

Linda Loman as a Tragic Heroine In Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

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(Received: October 29, 1999. Accepted: November 12, 1999)

The fiftieth-anniversary production of *Death of a Salesman* in 1999 is achieving a resounding triumph on Broadway. With four Tonys, including best revival play, the *Salesman* boom has reached its prime. This revival of the American theatre great classic has also provided the audience with a new concept of Linda Loman—the wife and mother in this play. This new perception owes much to the skilled performance of Elizabeth Franz, the Tony award-winning actress who plays Linda Loman, and the insightful directing of Robert Falls. This play has extensively served the audience as “the tragedy of a common man,” in Miller’s own statement, and in this production, Linda emerges as an “extraordinary” woman with tragic dignity.

The original 1949 production underlined the division between individuals and American society during that time. The capitalism and materialism represented by the American Dream mercilessly crushed the integrity of individuals. In this sense, the “common man,” Willy Loman, appeared on the stage essentially as the victim of this American Dream. In the 1999 Broadway revival, Robert Falls emphasizes the love among family members—the love between father and sons, and husband and wife—rather than the social concern. Fall’s direction, which sensibly stages the universal condition of love-hate relationships in a family, thus reduces the time division between the 1940s and 1990s.

Particularly, Falls’s interpretation results in modernizing the marital relationship between Willy and Linda. In this production, Linda asserts her individuality far more intensely than in the earlier productions. Franz stresses Linda’s spiritual strength, capability of love, and dignity as a tragic heroine. Her performance also sheds new light on the “sexuality” of this couple, as Franz herself explains:

Bob [Falls] and I were talking about the role one day—what I felt about her, what I felt were her traits—and he asked me, “What is the one thing you find is the greatest thing in their relationship?” I said, “Sexuality. I think that they are very sexually compatible together.” And he said, “I do, too.” He said, “That’s very daring because it has never been done before.” (Haun 47)

Linda “more than loves him, she admires him (12),” and readily accepts any unreasonableness in Willy. The audience of the 90s would be repulsed by Willy’s irrational verbal assault on her. Linda’s “iron

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repression" would also appear nonsensical for today's theatre. Moreover, her behavior would likely to mystify the audience. While she points out Willy's "smallness" to her sons, she pays unconditional attention to him. One would find it more explicable if one assumed that her attachment to Willy originated from their sexual boundary. Actually, Falls and Franz emphasize how Linda "chooses" Willy of her own free will. She is not the type of a woman who is just waiting to be "picked up" by a potential partner. Her determination to choose her partner places her, even unconsciously, in a higher position than her husband in their relationship, and this sense of superiority allows her to accept any self-centeredness in Willy. In addition, the unconditional love and forgiveness make her more of an admirable figure than her spouse, and she herself is aware of that.

On the other hand, Willy senses the implicit oppression of his wife. He intuitively sees that his wife "overlooks" his defects due to her overflowing "love." In short, she desires and "loves" him, but never "respects" him. As Clifford A. Ridley lucidly put it, she "doesn't love Willy for what he is, but simply because he is" (n. pag). Willy cannot bring himself fully into his ideal world in the presence of Linda because her "love" and forgiveness detect every deficiency in him. In other words, in front of Linda, Willy cannot play the roles of an ideal father and a successful businessman, which his sons found convincing in their younger days. This paper, accordingly, examines how this 1999 Broadway production articulates the role of Linda as a tragic and complex protagonist in *Death of a Salesman*.

I. "Willy, darling, you're the handsomest man in the world."

Since the original production in 1949, Broadway has produced three revivals of *Death of a Salesman* (in 1975, 1984, and 1999). Theatre critics on the earlier productions commented mostly on the performances of the actors who played Willy, Lee J. Cobb in 1949 to Dustin Hoffman in 1984. Many focused on the father-son relationship between Willy and Biff, but few discussed Linda's significance in the play. However, critics of the 1999 production, as well as the audience, praised Franz for her unanticipated yet moving portrayal of the under-appreciated woman. Ridley of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* referred to Franz's dominance over Dennehy's Willy on stage, stating "much of this show belongs to Willy's wife, Linda" (n. pag.). Donald Lyons of *The New York Post* also praised Linda as "a smart, sharp, sensible woman" who is "capable of blasts of anger and joy" (n. pag.).¹

Much "attention" was also paid to Mildred Dunnock, the actress who played Linda in the original 1949 production.² Actually, Dunnock was so determined to play this role that she kept returning to auditions even after repeated rejections, disguised differently each time. It is reported that one time she even was "padded from neck to hemline" (Murphy 16) to make her appear more like Linda in Miller's original concept.³ Her efforts proved that she was the right person for the role on stage. Yet Lee J. Cobb captured far more attention for his "mammoth and magnificent portrayal of the central character" (Harold Barnes, n. pag.).

Teresa Wright's Linda in the 1975 Broadway production was characterized as "the girl-next door grown old" (Clive Barnes, n. pag.). Another critic remarked that Wright did not convey "the dramatic force in Linda's own fatal weakness" (Kroll, n. pag.). In the 1984 production, Dustin Hoffman's performance was celebrated, but Kate Reid's Linda received rather negative reviews. Howard Kissel wrote that Reid

"makes a noble but cold Linda Loman, a thankless part in any case" (n. pag.), and Kroll pointed to her lack of "internal nuances in the tough role of Willy's wife" (n. pag.). Notably enough, however, quite a few reviewers on the past productions of *Death of a Salesman* assumed that Linda's character would require tragic force and internal depth. In this sense, Franz has exultantly conveyed the profundity of Linda's internal struggle that had been secondary in the past productions.

In this latest production, Franz, with her inspiring use of "hands" and "gaze," seems to occupy center stage. The eloquent expressions of her hands convey her affection for Willy, along with her eyes. Even when Willy interrupts her speech, giving his complete attention to Biff, her eyes fix upon him, representing, as Isherwood pointed out, "one of the most shattering expressions of love you will ever see on stage" (n. pag.). In addition, Franz pictures their marital relationship as "very sexually compatible together" (Haun 47), and she expresses the depth of their attachment through the caressing movements of her hands. Although she has fewer spoken lines than Willy, such "non-verbal" expressions transform her into the most animated figure on stage. In contrast, Dennehy seems to minimize his gestures, and underlines his helplessness by lingering and pausing between his lines. His slow, weary manner, in opposition to Linda's vivacious gestures and language, exposes his wife's intellectual and emotional superiority over her husband.

Linda's spiritual strength lies fundamentally in her unconditional love, which never allows her to criticize her husband. Yet, at the same time, through her acute observation, she senses that her companion is nothing but a "small man." As Brantley put it, Linda is "the only realist in the family" (n. pag.), and she attempts to bring her husband back to reality whenever he plunges himself into the illusory world. On the surface, this "unconditional" love, which even forces her to accept her husband's lies, suggests her passivity. Susan Harris Smith comments, "Linda, unlike all the men in the play, offers no philosophy, no opinion on how life ought to be lived" (31). Nonetheless, what Smith misses here is that Linda *needs to* support Willy's lies. Concerning her situation in the patriarchal American society of 1940s, she has no other place to exercise her autonomy than in her domestic life, and within the sphere, she asserts her right to *choose* her marriage partner. Just like Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, she must make her life bearable by idealizing the marriage she *chooses*.⁴ If she dismissed her husband as a "fake," she would consequently have to negate her existence itself. That is, she protects her own life through her unqualified "love" for her husband because the marital life is the only place where she can confirm her identity. The following conversation between the husband and wife, as well as the stage directions, elucidates this point:

LINDA: Willy, daring, you're the handsomest man in the world--

WILLY: Oh, no, Linda.

LINDA: To me you are. [*Slight pause.*] The handsomest. [*From the darkness is heard the laughter of a woman. Willy doesn't turn to it, but it continues through Linda's lines.*]

WILLY, *with great feeling*: You're the best there is, Linda, you're a pal, you know that? On the road--on the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life outa you.

[*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.*]

(37-38)

This could be the “love scene” of the couple. Here, however, Linda’s affectionate words, “You’re the handsomest man,” echo with The Woman’s mocking laughter. It seems to satirize the wife’s ignorance of The Woman’s existence. Yet Miller’s attempt to juxtapose Linda with The Woman in this scene reflects the more complex nature of the two women:

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. [*He talks through The Woman’s subsiding laughter The Woman primps at the “mirror”*]. There’s so much I want to make for—

THE WOMAN: Me? You didn’t make me, Willy. I picked you.

WILLY [*pleased*]: You picked me?

THE WOMAN [*who is quite proper-looking, Willy’s age*]: I did (38).

The Woman essentially shares the same assertiveness and autonomy with Linda. Just as Linda “chooses” Willy as her partner, The Woman “picks” him as her lover. They both reject to be “chosen” by men. Miller implies the common nature between the two women by utilizing the same music for each of their entrances.

Gayle Austin dismisses The Woman as the one “with no power and almost no characterization,” who is “totally under the men’s control” (50). Yet The Woman never *prostitutes* nor “sells” herself, and importantly, she is never passive during her affair with Willy. On the contrary, she assuredly derives joy from the affair, as she says, “Come on inside, drummer boy. It’s silly to be dressing in the middle of the night” (116). In the stage direction, Miller notes that The Woman is far from a stereotypical temptress, but a “proper” woman with a decent job. She is sensible enough to know that Willy is “the saddest, self-centeredest soul” (116). Additionally, she refuses to stay hidden in the bathroom when Biff visits Willy in the Boston hotel room, and deliberately makes her presence known to the son. Here, her abrupt emergence from the bathroom indicates her rejection to be nameless and “under the men’s control.” The “stocking,” in fact, does not indicate her price in their affair, but the necessity of her business. Moreover, it is she who gives the man the favor of sending him “right through to the buyers” (116) for the reward. That is to say, Willy, not The Woman, prostitutes himself for his business success. In this way, The Woman possibly dominates their relationship.

Both Linda and The Woman recognize Willy’s flaws and never expect intellectual nor emotional assistance from him: The Woman enjoys his company because he makes her “laugh,” and for Linda, Willy’s chattiness appears “lively,” even though, or because, it contains nothing sincere. In short, their attraction toward Willy is based on the physical, and, in this sense, Linda’s line, “you’re the handsomest man,” reflects The Woman’s “I picked you.”⁵ While the men in this play, including Willy, Biff, and Happy, feel somewhat ashamed of their physical drive, the two women vigorously applaud their right to be *sexual*.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), which preceded *Death of a Salesman* on Broadway by two years, Tennessee Williams stunned the audience, by his spectacular portrayal of Stanley Kowalski, verifying that a male body could evoke sexual appeal to women. Although in a much more roundabout way, Miller’s women also assert their sexuality and choose their partners of their own free will. That is, they possess the *power* to control their *desire*. On the other hand, for the men in *Salesman*, as Gayle Austin points out,

"sex with women is empty, mothers and wives are necessary but ineffectual, and the most important thing is to bond successfully with other men" (63). Sex for Willy implies only a temporary relief, and in Happy's case, it negatively functions as a way of *revenge* on his superiors in the business world. Happy, who cannot prove his capability in business, must assert his masculinity by showing off his conquests of women. In effect, for the men, sex "has been degraded to the crass status of a male relief mechanism for the pressures of the sex drive" (Montagu 79). What Willy "sells" is himself, and to offer himself as a valuable commodity, he must be "well liked" and "smiled" at by the buyers. In all business transactions, his success totally depends on the other's attitude. If his goal were to be "well liked" through his own efforts, Linda's unconditional love, as well as The Woman's attraction to Willy, would surely make him feel "empty." In contrast, Linda and The Woman attempt to assert themselves through their sexuality.

Franz has established Linda's autonomy through her perceptive presentation. Her Linda is in every way supportive for her husband, yet, as Isherwood commented, "no one could be less passive than Franz" (n. pag.). Her admiring gaze and protecting hands over Willy prefigure her total devotion to her husband. Yet, they also symbolize her controlling power over Willy. The husband cannot jubilantly accept Linda's devotion because it molds him into her idealized image—"the handsomest man" for her—and prevents him from playing the role of an invaluable "salesman." The diminutive Franz, with her dignity and assertiveness, seems to occupy the larger part of the stage than the towering Brian Dennehy. Indeed, Robert Feldberg accurately characterized the couple: "The bear-like Dennehy and the slight Franz, their physical qualities the opposite of their characters' emotional ones, make a striking, and utterly believable couple" (n. pag.). Franz offers the audience a reasonable explanation for her total dedication to Willy, who, in contrast, under-appreciates his wife.

II. "Attention, attention must be paid to such a person."

Linda's attitude toward her sons would probably bewilder the audience. Linda, with her acute observation and intellect, has detected every flaw in Willy's education of his sons. She senses how Willy's infantile dream of superficial success has marred his sons' lives. Markedly, she harshly reproaches Biff for his heartlessness toward Willy. Nonetheless, the son's reproach originates from his genuine concern for his mother. Willy has been a "fake" in Biff's eyes since the incident at the Boston hotel room. In Biff's mind, Willy's betrayal of Linda degrades his value as a father. The significant question raised here is whether Linda has detected her husband's affair or not. Miller does not clarify this, yet considering her ability of observation, it is unconceivable that the doubt has never once crossed her mind. If she knows about Willy's betrayal, however, how do we explain her unchangeable devotion toward her husband and unreasonably harsh treatment of her eldest son? It would be reasonable to assume, then, that she, even obviously, rejects her motherhood to save her position in the family.

Miller, in the process of revising the original script, has cut off much of Linda's emotional lines to underscore the stability of her mind and determination to support her husband. Significantly enough, such endearments as "dear" and "darling" for her sons have also disappeared from the original script in the process. With this elimination, the playwright emphasizes "her preference for Willy over her sons" (Murphy 45).

In fact, the mother-son relationship is portrayed less intensely in this play. This is essentially a "love story" between a father and a son, and a mother is not allowed to intrude into their affinity. In addition, one can obviously detect that Willy's own mother occupies a less conspicuous place in his mind than his father does. Ben introduces their mother merely as a "fine specimen of a lady." Learning that his mother has died long time ago, Ben casually comments, "I'd hoped to see the old girl" (46), and says nothing more. The imaginary conversation between Willy and Ben reveals that their father has left the family long ago. Their father, with his constant zeal for adventure, would likely refuse to be confined within the family. Willy says, "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" (51). He eternally remains a *child*, fumbling for the ideal image of a father. Supposedly, Willy's mother has nurtured the son during her husband's absence, yet Willy exhibits little appreciation for her dedication. This mother-son relationship evokes that of Willy and Linda: Willy also takes Linda's self-sacrifice for granted. He thus diminishes his wife's authority and insists on his importance as the master of the family to impress his sons.⁶

Elia Kazan explicates Linda's generosity and unselfishness as "something extreme, almost unnatural." He goes on to argue that her absolute royalty to Willy contains her plot to destroy the "love" between the father and son (quoted in Murphy 38). This point can be crystallized, supposing that Linda has learned of her husband's betrayal. Biff's concern over his mother has created his feeling of "spite" for Willy. Then, too, Linda has possibly forsaken her son by totally ignoring his feeling and devoting herself solely to Willy. In this way, she leads the father-son relationship to ruin. Her attentiveness has made Willy entirely dependent upon her, and she thus hinders his growth as a father. She endeavors to maintain her place in a patriarchal family, secretly treasuring her intellectual and spiritual superiority over her husband. The stage set itself, which places the "kitchen" center stage, seems to prefigure Linda's hidden autonomy in the Loman home.

Linda also plants the idea of Willy's *smallness* into her sons' minds. She obliviously nurses the idea that her motherhood has been demolished because of Willy's absolute need for his sons' attention. Therefore, she needs to regain her position as the mother, or as the mistress of the house, by stressing Willy's absolute dependence on her, in other words, by viewing her husband as her child:

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 a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be paid to such a person. You called him crazy. (56)

Here Linda underscores how miserable and exhausted Willy is, and even alludes to his death, comparing him with "an old dog." Through her description of Willy, Biff and Happy will definitely sympathize with their father, but will never respect him. Actually, this famed speech places the under-appreciated Linda at center stage: Franz's solemn tone of voice would articulate that "attention must be paid," not only to Willy, but also to this long-suffering woman, who has endeavored to hold the family together with her "iron repression."

Willy, in fact, loses a sense of self when Biff sees him as a "fake" in Boston. That is, the father's value depends on how intensely Biff needs him. Through the Boston incident, Willy intuitively learns that

his life has been a failure and he can never regain his dignity as a human being. On the other hand, Linda would lose her identity if Willy reacquired respect and admiration from his eldest son because, then, being freed from a sense of desperation, he would no longer seek Linda's "support." Miller presents here a story of unrequited "love," with which the three people; Willy, Linda, and Biff, are trying fiercely to find integrity in their existence. In this sense, this is a tragedy of a "common woman" as much as that of a "common man."

III. "Forgive me, dear. I can't cry."

"Requiem" is another place where Miller underlines Linda's tragic quality. The inclusion of "Requiem" in this play itself, indeed, bespeaks Linda's significance as a tragic heroine. This scene unveils the emotional side of Linda, which has been mostly subordinate in the earlier scenes: The outburst is likely to give her speech a melodramatic quality, yet under its sentimentality lies an ironic tone:

Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. *A sob rises in her throat.* We're free and clear. *Sobbing more fully, released* We're free. *Biff comes slowly toward her.* We're free ... We're free ...
(131)

This speech would appear somewhat inconsistent with her former lines: Here she repeats that she "can't understand" why her husband had to die. Yet she had discovered his suicide attempts in the past, and fearing the possibility of his future death, she had to "live from day to day." Nonetheless, she had probably believed that Willy, being totally dependent on her, would never bring himself fully into the unknown world of death. Linda, recognizing her spiritual superiority over him, could not imagine that Willy was daring enough to sacrifice his life for his son. Again, Willy's fragility signifies Linda's strength. His self-centeredness strongly contradicts her generosity and endurance, which strengthens her autonomy within the family. In this sense, Willy's suicide marks another *betrayal* to Linda.

Ben, or his image, urges Willy's final decision to dedicate his life to Biff. Here, Linda has to confront Ben again just as she did when he offered Willy a trip to Alaska. As Kay Stanton points out, it is primarily due to Linda's persuasion that Willy abandons the Alaska idea and resolves to pursue his dream of achieving a business success (70). Therefore, Linda is mostly responsible for his decision-making. If Ben represents a father figure in urging Willy to engage in adventures, then Linda symbolically plays a mother's role in persuading him to stick to his original dream. Linda's final call for her husband, "Willy, answer me! Willy!" (136), embodies her firm decision to bring him back to *reality*. Yet, conversely, the *reality* for Linda and Willy means their illusory world of a "salesman." On the other hand, Ben's line, "Not like an appointment at all. A diamond is rough and hard to the touch" (134), presents a conventional picture of the *masculine* world, which totally excludes *feminine* sensitivity. In short, Linda "cannot understand" why she failed to defeat Ben at Willy's critical moment, unlike the time when she first challenged him.

Linda stresses that Willy and she “made the last payment” on the house and that they are “free and clear” of the debt. The connotation of the debt and payment here becomes a symbolic explanation of their marital relationship. Willy is in debt to his wife for his repeated betrayals and heartless treatment of her. Therefore, he has been trying to “pay” her back by delivering her “a little good news” embellished with his lies. Because he knows that “the woman has waited and the woman has suffered” (107), he needs to brighten her distressed life with his illusory stories. On the other hand, Linda also is indebted to her husband for their married life. She impels Willy to abandon the Alaska adventure and to stick to his dream of business success. Yet, as discussed earlier, her dialogue with Biff and Happy clarifies that she does not value his capability in the business world. Therefore, she induces him to maintain his illusory world to make up for the misery of his actual life. Walter Davis defines the Loman family as “a vast mechanism for sustaining an illusion” in which “the identity of each member is determined by the role each plays in this process” (105). As represented here, Linda and Willy urge each other to sustain their illusions, and, consequently, victimize their children in that attempt.

Linda bursts out crying when she utters, “We’re free” (109). Maybe this line embraces a feeling of relief, being *freed* from her husband’s oppression. Stanton elucidates this argument when she states that Linda “will no longer have to bend under the burden of the masculine ego. Biff is free of the patriarch now, and so is she” (95). Nonetheless, when Linda’s self-integrity absolutely depends on her supportiveness of Willy, she expresses unbearable despondency in this scene. If Willy’s dream is to achieve material success as a salesman, hers is to become the nurturer and controller of that dream. Yet it also signifies that she can see her own life only through her husband’s point of view, and thus the play exposes her position as the victim of patriarchal American society.

IV. Coda

Franz is faithful to Miller’s original concept of Linda—“the kind who is strong by concealing her strength” (Miller 1991, 87). Her portrayal of the woman accentuates her intelligence, sensitivity, and dignity as a tragic heroine, qualities that have been neglected or less esteemed in past productions. The playwright himself comments on that point: “Linda’s part has often been weakly played, as though she were a mere follower, but that is unlikely to happen when the actress keeps herself aware of what the script has told her she knows” (Miller 1991, 87). Balakian’s view probably contradicts Miller’s viewpoint when she argues that Linda lacks the ability to realize her dream and, therefore, fails to present the tragic quality of Willy, who has sacrificed everything to find his place in the world (120). Yet Linda also attempts to find her own place by creating a dream for her husband. In fact, Willy himself signifies her dream, and thus becomes the alter ego of Linda, whose own identity has been mercilessly shattered by American patriarchy.

The audience should not see Linda merely as a passive “doormat,” the term Miller has used to describe her⁷. She has asserted herself within the limited sphere of the male-dominated hierarchy of American family system. Certainly, as Kazan points out, her self-assertion embraces an “unnatural” quality. Her excessive devotion has definitely disturbed Willy’s growth as a father and businessman. Yet the crucial point here is that Linda has never encountered other chances. Balakian’s insightful argument articulates Linda’s characterization and the significance of the women in this play: “Feminists who claim that the play

does not attempt to redefine women but instead contributes to the perpetuation of female stereotypes forget that Miller is accurately depicting a postwar American culture that subordinated women (115). As Balakian puts it, Miller faithfully represents the male-dominated postwar American culture, which invariably lessened women's status. The playwright hence challenges the stereotypical, superficial nature of the American Dream. He pictures the "masculine" dream of success with an ironical twist: Willy, driven by the superficial postwar value of American dream, *prostitutes* himself for the public recognition of his success. That is, the male-dominated American dream, represented by Willy, is actually to destroy man's sense of self-assurance. On the other hand, the women in this play, even though marginalized, strive to insist on their individuality: Linda's persistence to support Willy and The Woman's refusal to hide herself into the bathroom in a way materialize their undefeatable spirit in the hostile environment of American patriarchy.

Notes

- 1 Ben Brantley also applauded the spiritual strength and tragic quality created by Franz's Linda, remarking, "Ms. Franz's astonishing portrayal shatters that character's traditional passivity to create a searing image of a woman fighting for her life" (n. pag.). Vincent Canby defined Linda in this production as the central figure: "The production's most skillful, controlled and fully realized performance is that of Elizabeth Franz, a timeless Linda, a woman held together by her mission to save Willy from himself" (n. pag.).
- 2 Yet most of the reviewers on this original production see Linda's tragic quality primarily as being a traditional, devoted wife. For example, Richard Watts Jr. of *The New York Post* pictured Dunnock's Linda as "a fine, tragic wife" (n. pag.). Jon Mason Brown refers to Dunnock's characterization as "all heart, devotion, simplicity" and portrays her as "the smiling, mothering, hard-worked, good wife, the victim of her husband's budget" (99). Harold Clurman admits the "precision, clarity, purity of motive" (71) in Dunnock's Linda.
- 3 Miller notes that Linda Loman should be "taller, and much larger than Willy" to embody her spiritual support and "superior and calmer intelligence" (quoted in Murphy 7-8). Murphy also introduces Miller's concept in which "Linda's physical size and power, in contrast to Willy's small stature, were important to Miller's original conception of the character, as was her repressed resentment" (Murphy 8).
- 4 It should be noted here that Miller himself clarifies that the marriage between Willy and Linda was "a love match" in his *Salesman in Beijing*. Miller also explains to Ying, the actress who played Linda in the Beijing production, that "her family disapproved of him because he had no money or prospects and that she, in effect, had run off with him" (Miller 1991, 78).
- 5 Miller emphasizes Linda's physical attraction to Willy in directing the Beijing production, saying, "They are still physically in love and that she means it when later she is to say, 'Willy, darling, you're the handsomest man in the world'" (Miller 1991, 78).
- 6 Clifford Olcott's comments on parenthood help us grasp the ideal image of a father in the 1940s and Willy's concept of fatherhood: "To be success with the children, be a personality on your own. Don't relinquish your own identity by turning over to your wife all the decisions and matters concerning the children" (141). As depicted here, for Willy, to be a good father means to ignore his wife, especially when it concerns the education of their children.
- 7 Miller, in his *Salesman in Beijing*, applauds the performance of Ying, the Chinese actress who played the role of

Linda: "Linda, for example, is thoroughly on target now, no longer Willy's whimpering doormat. She has told me that she had the wrong idea of the woman to start with. Instead, she has become, as he calls her, 'my foundation and support,' who is fighting off his death from the outset" (87). The playwright here insists on the necessity of underlining Linda's spiritual strength.

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