Drama

Fourth year- the second semester

The 4th lecture: د.ليلى باطوق

The sentences that are written between brackets are stages direction because they tell how the character, for example, is going to move and what she is going to do. So, stage directions are used to be meant be for readers plus for the actors themselves to tell them what to do on stage. But here it is different. It is not a mere stage direction. It is a real introduction giving full details of not events, but important ideas related to the plot. This is the significance of the overture here.

Let’s look at the beginning of the overture before we begin with act II. Look at the opening of the overture. Is it different from other opening of plays?

(A small upper bedroom in the home of Reverend Samuel Parris, Salem, Massachusetts, in the spring of the year 1692.)

It is the same. Most plays start with an opening like this. It is like a stage direction telling us what the setting of the play is. So, it is a normal opening. It is a technique that most playwrights use.

(There is a narrow window at the left. Through its leaded panes the morning sunlight streams.)

It is a description of the setting also. The setting does not only mean the place. It means also the time. It means everything that is related to the place of action. So, this is a normal beginning.

(As the curtain rises, Reverend Parris is discovered kneeling be-side the bed, evidently in prayer.)

Again it is a description of one of the characters that appear in this setting. It is a person called Parris. It seems that he is praying.

(His daughter, Betty Parris, aged ten, is lying on the bed, inert.)

What is this introduction is telling us? It tells us some information about the characters that appear in front of us. There is a man kneeling and he is praying over a child whose age is ten. What is important about this child? It seems that she is sick because she does not move; she is inert. She is unconscious. What does this raise in you as reader or as audience? The first thing that comes to your mind is >> why is this man praying? Why is this child sick? What has happened to her? Who is this man? We do not know that he is her father. We just see these people in front of us. We do not know as watchers/ as audience that he is her father.

It is a simple beginning. But from the beginning of the play, the playwright raises suspense and excitement and draws the attention of the audience. Wonder is aroused in the readers as audience.

(At the time of these events Parris was in his middle forties. In history he cut a villainous path, and there is very little good to be said for him.)

This is a detailed description of this man that you are seeing. The playwright is very keen to introduce every character in details. What kind of detailed description is given here when it is said that there is very little good to be said for him?

Maybe he is not a good man. He is telling us what to think of his character. Maybe when you see that person praying, the audience or the reader will sympathize with that person who seems to be desperate, kneeling and praying. Maybe from the beginning, the playwright is warning you not to be deceived and not to sympathize with that person. Usually when a playwright gives a description of a character, what kind of description is usually given? It is physical appearance. You will notice that Arthur Miller does not really care for physical appearance as much as he cares for psychological, spiritual and emotional. He really cares about features and characteristics of a person more than physical appearance. This does not mean that he does not give physical appearance. On the contrary, you will see that he describes his characters physically and sometimes in details. And he cares to details about the age of each person. So, you will see some physical description but you will notice that more details about the task of these people are given. Moreover, not only the task but he is very keen to give the relationship between the characters while describing them.

(He believed he was being persecuted wherever he went,)

What does this mean? This person believes that he has been suffering from people in the town that he was persecuted. This person thinks that he was not well treated by others and he was persecuted wherever he went.

(despite his best efforts to win people and God to his side.)

This person believes that he is doing well for people and that his relationship with God is perfect but he does not know why he is persecuted and ill-treated by people.

(In meeting, he felt insulted if someone rose to shut the door without first asking his permission.)

He likes people to respect him.

(He was a widower with no interest in children, or talent with them.)

This is some information about his family life. A widower means that his wife is dead. When we hear his daughter asking for her mother later on, we already know that her mother is dead.

I will skip the lines that talk about his relationship with children. He does not have a strong relationship with children. It seems that he does not have the temper and the talent to deal with children. But he and all people, as described here, in the town believe that children are young adults. They should be grateful for being able to walk. What does this mean if you read these three lines?

(He regarded them as young adults, and until this strange crisis he, like the rest of Salem, never conceived that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly low-ered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak.)

What does this mean?

A student: they should listen to adults’ orders. If they are allowed to speak, they have to speak, otherwise they have to be quiet and say nothing.

The doctor: what do you understand here? What kind of life do the children of Salem have?

They do not believe that children have the right of playing. They treat children as adults People stop playing when they are adults. Play is related to children more than adults. This is significant that the playwright is telling us this about this person Parris and as he is saying (like the rest of Salem). It is not only him but even the other people in that town. Children are not children; they are adults. So, simply they do not have the right to enjoy their lives by playing. It is the idea of enjoyment. It is the idea of entertainment. So, we know now that children are not expected to have time for play; they should be quiet. They should walk as if they are in the army; their arms are aside and they should not talk unless they are permitted to do that. What kind of life is this? It is very strict life.

(His house stood in the “town” - but we today would hardly call it a village.)

At that time it was called the town but for us today/ for modern people, it is called a village.

(Salem had been established hardly forty years before. To the European world the whole province was a bar-baric frontier inhabited by a sect of fanatics who, nevertheless, were shipping out products of slowly increasing quantity and value.)

This is very important. It tells about the people who are living in that town (what nature of people). You understand that this Massachusetts is a colony. More people inhabited it before. People from England came and inhabited this place. According to the people in Europe who have culture and who have a better life, people who are living in this place are bar-baric, savage, without culture and without any kind of modern life.

(inhabited by a sect of fanatics)

The meaning of fanatics is >>>> very conservative traditionally as well as religiously. He is describing to us now what kind of people are the people of this town Salem. They are fanatics. They are very conservative religiously speaking.

(nevertheless, were shipping out products of slowly increasing quantity and value.)

Although they came from Europe itself, they were the kind of people who were very prejudice to their religion, very strict and conservatives.

What kind of life did these people have?

(No one can really know what their lives were like.)

It means that they are very conservative and very close to themselves. People cannot know about their inner life or their life among themselves. Moreover, what is important here:

(They had no novelists - and would not have permitted anyone to read a novel if one were handy.)

When we said that the playwright said about children that they have the right of enjoyment, playing and entertainment, again it is with adults. Adults in the European world would read novels, go to theaters and they have some sort of entertainment and enjoyment but here novels are forbidden. There are novelists who would write novels about their life and if somebody had a novel and he was caught with a novel in his or her hand, he would be punished for that. It was considered as a crime.

(Their creed forbade anything re-sembling a theater or “vain enjoyment.”)

Anything that has relation to enjoyment and entertainment was forbidden.

(They did not celebrate Christmas,)

They are even different from Christians. Even in Christmas they are not allowed to celebrate.

(and a holiday from work meant only that they must concentrate even more upon prayer.)

Even in holidays >>> if there is a holiday, they should not spend this holiday in entertainment or sitting idle; they should pray. So, it is a very strict life.

(Which is not to say that nothing broke into this strict and somber way of life.)

This is the kind of life they are living. >>>> strict and somber way of life.

Why is Arthur Miller giving us this detailed description about what kind of life they are living?

A student: He wants us to understand the character of the father.

The doctor: and also the other parents that will appear in act I and in the other acts.

This introduction is like a paved way, it is like introducing you to the causes of the reactions of the people that we are going to meet later on.

(Probably more than the creed, hard work kept the morals of the place from spoiling, for the people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain of corn, and no man had very much time for fooling around.)

What is meant here is that people are forced to work all the time and if they are not working, they should be praying and worshipping. They believe that work will protect their souls from being spoiled and from sins. If they are working, they are busy all the time and they will not do sins.

(That there were some jokers, however, is indicated by the practice of appointing a two-man patrol whose duty was to “walk forth)

What is meant here? If there are people who are not praying, not working or not worshiping, how would they know about them? What was their means to force people to live in this way? How would they prevent a person not to do their way? What did they use to have? All this related to the idea of McCarthyism that we have discussed before. (two-man patrol) what does this mean? Do you the character that was called العسّة? He is not officially a military man or a policeman. He is a person who would protect the town during night when people are sleeping. It is the same during their age. They would have two people wandering around the city watching the security of the town. They care to watch people. It is not only during night during that time. For example, if it is work time now and this man is not working, they would take his name and go to the authority. If it is Sunday and they have prayer and sermon in the church and somebody is out of the church, again they would take his name and give it to the authority. The idea of giving names of guilty people, simple people or just suspected to be doing anything is related to the idea of McCarthyism.

Now go to page five. Another idea is giving bout the life in that town.

(to present them to the magistrates, whereby they may be accordingly proceeded against.” This predilection for minding other people’s business was time-honored among the people of Salem,)

This is an important theme in the play.

It was like a habit among the people of that town that they are keen to mind other people’s business.

(and it undoubtedly created many of the sus-picions which were to feed the coming madness.)

This is very important point (minding other people’s business). In that place in Salem, people mind other people’s problems. How would they give the names of a person that did not go to the prayer? If you go watching your neighbor what did that person do and what did that woman do and you will go and tell the authority about that, it is minding other people’s business. And you will see that what happens in this play is that because people are minding other people’s business. And the playwright is giving this very detailed in the overture/ in the introduction to emphasize it because you will understand the nature of these people. The reaction they are doing is because of their nature.

They have this habit of watching others maybe in order to get a benefit. Watching and minding other people’s business, what does it mean? suspicions. Everybody becomes suspicious about his neighbor, for example: Why did that man return early from his job?

So, if you do not mind other people’s business, you do not know what is really happening.

In the next paragraph, he talks about what kind of life they are living. Sometimes people become suspicious when they are threatened. He talks here about the threat of the Indians. Who are the Indians there? They are the natives of the country but they are considered as enemies. These people have come and settled in their country and now they are considering them as their enemies.

What do you think is the other reason for strictly considering these people and the Indians as their enemies?

They do not have religion. They were saying the settlers of Salem are purely religious people. So, they are always in conflict with the Indians who do not have religion. So, it is not only that they are defending themselves and the territory that they have occupied but also from a religious point of view.

So, being threatened that an enemy will attack you, this again might cause suspicion. You might suspect your neighbor that might ally with the enemy. So, all sorts of suspicion started with these things.

(For these reasons, among others, they carried about an air of innate resistance, even of persecution. Their fathers had, of course, been persecuted in England.)

He still tells us about the people of Salem. They came from England. They were not happy when they were in England. They came from England because they were uncomfortable there. Why did move from England? Is their religion different from the religion of the Church of England? In the Church of England, they have the Protestants and the Christians. The puritans are more strict more than these people. There is like a new kind of religion that arouse from the catholic church of England and they were not accepted by the Church of England. That is why they felt that they are persecuted even when they were in England. They have this feeling of persecution that they are victims. This feeling of being victims has been with them even before/ when they were in England.

So, when they came here, they had this feeling of being victims. Now they feel that they are victims of the Indians who come and invade them every now and then. This feeling that their fathers had been victims in England raises their feeling of being victims in the new place. That is why they were very strict, not to allow any other party to rebel against them for example. They were trying to secure their parties and to secure themselves to defend their territory and their religion so that they will not allow anybody to rebel against them. That is why if they suspect anything, they will immediately react against that suspicion. That is what increases this feeling of unease and discomfort among them.

(They believed, in short, that they held in their steady hands the candle that would light the world.)

They are very proud of themselves. They think that they are holding the candle that would light the world. They think that they are right and they are the ones who are going to enlighten the world. This feeling is reflected on some of the characters that you will see later on/ characters that are so proud of themselves that they think they are the best among the others and that they are the best to lead the people in that town.

The playwright continues in giving detailed description of the kind of life among the new comers of England.

On Page six:

The playwright talks about again the coming of these people. The first Landers in Massachusetts but there are some people landing in the south in Virginia. And he is saying that they are different in attitude and in behavior. He is talking about the idea of autocracy among people at that time that how the two people, the new comers in Virginia and the new comers in Massachusetts combined together in order to have like a powerful party. In the second paragraph, he talks about their coming; how they came from England and when they have taken the ship that brought them from England. What was it called? The ship that landed them in the colonies or in America was called **Mayflower**.

On page seven/ line three:

(the people of Salem developed a theocracy, a combine of state and religious power whose function was to keep the com-munity together, and to prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies. )

Three lines below he says:

(Evidently the time came in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom.)

They were against any threat and one of the threats that threatened their social life was the witch-hunt. Witchcraft was condemned and they started seeing signs of witchcraft.

Look at the last three lines in the same page.

(Long-held hatreds of neighbors could now be openly ex-pressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible’s charitable injunctions. Land-lust which had been expressed before by constant bickering over boundaries and deeds,)

What is this paragraph about? The playwright is emphasizing some features of the Salem community >>> (hatreds among the neighbors themselves). What did they hate each other for? What was the mean reason of hatred? Owning lands. People sometimes fight against who is the owner of one land or the other. So, owning lands was one of the causes of hatred among neighbors. So, they hate that neighbor and they would like to take her/his land. May they would accuse that person of doing a sin who is really innocent.. This is exactly what happens in this play.

After giving us all this background about the town in general and the feelings among people in general, now he takes us back again to the real opening of the play.

(Reverend Parris is praying now,)

He is continuing with the real scene telling us that Parris is praying.

(The door opens, and his Negro slave enters. Tituba is in her forties.)

It is a description telling us how Tituba became his servant.

Look at the last sentence >>>> (trouble in this house eventually lands on her back.)

The playwright is telling us that people accuse her whether from this house or from other houses. Why do they always blame her for anything that happens? She is a slave that it was very easy to accuse her or blame her all the time.

We are introduced to another character Abigail Williams that she is 17 and she is strikingly beautiful girl and an orphan; she does not have parents. She has endless capacity for dissembling. What kind of person is she? She is hypocrite. She is not an honest person.

(Now she is all worry and appre-hension and propriety.)

We see that this person looks very worried. This raises our wonder and suspense why she is worried and why that man is worried and praying.

When the dialogue starts, we understand that the father is worried about his daughter that she is sick and he seems that he is blaming his niece Abigail for this thing.

Page nine: (Susanna: Aye, sir, he have been searchin’ his books since he left you, sir. But he bid me tell you, that you might look to un-natural things for the cause of it.)

He is asking about the doctor. He is asking Susanna what did the doctor come up. She says that he has been looking in medical book but he says that it is better that if you also look to unnatural things for the cause of it/ for the things that are related to unnatural, to what? To witchcraft, to magic. Does he agree? What does he say? He immediately rejects.

(Parris, his eyes going wide: No - no. There be no unnatural cause here. Tell him I have sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, and Mr. Hale will surely confirm that. Let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. There be none.)

Let him to concentrate on medicine and forget about magic. Abigail tells him that the rumor of witchcraft and magic has spread in the town and it seems that everybody is believing that. But he insists that it has no relation to do with witchcraft.

He keeps saying to her that my enemies will find this as chance to destroy me.

Page eleven:

He was questioning Abigail about what happened the night before that caused his daughter sickness and she keeps swearing that they did not do anything except dancing. Was dancing acceptable? Even for adults/ for girls, they were also very conservatives and even saying that they have being dancing is something that would be used against him. He is the man of a church, so how comes this household/ his niece or his daughter is doing something that is prohibited.

He does not believe Abigail.

(Parris, studies her, then nods, half convinced: Abigail, I have Sought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character.)

What is he saying here? He is afraid that people would change their mind about him and about choosing him as a minister because of what has happening to him. But what is he saying about his wife and his work?

He says he is working hard to win these people to his side. What kind of people are they? They are stiff-necked people. They are very stubborn people. So, he is also giving us information about the people we are going to deal with. It was very hard to him. He did not get that position easily. It was very hard to him and he worked hard to do that and he is saying to Abigail, you are going to compromise all that to threaten my position and people will lose trust in me because of you. He is very convinced that she has a hand n that.

(I have given you a home, child, I have put clothes upon your back - now give me upright answer. Your name in the town - it is en-tirely white, is it not?)

What do you understand when he said to her (I have given you a home, child)? First of all, she has been introduced before as an orphan. Now he is emphasizing the fact that she is really an orphan and she has lived in the house of her uncle. I brought up here in my house as a father and I gave you this and this. But would a father count this for his children? A father would not say to his daughter or his son that I have spent a lot of money on you to do this and this. There are examples of such fathers but the natural relationship is that you are a father and you would do this because this is your job.

At the end of the lecture, the doctor explained the way of discussing a quotation and she commented on the presentation of the students:

-You are reminding us of what happened in the end of act one when the girl confessed what they did in the forest. What is more important is that they started mentioning other names. First of all, Tituba and the other girls also started giving other names of people who would never been accused of such thing.

-We talked about children that they should not play with anything. The meaning of puppet is a small doll. Even the presence of a doll in the house was considered as something related to witchcraft and magic. Even if the puppet related to a child, they would not believe that; they would believe that it is used for magic.

-When we talked about hatred among people in Salem, this is an example of hatred among people. If anybody hates anybody for any reason, the simplest way to get rid of that person is to accuse that person of being a witch or using magic or witchcraft. For example, Abigail is jealous from Elizabeth the wife of Proctor and in order to get rid of her, she accused her of being the witch that is spreading magic or witchcraft in the town.

-We have a comparison between the husband and wife here; that their reactions to witchcrafts are. Elizabeth does not believe at all in witchcraft while her husband believes in witchcraft but he believes that what is happening to people is really witchcraft. He knows that Abigail is behind the thing.

-You talked about what happened in a trial before. 200 people were accused of practicing witchcraft. Some were hanged, some were died and some were severely punished. What did they discover later on? The people were honest and the trials were unjust. The people were honest and there was a mistake. All the whole trial was a mistake. This creates hatred, anger and sorrow among people. And people would not trust the trials anymore and everything would be suspected. When we want to relate it to the idea of McCarthyism, it is exactly the same. >>> (accusing people without evidence). So, it was a mistake and they compensate them; they tried to give them something in return but it is useless. Since then the story of the trial has become synonymous with paranoia and injustice. This fear of injustice was always related to courts and justice everywhere. And it has stamp in the memory of people. Whenever something relevant or something similar happens, hey remember what happened to the victims during that time. So, there was this historical fear of injustice of trials and so on. This is exactly was the mood at the play. When you were talking about the characters that have been accused among the people of Salem, there was a fear; there was hysteria of fear that I will be the next person to be accused/ I will be punished for something that I did not do. So, everybody was trying to find an excuse for himself/herself how to prove that she or he was innocent.

-The example of hard-working people is very relevant in the example of the Proctors family (their life in the field and how they are working as farmers and so on). Proctor’s decision to prevent his family to go to Salem was to protect them but he was not able to protect them because accusations came to his family. Even farmers were not safe from accusation.

The idea of dealing with people (neighbor and town people) is not related to Salem the 17th century, it is not related to America; it is universal issue.