tried to show by analyzing certain synthetic elements of *A Memory of Two Mondays* (elements that, to my knowledge, have not been investigated), the psychological transvaluation does not hold here a secondary role that it normally holds in a social realistic play — that is, used merely to facilitate the life-likeness or even to motivate the characters' sayings and doings.

19. Nelson, p. 158.

In fact, in this, as in other successful plays by Miller, psychological maneuvering becomes theme and, simultaneously, a technique which unifies all the dramatic elements of the play. In this sense, I believe that *A Memory of Two Mondays* deals with themes common to all of Miller's work: themes such as illusion, frustration, alienation and despair. And, like other important American playwrights, Miller uses these themes so as to denounce through them a society of material success and so as to stress the values of solidarity. Furthermore, I believe that a psychological approach to a social problem and, more specifically, the introspective nature of the narration reveal the introspective method through which the play was written and make *A Memory of Two Mondays* equivalent to other plays representative of Introspective Realism, through which the American theater gained universal appeal.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ελένη Χαβιαρά-Κεχαΐδου, *Ψυχολογική Διαλεκτική στο Από Δευτέρα σε Δευτέρα του Μίλλερ*

Στην εργασία αυτή γίνεται μια δραματουργική ανάλυση του *Από Δευτέρα σε Δευτέρα* (*A Memory of Two Mondays*) του Άρθουρ Μίλλερ με στόχο την επανεκτίμηση του μονόπρακτου αυτού που η κριτική τείνει να το ξεχωρίζει θεματικά και δομικά από τα χαρακτηριστικά έργα του συγγραφέα και κατ' επέκταση από το αντιπροσωπευτικά Αμερικάνικο Ενδοσκοπικό Ρεαλιστικό Δράμα, του οποίου ο Μίλλερ είναι κύριος εκπρόσωπος.

Όπως προκύπτει από την ανάλυση, το *Από Δευτέρα σε Δευτέρα*, το οποίο έχει χαρακτηριστεί ως «κοινωνικό έργο» με την αυστηρή έννοια του όρου, παρουσιάζει τη σύνθετη ψυχολογική διαλεκτική που χαρακτηρίζει το Μοντέρνο Αμερικάνικο Ρεαλιστικό Δράμα. Η ψυχολογική διαλεκτική — ασυμβίβαστη ουσιαστικά με το ορθόδοξο κοινωνικό έργο — συνίσταται στην ψυχολογική προσέγγιση του κοινωνικού προβλήματος που θέτει ο συγγραφέας. Η προσέγγιση αυτή αντανakλάται τόσο στο θεματικό περιεχόμενο όσο και στη μέθοδο της σύνθεσης των χαρακτήρων, του διαλόγου και των δραματικών γεγονότων τα οποία απορρέουν από τις ψυχολογικές συνέπειες του εκτιθεμένου κοινωνικού προβλήματος. Η ψυχολογική προσέγγιση εκτείνεται και στο αφηγηματικό στοιχείο που χρησιμοποιεί εδώ ο συγγραφέας και το οποίο καθορίζει την τεχνοτροπία του έργου. Βλέπουμε δηλαδή ότι η δράση του *Από Δευτέρα σε Δευτέρα* είναι η θεατρική απεικόνιση μιας νοσταλγικής αναπόλησης ενδοσκοπικού τύπου, μέσω της οποίας ο Μίλλερ παραβιάζει τη ρεαλιστική σύμβαση του «τέταρτου τοίχου» για να πετύχει την αποστασιοποίηση του θεατή από τα δρώμενα και να προβάλει τον κοινωνικο-κριτικό τόπο του έργου.

Η εργασία καταλήγει στο συμπέρασμα ότι στο έργο αυτό, όπως και σε άλλα αξιόλογα έργα του Μίλλερ, το στοιχείο της ψυχολογίας παίζει πρωτεύοντα συνθετικό ρόλο λειτουργώντας ως θέμα (theme) και ταυτόχρονα ως δραματουργική τεχνική που συνενώνει όλα τα δομικά υλικά της δράσης. Με την έννοια αυτή το *Από Δευτέρα σε Δευτέρα* εντάσσεται δικαιωματικά στο κύριο σώμα του Μιλλερικού έργου, ενώ η ενδοσκοπική μέθοδος της σύνθεσής του το εξομοιώνει με άλλα αντιπροσωπευτικά έργα του Ενδοσκοπικού Ρεαλισμού, μέσω του οποίου το Αμερικάνικο Θέατρο κέρδισε τη διεθνή φήμη του.