

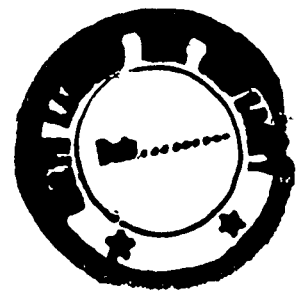
THE CONCEPT OF SELF IN SOCIETY IN THE PLAYS OF ARTHUR MILLER

By

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Dissertation

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Few dramatists have been more articulate on their own behalf than Arthur Miller. His various prefaces, lectures, articles and interviews provide a formidable critical commentary on his nine major plays and on the theory of literature that underlies them. The insight and depth of such critical writings not only show Miller as an important dramatist, but also as an important 'American' dramatist whose work occupies a significant place in the tradition of American literature.

Arthur Miller has till now published nine major plays, film scripts and short stories. Miller was born in NEW YORK city on 17th October, 1915 and has published an interesting account of his early years under the title A BOY GREW UP IN BROOKLYN. Success didnot come easily to Miller. He had written eight to nine plays, largely ignored by the theatre world until in 1944 came ALL MY SONS which won the 'Drama Critic' prize for the season's best play of American authorship. Fame and success soon followed with his next play DEATH OF A SALESMAN (1949) for which he was awarded the Pulitzer prize. After this Miller never looked back. With plays like THE CRUCIBLE, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, AFTER THE FALL, THE PRICE, he has firmly established himself, alongwith Eugene O' Neill and Tennessee Williams as the 'Big Three' of American drama.

For the past quarter of a century, a disturbingly large percentage of the plays written for the American theatre have tended to be case histories of all forms of social and psychological aberrations, states Robert W. Corrigan, editor of Critical Essays on Arthur Miller; "for Arthur Miller, who has been a major figure during the whole period, this has not been the case; he has insisted with a continually broadening range that courage, truth, responsibility and faith must be central values of man who would (as they must) live together."¹

Taken together Miller's works testify in Corrigan's opinion to "Miller's own sense of involvement with modern man's struggle to be himself and have made him one of Modern Theatre's most compelling and important spokesman".²

Arthur Miller was granted the status of a major playwright with the professional production of his second full length play. After DEATH OF A SALESMAN was produced in 1949, he was considered by many as one of the world's most important living dramatists and thus acquired an international reputation early in his career. Fortunately Miller knew how to cope with such adulation and was not destroyed by it. But the fame and glamour attached to his name created an atmosphere which made it difficult to consider his artistic achievement with objectivity.

A lot has been written on Arthur Miller and his personal life; his marriage to the famous actress Marilyn Monroe, his disillusionment and breakdown of his relationship with her finds its echo in many of his plays and writings; his leftist ideologies which made him a target of many controversies. Thus, various critical opinions, Miller's own formidable critical writings have tended to confuse one as to the real ideas and attitudes present in his writings.

When recently asked in what way his plays were related to the events of his life, Miller replied "in a sense, all my plays are autobiographical".³ When John Chapman introduced Arthur Miller to readers of THE BEST PLAYS OF 1948-49, not only as the author of the prize winning DEATH OF A SALESMAN but as "one who has held such tiring jobs as

truck driver, waiter, crew-man on a tanker and even now spends a few weeks each year working in a factory so he will remember what it feels like to stand on one's feet in one place eight hours a day".⁴

This image of Miller is not a fictitious one. Not only do the plays suggest an author with an extensive first hand acquaintance with a variety of ordinary employments but they attest to the acquiring of that knowledge the hard way. Miller was growing up during the 'Depression' in America and no other single factor is a more important than this in determining his work.

It was the "Depression" that gave him his compassionate understanding of the insecurity of man in modern industrial civilisation, his deep-rooted belief in social responsibility and the moral earnestness that has occasioned unsympathetic and often unjust criticism".⁵

Marriage in 1940 to Mary Slattery whom he had met at college, brought a son and daughter, but it ended in a divorce in June 1956. Miller married Marilyn Monroe on 29th June, 1956 at which time he was very much in the public eye for other reasons, that in the belief that he was supporting the communist movement and controversy regarding his Jewish descent.

However, we are concerned with Miller as a writer and with his place in American literature and more specifically Drama. Miller is more cosmopolitan than American. He has more in common with Ibsen, Shaw and Brecht than with O'Neill, Obet or Wilder. Dennis Welland has called him "the E.M. Forster of the theatre".⁶ Writing only when he has

something to say and refusing to cash in on an easy popularity by repeating himself, Miller is not a prolific writer. According to Welland "it is not poverty of invention or lack of ideas that inhibits him but an excess of self criticism coupled with a restlessness of intellect".⁶ For this reason, he has been called "the passionately self-exploring, artist genius type".⁷

It is generally agreed upon by critics that Arthur Miller is a playwright who has placed the idea of commitment and responsibility at the centre of his dramatic theory and practice. It is also commonly held that Miller's intense intellectual and moral development on the great issues of his time has given his theatre its serious and tragic stature. A whole number of labels have been applied to the description of his theatre; some of these labels are totally vague and some are not fully borne out by the close analysis of his drama. Is Miller, for instance, a latter day Ibsen who has made use of the worn out technique of the realistic drama borrowed from his Norwegian master to articulate his obsessive preoccupation with the guilt-laden life of the bourgeois middle class ? Or do his plays bear a quasi-marxist stamp as they sometimes tend to be partisan critiques of the American way of life ? Could we call him a direct descendent of the playwright of the Depression thirties ? Is Miller's vision of life close to Christian existentialism ? A critic Dennis Welland believes that "Miller's constant preoccupation is with people who are, in one way or another, denied a sense of community".⁹ There are others who feel that his plays read like a commentary on the American way of life ;

for Miller, just as much as for Hawthorne or Henry James, its a complex fate, being an American and like their novels, all his plays are original and thoughtful enquiries into the nature of that complexity".¹⁰

The purpose of this study is not to resolve the questions centering around Miller's works, but to highlight one of Miller's major concerns; his concern with the individual and his place in society. Thus, this study contains an extensive survey of Miller's intellectual background as well as his function as a serious dramatist. There have also been attempts at using long quotations from Miller's critical writings because they are in my opinion essential for illuminating this study, but here it must be said that Miller is not always his best critic and that some of his comments about his own plays tend to be confusing at times. In the three chapters that follow, I have attempted a close thematic and structural study of the four social plays which belong to the first period of Miller's artistic development which was published in his COLLECTED PLAYS in 1957 - ALL MY SONS (1947), DEATH OF A SALESMAN , THE CRUCIBLE (1953), AND A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1955-1957) with some emphasis on A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS. These plays constitute a cycle. The accent of this study thus falls heavily on the first phase of Miller's artistic development.

Arthur Miller has been the subject of many controversies ever since DEATH OF A SALESMAN. The advocates of private and obscure images of man's disintegration had condemned him for continued adherence to an outworn Ibsen tradition; Eric Bentley had seen in the drama "The Little Man as Victim".¹⁰ On the other hand social realists had welcomed Miller too enthusiastically as a writer who avoided violence and sexuality and personal dislocation as a way out of despair.

Thus, Miller in the European tradition had set himself up as "essayist, commentator and moralist".¹¹ He repeatedly demanded of the writer "a kind of truthfulness that is larger than the mere invitation of life", and a relentless search for "responsibility and guilt for this world we cannot quite believe we made".¹² He questioned "what is the most human way to live and where in all the profusion of materiality we have created around us is the cup where the spirit may reside".¹³

It has rightly been said by one critic that Arthur Miller "discovered himself in the Crucible of the great Depression of the nineteen thirties".¹⁴ As a young boy used to the security of a middle-class Jewish family in New York city, Miller was personally affected by the economic crash of 1929 and the events which followed it. His father who had been a prosperous business man suffered great losses during the Depression and was forced to move the family to a small town in Brooklyn. The young Miller who had planned on going to Cornell University ended up in a warehouse from which experience he was ultimately to write A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS (1953). Miller has himself acknowledged the importance of the Depression catastrophe in the evolution of his world view; mass unemployment, poverty and the gathering social tensions tended to destroy so much that was human and lovely in his neighbourhood. The Depression thirties unfolded before Miller the facet of capitalism which he later found hard to dismiss from memory. The economic collapse taught Miller "the basic vulnerability of a social system based on greed and sheerly oriented towards profit".¹⁵ Miller sought to find in the lessons of Depression the coordinates of a high sense of human destiny.

My standard is to be sure derived from my life in the thirties but I believe that it is as old as the drama itself and was merely articulated to me in the accent of the thirties. I ask of a play, first the dramatic question, the carpenter-builders question what is its ultimate force ? How can that force be released ? Secondly, the human question - what is, its ultimate relevancy to the survival of the race". 16

Thus the Depression experience formed the basis of Miller's conception of the social drama. It forms the background in plays like ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN and A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS.

Many critics have found a remarkable similarity between Henrik Ibsen and Arthur Miller. There can be no doubt that Miller found in the dramatic method of Ibsen an exact way of realising some of his concerns. It is the Ibsen of the middle period with whom Miller identifies himself; the author of THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY, A DOLL'S HOUSE, GHOSTS, AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE and THE WILD DUCK. These are Ibsen's realistic social dramas. The tragic problems of individual versus society held profound implications for Arthur Miller. Thus, in his plays, there are certain concrete and specific echos from Ibsen's theatre and thus critics hurl the term 'Ibsenesque' and have usually tended to overpress the point.

In his "Introduction" to the Collected Plays, Miller pauses to examine 'Ibsenism' as a technique and which inspired his own ideas of craftsmanship from the beginning of his career.

If his plays and his method do nothing else, they reveal the evolutionary quality of life. One is constantly aware, in watching his plays of process, change and development.....What I believe to be the biggest single dramatic problem namely is how to

dramatize what has gone before.....because dramatic characters and the drama itself can never hope to attain a maximum degree of consciousness unless they contain a viable unveiling of the contrast between past and present and the awareness of the process by which the present has become what it is. And I say this finally, because I take it as a truth that the end of drama is the creation of a higher consciousness". 17

The tragedy of the Depression years taught Miller that

there was a hidden or half concealed order in the universe, some vital connection existing between the private destiny of the individual and the vaster economic and social forces at work in the world outside". 18

This explains Miller's constant concern with causes, actions. Thus, we find in ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRUCIBLE and THE PRICE, characters and incidents are deeply rooted in the past; the plays cannot move forward without moving backward to dig up the roots.

There are also many critics who see a close affinity between Miller and 'Leftist' writers like Odets, Lillian Hellman, Elmer Rice etc. The theme of work alienation and its depersonalising effects on the individual runs like a dark thread through most of his plays. The notion that the human personality becomes a marketable commodity in a capitalist system and the resulting self-alienation of the individual leading to social unhappiness figures prominently in DEATH OF A SALESMAN and to some extent in MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS. The 'Depression' made Arthur Miller realise that it was not just financial stress alone that shook the foundations of American life at that time but a false ideal which the preceding era, the 'twenties' had raised to the

level of a religious creed; 'the idea of success'. The unsuccessful Man, the one who failed in business was a flawed man. Thus, the root of evil was "the false ideal, the dream of success, the hot air of the corrupted American dream".¹⁹ In his plays, Miller seeks the maintainance of individual dignity within the context of the family which broadens to the concept of society as a whole. Here again Miller acknowledges his debt to Ibsen -

It is obvious to begin with that Ibsen's Mission was to create not merely characters but a context in which they were formed and functioned as people. That context, heavily and often profoundly delineated was his society. His very idea of fate, for instance, was the inevitability residing in the conflict between the life force of his characters struggling with the hypocrisies, the strangling and abortive effects of society upon them. Thus Ibsen had to draw society in his plays as a realistic force embodied in money, in social mores, in taboos and so on as well as an internal subjective force within his characters".²⁰

Thus it is through his plays that Miller comes to make something of existence. He has said

I am not calling for more ideology..... I am simply asking for a theatre in which an adult who wants to live can find plays that will highten his awareness of what living in our times involves. I am tired of seeing man as merely a bundle of nerves. That way lies pathology and we have pretty well arrived".²¹

After having discussed the various influences on Arthur Miller's writings, his own critical writings, it is necessary for us to study indepth the plays he has written. In spite of the interpretations propounded by various critics, there is one common thread weaving through all his plays.

As Miller himself says -

That is why we must have a theatre. For above all, the theatre places man in the centre of the world. We must have a point of adventurous stillness, the quiet eye of the storm, from which to witness the age old revelation of a man challenging God in the working out of his fate".²²

Here, the emphasis is on placing 'Man' in the centre world. In all his plays, Arthur Miller deals with an individual confronted by many ordinary situations, family situations, social situations that an average reader can relate to. We are lulled into a feeling of complacency, we are invited to participate in a domestic scene where there is love between Father and son (All My Sons), between husband and wife (Death of a Salesman). But as the plays progress, they move not outward but inward, ploughing through the masks, tearing through the curtains; an inward journey reaching down to the hitherto unexplored depth of the human mind and heart, till the character is revealed to us in all his weakness, his faults. Nothing is hidden and we are confronted with the "Self", unhampered and free from all illusions imposed on it. The end of the journey is reached and the moment of truth is upon us.

Thus, in all his plays, the core of human nature, the 'Self' is revealed naked in its various manifestations. Miller in his "Introduction" to the Collected Plays says -

These plays, in one sense are one's response to what was in the air, they are one man's way of saying to his fellow men; this is what you see; what you really are, what you really know, but have not had the time, or disinterestedness or the insight or the information to understand consciously. Each of these

plays in varying degrees, was begun in the belief that it was unveiling the truth but unrecognised as such..... and in this respect at least the function of a play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of the revelation of his mutuality with them. If only for this reason, I regard the theatre as a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say less alone".²³

Thus, being a serious artist, he has shown interest in the fundamental problems of contemporary life which emerge essentially from the unchanged human nature. Miller's plays are a combination of the Psychological and Sociological drama. The exploration of the 'Self' in the context of certain social situations. "The true social drama", which he calls the whole drama "must recognise that man has both a subjective and an objective existence, that he belongs not only to himself and his family but to the world beyond".²⁴ But if the playwright is to be concerned with both the psychological man and social man, he is inevitably forced to deal with the problem of identity. In Miller's early work, each of his heroes is involved in a struggle which results from his acceptance or his rejection of an image of himself, an image that partly grows out of his own illusions and partly out of the values and prejudices of society. This study aims to analyse Miller's plays in both these aspects, a journey both inward and outward. It will study some basic questions raised in his plays - the quest for identity, how far is the individual himself responsible for his tragic existence and how far is society responsible

It will be a study of exploration and exposition; to separate illusion from reality, man from image till the very core of human nature is reached, till the self is revealed, naked and vulnerable. Thus, the study will focus on two of the most important aspects of Arthur

Miller's work - THE STUDY OF SELF and THE STUDY OF SELF AND SOCIETY. The accent of this study will focus heavily on his early plays written up to and including the revised version of A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1957). Thus, the next three chapters will discuss in detail four of his important plays, ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRUCIBLE and A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.

Miller's early plays form a cohesive group, although at first glance they seem very different. As Miller himself says -

Now I should like to make the bold statement that all plays we call great, let alone those we call serious are ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this; how many a man make of the outside world a home? How and in what ways must he struggle, what must he strive to change and overcome within himself and outside himself if he is to find the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity".²⁵

The following chapters on the early plays of Miller will explore this basic problem - the crisis of identity and Miller's purpose of writing drama which is to

embrace the many sidedness of man. In a word there lies within the dramatic form the ultimate possibility of raising the truth-consciousness of mankind to a level of identity as to transform those who observe it".²⁶

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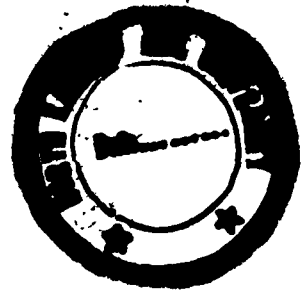
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17. Arthur Miller, "The Introduction to the Collected Plays", P. 21. All subsequent references to "Introduction" are to this edition; Arthur Miller's Collected Plays (New York Viking Press, 1957), the title of which is hereafter abbreviated as C.P. It contains the following plays - ALL MY SONS (A.M.S.), DEATH OF A SALESMAN (D.S.), THE CRUCIBLE (C.R.), A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS (M.T.M.), A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (V.B.). All citations to these plays are from this edition.
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ALL MY SONS - "Illusion and Reality"

Man is his own star; and the soul that can render an honest and a perfect man, commands all light, all influence, all fate. Nothing to him falls, early or too late, our acts our angels are for good or ill, our fatal shadows that walk by us still.¹

Although one should be wary of critics who play the 'periods game' and break down an artist's work into nice, tight little compartments, there do nonetheless seem to be two different patterns of concern in the plays that Arthur Miller has written so far. The first pattern emerges in the plays written up to and including the revised edition of A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1957). The second pattern began to emerge in THE MISFITS (1960); Miller's only produced film, and has been increasingly manifest in his last three plays; AFTER THE FALL, INCIDENT AT VICHY and THE PRICE. These two distinct patterns can be treated as Miller's evolution as an artist.

The central conflict in all of the plays in Miller's first period grows out of a "crisis of identity".² Each of the protagonists in these plays is suddenly confronted with a situation which he is incapable of meeting and which eventually puts his 'name' in jeopardy. In the ensuing struggle it becomes clear that he does not know what his 'name' really is; finally his inability to answer the question, who am I ?, produces calamity and his ultimate downfall. Joe Keller, Willy Loman, John Proctor, and Eddie Carbone are alike; caught up in the problem of identity and their deaths are caused by their lack of self-understanding. In every case, this blindness is in large measure due to their failure to have resolved the question of identity at an earlier and more appropriate time in life. Miller presents

this conflict as "a conflict between the uncomprehending self and a solid social and economic structure - the family, the community, the system".³ The drama emerges either when the protagonist breaks his connection with society or when unexpected pressures reveal that such a connection has never in fact even existed. Miller sees the need for such a connection as absolute and the failure to achieve or maintain it is bound to result in catastrophe. He makes this very clear in his "Introduction" to the Collected Plays, where he writes about ALL MY SONS as follows :

Joe Keller's trouble in a word, is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any connection with his world, his universe, or his society. (C.P,P.19)

Miller expands this idea even further in an article in the New York Times

what kills Eddie Carbone is nothing visible or heard, but the built-in conscience of the community whose existence he has menaced by betraying it. Whatever both plays are, they are at bottom reassertions of the existence of community.⁴

Thus, each of the plays, written prior to THE MISFITS is a Judgement of man's failure to maintain a viable connection with his surrounding world because he does not know himself. The verdict is always 'guilty' and it is a verdict based upon Miller's belief that if each man faced up to the truth about himself, he could be fulfilled as an individual and still live within the restrictions of society. But though the verdict is guilty, there is no doubt that Miller's sympathies are for the most part directed towards "those ordinary little men who never discovered who they really were".⁵

A Miller protagonist is a strange breed. In every instance he is unimaginative, inarticulate and physically nondescript, if not downright unattractive. His role as husband or father (or father surrogate) are of paramount importance to him and yet he fails miserably in both. He wants to love and be loved but he is incapable of either giving or receiving love. And he is "haunted by aspirations towards a joy in life that his humdrum spirit is quite unable to realise".⁶ Yet, in spite of all these characteristics Miller's protagonists do engage our imagination and win our sympathies. On one hand, he finds them guilty for their failure to maintain (or fulfill) their role within the established social structure. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the system is shown to be in some ways responsible for creating those very conditions which provoke the protagonist's downfall.

Despite these contradictions, each of the plays of Miller's first period is imbued with sure sense of the world. "The individual may struggle for his name, to be himself in difficult situations in what may seem to be an inimical world, but a sense of what Miller believes the world can and should be is always there".⁷ It is this quality of certainty which characterises the COLLECTED PLAYS. This volume, published in 1957, marks the completion of the first phase of his development and one senses from the "Introduction" that Miller was capable of an objective assessment of his own work which only an artist secure in his achievement could succeed in writing.

In his INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTED PLAYS, Arthur Miller says

It is necessary if one is to reflect reality, not only to depict why a man does what he does or why he nearly didn't do it, but why he cannot simply walk away and say to hell with it. To ask this last question of the play is a cruel thing for evasion is probably the most developed technique most men have. (C.P, P. 7)

It is the depiction of reality and the breaking down of Illusions that forms the central focus of his early plays. "Any play of character", says Arthur Miller, "must show characters who are somewhat self-deluded or less than fully aware" (C.P., P.32). The quest for identity, the quest for self sends the protagonist on a long journey of discovery and the truth about one's self is so painful and stark that the only escape route is death. Thus, the developed concept of 'Illusionary identity' occurs where the protagonist suffers because of a disastrous inability to know himself. Either he has a false idea of his identity in life or cannot identify himself at all. Hence, there is an excess of illusion or delusion, leading to a conflict between the real and the ideal, which makes it impossible to live and so the 'death wish' becomes common; hence we have the hero's quasi or actual suicide. The only way they know how to live is by leading a life of escape through dreams. "Who wants to see life as it is ?" ⁸ says Edmund in Eugene O' Neill's LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT. The underlying attitude in Miller's plays is that life is so unjust and fruitless that illusion is called for. Then, when man tries that life destroys him for it. It goes without saying that

in a society where there is basic disagreement as to the right way to live there can hardly be agreement as to the right way to die and both life and death are heavily weighted with meaningless futility. (C.P,P.33,34)

Thus, both Willy Loman (Death of a Salesman) and Joe Keller (All My Sons) struggle with lies and dreams because their motive is to belong. Miller believes that "tragedy springs from the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world".⁹ The inability to know one's self or others is responsible for modern man's loneliness. Tennessee Williams rightly says - "Nobody ever gets to know anybody: We are all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins".¹⁰

The theme of social alienation is thus common in Miller's plays. Miller himself remarks

It is as though both playwright and audience believed that they had once had an identity, a being somewhere in the past which in the present has lost its completeness, its definitiveness, so that the central force making for pathos in these large and thrusting plays is the paradox which time bequeaths to us all. We cannot go home again and the world we live in is an alien place .¹¹

By focusing on the individual's search for a place in society, the most important single fact about the plays of Arthur Miller is that he has brought back into the theatre, in an important way, "the drama of social questions".¹²

Absorption with the self and analysis of motives stems from Miller's consciousness of personal failure as son, husband and father - "The truth is that we have not discovered how to be happy and at one with ourselves. We have only gone far in abolishing physical poverty".¹³

No discussion of the plays of Arthur Miller will be complete without the influence and similarity between Ibsen and Miller, especially where the theme of the individual in society is concerned. A device which is commonly used in Ibsen's domestic tragedies, which has profound implications for the technique of retrospective exposition had evidently caught Miller's attention. This is what has come to be known as 'fatal secret', or the secret of the long buried guilt in the family. Ibsen in his famous tragedies of middle class life found this to be a useful stratagem in his attempt to dramatise the interrelationship between past and present; to exhibit a present into which the past (Ghosts) erupt.

Eric Bentley speaking about Ibsen's dramatic technique says

.....Ibsen saw life itself as a placid surface through which from time to time what seemed dead and buried will break; a present into which the 'vanished' past returns that there is a moral continuity between past and present, that concealment (repression, hypocrisy) is the enemy; openness (candour, light, truth) the one thing necessary.¹⁴

Ibsen's use of the deep secrets lurking in past situations is in fact related to a whole 'world-view' which sees the present, in its growing vulnerability springing from the past. This device is intimately linked up with the haunted feeling of Ibsen's characters who search about in

the past for the concealments and suppressions of truth which have stifled their subjective quest for personal realisation. Miller, adopting this device from Ibsen, has shown in his plays with some divergence, the device of the long buried guilt in the family which erupts into the life of a protagonist with sensational and tragic consequence. There arises in this context another relevant point. There have been many critics who think that Miller's use of the buried secret in his plays from ALL MY SONS to THE PRICE registers the combined influence of Ibsen and Freud. Laurence Kitchin while commenting on Miller's role in contemporary Drama invites our attention to this

Like Oedipus Rex, domestic drama depends very much on the disruptive effects of an appalling secret, as Ibsen demonstrates. As to reinforce them came the influence of Freud whose special field, was the appalling secret within a family.¹⁵

Thus, there is the use of Freudian motivation and symbolism in the plays of Arthur Miller. This becomes markedly evident in two of his plays DEATH OF A SALESMAN and ALL MY SONS which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. In DEATH OF SALESMAN, the buried guilt in Willy Loman's life is located in the hotel scene in Boston where Biff witnesses the traumatic destruction of his 'Father-God'. This scene which occupies a crucial place in the play's structure carries clear Freudian overtones.

The stage Mechanism through which Joe Keller's guilt is brought to light in ALL MY SONS, involving Kate's Freudian 'Slip of the tongue', carries a hint of psychological causation. In all these instances, Miller has constantly introduced psychological Motifs in order to deepen his evocation of a guilt-laden past which intrudes into the present situation at a relentless pace in the true manner of the domestic tragedies of Ibsen.

The great American scholar Ralph Waldo Emerson in his famous essay Self-Reliance has said that man must know himself, he must strive for truth and must not foster any illusion about himself; "A man must know his own worth and keep things under his feet".¹⁶ But Emerson believes that "Man as it were is clasped into Jail by his consciousness".¹⁷ Man is timid and apologetic, he is no longer upright, he dares not say I think, 'I am'; Emerson believes that man can achieve 'self-reliance' only by speaking the truth; "Thy lot or portion of life", said the Caliph Ali, "is seeking after thee". Emerson tells us to

check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of those deceived and deceiving people with whom we can converse. Say to them, O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O son, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforth, I am the truth. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. ¹⁸

This is precisely what the Miller protagonists are incapable of saying. No doubt what Emerson is saying is the highest philosophy, the highest truth, but in the real world, is anyone capable of revealing one's self to everyone and cry out "This is the real me" and with this revelation, will he achieve the self-reliance he is seeking for or will self-reliance turn into self-denial, isolation and an inability to live with the truth of one's 'self' ? In the real world, the world which Arthur Miller portrays, there is a very thin line between illusion and reality. "We are content with our world of illusion, complacent with the half knowledge we have of ourselves".

In ALL MY SONS, we have a normal family background, Joe Keller is a perfectly respectable man, a rich businessman and the love that is there between himself and his son Chris is apparent.

Ann - "you are the only one I know who loves his parents".

Chris - "I know, it went out of style, didn't it".
(A.M.S., P.83)

But as the play progresses, we see how cleverly Joe Keller is living in a world of illusion, how hard he is trying to sustain an image of himself, as a father, as a husband and as a respectable man of society while we are made to realise the awful truth that Joe is guilty in shipping out faulty airplane parts and was responsible for landing his partner in Jail. What is most horrifying is the fact that deep down in their hearts, all the other people living in the neighbourhood know but are willing to sustain his illusion. But the moment of truth has to come; "the ancient doctrine of Nemesis who keeps watch in the universe and lets no offence go unchastied".¹⁹ The past (fatal secret) rears its ugly head and Joe Keller is revealed not only to us but to his idealistic son who had believed in him. Joe nor his son Chris can live with his reality. Joe cannot reach out to his son and say - "This is the real me. Love and accept me for what I am". Joe Keller is a good husband and a good father but he fails to be a the good man, the good citizen that his son demands. His excuse that he had done it for Chris is weak and he realises it. The mask of illusion is torn apart by his idealistic son and he is made to realise the essential truth of his 'self'. He cannot live with it and so takes his own life. Miller talking about his plays says,

The crime in ALL MY SONS is not one that is about to be committed but one that has long since been committed..... the damage has been done irreparably. The stakes remaining are purely the conscience of Joe Keller and its awakening to the evil he has done. (C.P, P.18)

In DEATH OF A SALESMAN, described as "the best American play ever written" ²⁰, again we have a world of illusion and reality. We have Willy Loman, a Salesman, who is unable to come to terms with his own limitations and who is desperately clinging on to his illusion of being "well liked and well loved" (D.S, P.144). he not only convinces himself that "success falls inevitably to the man with the right smile, the best line, the best charm, the man who is not only liked but well liked" but he also succeeds in fostering his illusions on his two sons. He regularly confuses labels with reality. In his last scene with his son Biff, Willy cries out - "I am not dime a dozen, I am Willy Loman and you are Biff Loman" (D.S, P. 217). But he cannot sustain this illusion with his son Biff who knows him for what he is - "A phoney" (D.S, P.216).

This is the reason for the sense of uneasiness and anger between the two. But Willy still tries to hold on to his dream. He lies about the size of his sales, the warmth of his reception, the number of his friends. His continuing self-delusion keeps him from the truth of his self which he knows but is afraid to face. But one by one, all his illusions are torn apart by his son, Biff-

Pop, I am dime a dozen and so are you. For Christ's sake, will you take that phoney dream and burn it before something happens ?" (D.S, P.217)

But rather than let go of his illusion, Willy dies convinced that his way of living has been right all along. Thus, in the two plays mentioned, there is a desperate need to cling to illusions as reality is harsh and cruel and when

the truth of one's self is revealed not only to himself but to others who love him, the whole edifice comes tumbling down like a pack of cards. In the play THE PRICE, Walter tells his brother Vic,

We invent ourselves, Vic, to wipe out what we know. You invent a life of self sacrifice, a life of duty but what never existed here cannot be upheld. You were not upholding something, you were denying what you knew they were and denying yourself. And that's all that is standing between us now - an illusion.²¹

A discussion of these two plays ALL MY SONS and DEATH OF A SALESMAN brings home the important fact that though truth can make us self reliant, 'truth can also destroy'. Eugene O'Neill affirmed that only with self deception could man go on "our pipe dreams though false are preferable to fact. Destroying illusions destroys man".

But how far is the individual himself responsible for his tragic existence : Doesn't society play any part in individual existence; can it not be held responsible in some way to the problems that are facing man today ? "No man is an island" and man defines himself in his relationship with others living in society. Arthur Miller himself makes it clear that his dramas are "social dramas". So Society forms a large part in defining the characters in his plays.

Miller once remarked "I can't live apart from the world".²² Yet his plays dramatise the ways in which a man alienates himself from his society and fights to get back into it. The structure of society goes uncondemned and unanalysed, taken as if it were an unchangeable artefact.

The weight of action falls cruelly on the individual within the fixed powerful society which fails to support him at his moment of need and remains, as he falls, monolithically immovable.

Thus, the concern with the social problem, the social injustice and its effect on the lives of the characters is found in Miller's plays - the common man is crushed by forces outside himself and by illusions, false ideals spawned by those forces. The tragedy of social disintegration forms an important part in his plays. Perhaps influenced by the Depression and its effects on society Miller's constant cry was that society must pay attention to the 'forgotten little man' who served the whole; "we are allowed to pass by with our eyes callously shut because the man is nobody important".²³ Elmer Rice in his play, THE STREET SCENE says

That's all there is in life. Nothing but pain, from before we are born, until we die. Every where you look, oppression and cruelty; if it doesn't come from Nature, it comes from humanity trampling on itself and tearing at its own throat. The whole world is nothing but a blood stained arena, filled with misery and suffering. It is too high a price to pay for life; life isn't worth it.²⁴

Although Miller's views are not so pessimistic as Elmer Rice's, there is an atmosphere of perennial defeat in his plays which comes from the impersonality of the automated mechanised society that has substituted slowly cultured quality for 'Mass mediocrity'. The dramatist, as Arthur Miller insists, must not conceive of man as a private entity and his social relationships as something thrown at him but rather he must come to see that

Society is inside of man and man is inside of society and you cannot even create a truthfully drawn psychological entity on the stage until you understand his social relationships and their power to make him what he is and to prevent him from being what he is not.²⁵

In one of his earliest essays on Drama TRAGEDY AND THE COMMON MAN, Arthur Miller formulated his position on the function and nature of tragedy

"The tragic feeling", he writes, "is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing; his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to regain his rightful place in society. The theme of tragedy is Man's need to wholly realise himself. Whatever confines man and stunts his growth is ripe for attack and examination. Man's destruction in his effort to evaluate himself and to be evaluated justly says Miller "posits a wrong or an evil in his environment".²⁶

From these remarks made by Miller, we can have a more detailed discussion on the four plays which form the COLLECTED PLAYS edition. In this chapter, there will be emphasis on one of Miller's most popular plays, ALL MY SONS (1947).

ALL MY SONS

Opening his discussion on the nature of Miller's dramatic art in his four major social plays, Henry Popkin wrote in 1960 -

Arthur Miller's regular practice in his plays is to confront the dead levels of banality with the heights and depths of guilt and to draw from this strange encounter a liberal parable of hidden evil and social responsibility.²⁷

This would serve as an adequate summary of ALL MY SONS in which Miller attempted successfully for the first time to wrest tragedy out of the hidden tensions and looming fears of the life of the American Middle Class. Structured around the guilt of a wartime profiteer and uncovering its emotional conflicts in the traditional Ibsen-like form of narration, ALL MY SONS registered its impact on the American theatre in the late forties as a social thesis play. Staged in 1947, ALL MY SONS was Miller's first success on Broadway, and it contained the defining characteristics of Miller's theatre which won him recognition in the later years.

ALL MY SONS based on a true story presents Chris Keller, the returned army officer, rejecting Joe Keller's criminal irresponsibility, whether he is his father or not. The father shoots himself once the son knows the truth. He accepts his fate but so does the son. The main line of action in the play proceeds from the guilt of Joe Keller, an uneducated, self-made businessman who sold defective cylinder heads to the Air Force during the Second World War. He had allowed 120 cracked Engine Heads to go from his factory into P 40 Aircrafts directly causing their pilot's deaths, the slaughter of his own son's comrades in battle. Joe's son Larry, a pilot was reported missing during the war; the fact that Larry committed suicide out of his sense of shame and outrage is withheld till the very end of the play where it is used to produce melodramatic effects. Joe was implicated in the trial but he managed to escape a long prison term by letting the blame fall upon his weaker and less guilty business partner Steve Deever. Joe returned to his business, rebuilt it, and by the time the war is over, is operating it successfully. When the play opens, we are introduced to the leisurely Sunday atmosphere of Joe's family life. The plot is presented through unstylised conversation with a minimum of stage devices, symbolism or

heightened language. The terror emerges from the ordinariness of the scene in which moral sense is smothered and self accusation follows enlightenment. At first nothing is revealed. Little by little the playwright lifts the veil on the ominous events of the past, leading, through an interplay of character and motive, and action and melodrama, to an implacable exposure of the main character and the social philosophy that he represents. Joe Keller's life is a waste; he forfeits his son's love and his own good name for a public business ethic which is strictly unusable in private, family and neighbourhood life.

The business ethic puts financial and social self interest first and social responsibility second. The war exposed the radical moral division. Joe's horror at his own crime is insignificant besides his larger irresponsibility to a universe of people.²⁸

The plot is presented in a very conventional manner. There is a lot of banter and bonhomie circulating in the conversation in Joe's house and the spirit of good neighbourliness is allowed to predominate the atmosphere till the play picks up sudden momentum at the middle point of the second Act. The loose and casual rythm of dramatic movement till Ann's brother George, arrives on the scene with his vengeful mission does very little to reveal or deepen the central theme of guilt and tragic punishment. It is, on the other hand, characterised by a certain semi-deceptive quality which goes with the typical American 'drawing-room comedy'. We get a word, a nuance to suggest that there are some hidden secrets in Joe's family; there is a hint of suspicion in the dialogues that Joe's business prosperity is somehow connected with his unfortunate experience in the past. But real tension begins only with the critical arrival of George whose impatient demand for the whole truth prepares the way for the climatic exposure of Joe Keller and the world of illusion he had been living

in. In the true manner of an Ibsenesque well-made play, ALL MY SONS begins at a late point of action. In a sense, the story is nearly over before the action starts. Much of the time has therefore to be spent in bringing the past into the present.

We notice the broken Apple tree and Joe Keller is half-way through his conversation with his neighbour Frank before they talk about the previous night's storm which blew it down. Even the tree has been called an Ibsenian symbol but its main function is to introduce the plot as it does when Frank talks about it as 'Larry's tree' and mentions that he is working on Larry's horoscope. After this it is easy for Miller to start presenting the play's pre-history. Joe's son Larry, a pilot was reported missing during the war three years ago and Kate, his mother, still refuses to believe that he is dead.

Another neighbour, Dr. Jim Baylies and his overweight wife Sue, who never lets him out of her sight for longer than she can help, lets us know that there is a beautiful girl in the house. Ann, who was Larry's fiancée is staying with the Kellers at the invitation of Chris, the younger son and we learn from Frank's wife, Lydia that they are living in the house which used to belong to Ann's father. But we don't get any more of the plot yet. First we have a lot of banter. After Chris, who wants to read the book-section of the Sunday paper, has teased his father about his ignorance, we see Joe rather charmingly playing policeman with Jim's young son, kidding the boy into believing that there is a Jail inside the house. It is only then that Chris, who wants to marry Ann, tries to get his father to side with him in the Fight that is bound to evolve with Kate, who still thinks of Ann as Larry's fiancée. We also get our first glimpse of the closeness in the relationship between Joe and Chris, and the difference

in their attitudes to the family business.

Keller : "You Mean (goes to him) Tell me something, you mean you'd leave the business ?

Chris : Yes, on this I would.

Keller : (after a pause) Well.....you don't want to think like that.

Chris : Then help me stay here.

Keller : Alright, butbut don't think like that. Because what the hell did I work for ? That's only for you, Chris, the whole shooting match is for you.

Chris : I know that, Dad. Just you help me stay here.

(A.M.S, P.69)

Kate's apperance immediately shows how hard the fight is going to be. In the earlier draft of the play, she was the dominant character and there was a great stress on her belief in astrology. Though Miller later shifted the Main focus to the father-son relationship, Kate remains a dominating personality. Her stubborn refusal to give up her belief that Larry is not dead is a source of conflict in the play. Her reaction to the Jail game that Keller is playing with Jim's young son creates the suspicion in our minds that maybe he has got something to hide.

Mother : I want you to stop that, Joe. That whole Jail business.

Keller (alarmed, therefore angered) : Look at you, look at you shaking.

Mother : I can't help it.

Keller : What have I got to hide ? What the hell is the matter with you, Kate ?

Mother : I didn't say you had anything to hide, I am just telling you to stop it : Now stop it.

(A.M.S, P.74)

We now see how cleverly, Miller has prepared the ground for revelation of the hidden crime with the game about the Jail and Kate's reaction to it.

As C.W.E. Bigsby has pointed out in his book CONFRONTATION AND COMMITMENT, the plot here bears some resemblance to Ibsen's in the WILD DUCK, in which one of the two business partners is found guilty of fraud while the other goes free. And like Ibsen's Gregors Werle, Chris is an idealist who later on, when he finds out about his father's guilt, feels compelled to destroy the lie on which his father's life is based at whatever cost.

Etched against the background of the story and the leisurely narrative, there emerges the portrayal of Joe and Chris, the two central figures in the play. Miller has almost divided the thematic focus between the father and the son.

According to Raymond Williams -

In both father and son, there are roots of guilt and yet ultimately they stand together as men - the father both a model and rejected ideal, the son both an ideal and a relative failure. One way of looking at ALL MY SONS is in these universal terms; the father, in effect, destroys one of his sons and that son, in his turn, gives sentence of death on him, while at the same time, to the other son, the father offers a future and the son, in rejecting it, destroys his father in pain and love.²⁹

The issue in this play is, how far is the individual responsible for his downfall ? In the play, one thing is made clear "Dishonest dreams destroys the right to survive". The fault with Joe Keller lay in the fact that he built his whole life on a 'lie'. The dramatist has provided a little symbolic detail which serves to illuminate the character and philosophy of Joe Keller. This is the image of the forty-foot Fence which he feels bounds his world.

The hedged-in backyard setting in the play helps to dramatise his insularity and his withdrawal from the community around him. Joe Keller is not inherently Evil; there is no vice in him, only banality and his own form of limiting selfishness.

Miller wants Joe Keller to be innocent insofar as he is

The uneducated man for whom there is still wonder in the many commonly known things, a man whose judgements must be dredged out of experience and peasant-like commonsense.
(A.M.S, P.59)

He is characterised by simple geniality and naive high spirits. Miller has presented him as an ordinary man, surprised that "every week a new book comes out" (A.M.S, P.64) occasionally uncertain of his pronunciation, aggressively proud of his night-school education and somewhat perplexed by a world where "you stand on the street today and spit, you're gonna hit a college man" (A.M.S, P.96). His sense of fun and good nature predominate much of the conversation in the first two Acts. In fact, the playwright has done everything possible to emphasise the ordinariness of his protagonist through his drab speech and values. It is precisely his dullness and incomprehensibility which renders Joe a fascinating object of attention when he is on trial, matched with extraordinary demands and accusations. A man who is frightened to face the truth of his self and who was comfortable in the world of illusion that he had created for himself and his family. The moment of confrontation dawns upon him somewhat suddenly, when startled out of his placid existence, he stands face to face with his hidden guilt.

"The fortress which ALL MY SONS lays siege to is the fortress of unrelatedness" (C.P, P.19), Miller wrote while explaining the didactic design of his play in his 'Introduction' to COLLECTED PLAYS. 'Unrelatedness' is a telling epithet to describe Joe's Malady which was the Main spring of his antisocial crime. It was through his narrow and outdated loyalty to business and family that he betrayed the larger loyalties of the global conflict by shipping out defective engine parts for the aircraft, causing the death of many American pilots. Joe acted within the confines of his family-based philosophy of life; his crime was quite in conformity with his inauthentic and unexamined mode of life which is unsettled by a queer turn of events in the play. His whole life has been built on a lie and he constantly evades the truth about himself. He tries to ease his conscience over what he did to Deever by offering Ann to set George up with some friends of his in a local legal practice and to help Steve by taking him back into the business when he comes out of the prison. When Ann confesses that she has never written to her father because

It's wrong to pity a man like that. Father or no father, there's only one way to look at him. He unknowingly shipped out parts that would crash an airplane. (A.M.S, P.81)

Keller, more out of a sense of guilt, hypocritically puts a case for Deever based on the convention of the 'little man' alone and afraid, caught in the 'business machine'.

Keller : The man was a fool, but don't make a Murderer out of him It was a madhouse every half hour the major calling for cylinder leads, they were whipping us with the telephone I

mean just try to see it human, see it human, All of a sudden a batch comes out with a crack. That happens, that is the business. A fine, hairline crack. Alright, so - so he's a little man, your father, always scared of loud voicesso he takes out his tools and he covers over the cracks. Alright, that's bad, it's wrong but that's what a little man does. (A.M.S, P.82)

But however much he justifies himself and finds excuses for his behaviour, the fact remains that he caused the death of twenty one pilots and shifted the blame on his weaker partner, Deever. He cannot escape the consequences of his action. The past in Miller's Ibsen Manner, reaches into the present and overcomes the future. Chris tells Ann, "We are going to live now" (A.M.S, P.93) and the play proceeds to destroy that confidence.

The arrival of George fortells the breaking of the storm over Joe Keller's head. In Act II in the struggle of fathers and sons, Deever's son George determines to apply to the law to release his father by condemning Keller. He resists family softening and the mother's accusation of hardness and self destruction by blurting out with the true story. On the crucial day, Joe had stayed at home pretending to be sick and given Steve instructions over the telephone to cover over the cracks in the cylinder heads.

Faced with the story of his past, Keller again evades the truth by blaming Steve Deever -

I am sad to see he hasn't changed. As long as I know him, twenty five years, the man never learnt how to take the blame. (A.M.S, P.109).

But however hard Keller evades the truth, Miller's point is that the community rests on moral chaos and at the height of the family cosiness he allows Keller to betray his Faked life. The mother who has Joe's talent for ignoring things and a fatalistic horoscope reader who believes that "God is that certain things have to be, and certain things can never be" (A.M.S, P.78) is made to blurt out her truth; Larry must be alive because if he is not, Joe Keller killed him -

Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead, your father killed him. Do you understand me now ? As long as you live, that boy is alive. God does not let a son be killed by his father. Now you see, don't you. (A.M.S, P.114)

Confronted with the bullying rage of Chris, Joe blurts out the truth about his sincere though perverse motivation behind the shady business deal -

Chris, I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you. I am sixty one years old, when could I have another chance to make something for you ? Sixty one years old you don't get another chance do you ? (A.M.S, P. 115).

As Chris's love for his father vanishes possibly too abruptly, Miller makes Keller give his central plea for justice -

What could I do : I am in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you are out of business; you got a process, the process don't work you are out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up; they tear up your contracts, what the hell's it to them ? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away ? (A.M.S, P.115).

This is the root of the action and Chris turns on his father.

Keller : For you, a business for you;
Chris, with burning fury : For me, where do you live ? Where have you come from ? For me; I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me ? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business ? Is that as far as your mind can see, the business ? What is that, the world - the business ? What the hell do you mean, you did it for me ? Don't you have a country ? Don't you live in the World ? What the hell are you ? You are not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you ? (A.M.S, P. 115,116).

For Joe, there was nothing bigger than the family. At one stage in his altercation with Chris, Joe says -

I am his father and he's my son and if there's something bigger than that I will put a bullet in my head. (A.M.S, P. 120).

He cannot understand the attitude of his son Chris. Keller believes that he betrayed the pilots for his family and especially for his son his only accomplishment . He cannot believe or accept the condemnation heaped on him by his son. He cries out -

There's nothing he could do that I wouldn't forgive. Because he is my son. Because I am his father and he is my son. (A.M.S, P.120).

Joe had his own type of commitment; Commitment to the paternal obligation as he understood it. It is this wrong type of commitment that stands exposed at the end of the play, under the impact of the startling revelation about Larry's death. The concealed letter of Larry is used

by the dramatist to destroy Joe and to reveal to him the "revelation of the full loathesomeness of an anti-social action". (A.M.S, P.17). Joe awakens to his own self-knowledge, he cannot live with the truth of his self-knowledge, he cannot live with the truth of his self and the play concludes in a suicide of shame and helplessness when Joe is made to realise that his responsibility does not end with the family but it has to extend to a universe of people -

Sure, he was my son, but I think to him they were all my sons. And guess they were, I guess they were. (A.M.S, P. 126).

He is therefore a victim of a false ethic of family and business sentimentality and thus, he is to be a Miller archetype. His son Chris, is the other archetype Miller will constantly return to : "the Moral idealist taking his cue from the moral gyro-scope of inner direction". He retains his capacity to love inspite of capitalist and war experiences. A minor character, Sue, criticises Chris - "he wants people to be better than its possible to be" (A.M.S, P. 93) and insists that compromise is necessary. Chris believes in a code of traditional honour older than America and capitalism. Keller can cry "a man can't be Jesus in this world". (A.M.S, P.125) but the answer is that Chris only wants people to be better and responsible.

Arthur Miller's conception of Chris's character has been a constant source of irritation with some leading critics. Chris wants to be different from his father. Watching his comrades die for each other and for him, he has become aware of "a kind of responsibility, Man to man",

yet when Chris returns home he finds "no meaning in it here" and finds "nobody.....changed at all", from his speeches in the play, we can infer that since then he had been wavering between a contemptuous rejection of this intolerably unchanging world and a sentimental urge to find solace in his love for Ann and to settle down eventually.

It is true that this frightening gap between his hard-won idealism and the rat-race for social success is at the heart of his disillusionment. Even before he confronted the problem of betrayal in the person of his father; Chris, suspected there was something gravely wrong in the world to which he returned after the War. Thus, in one sense he is what William Weigand has characterised as the "Man who knows, the character who has grasped the simple yet profound truth about the social condition".³¹

What has disturbed the critics of the play is the arrogant and inflexible side of the nature; "he has been seen as a self-justifying young star who brings about the destruction of his parents in the name of the abstract claims of the ideal".³² If the play finally rejects Joe's insular devotion to personal and familiar loyalties, does it wholly vindicate the stance of Chris, especially in view of the price which he extracts for his tall ideals in terms of the happiness of his family ? If Joe Keller has been living in a world of falsehood and illusions, Chris too has been living a lie. It becomes clear in the exchange between Chris and George (Act Two) that Chris has suspected his father but has suppressed his suspicions because he could not face the consequences - condemnation of the father whom he loves, and the condemnation of himself as polluted by sharing in the illicit spoils of war. His love for Ann is

poisoned at its very source by a paralysing feeling of guilt and inadequacy. Again, one might not like to take at its face value, Sue's evaluation of Chris, but there is a trace of truth in her complaint that his pose of moral superiority makes him somewhat meddlesome in his friends and neighbours.

Sue : If Chris wants people to put on the hairshirt, let him take off his broad cloth. He's driving my husband crazy with that phoney idealism of his and I am at the end of my rope on it. (A.M.S, P.94).

The theme of idealism versus family responsibility is projected through Chris. Joe Keller is a self-made man, an image of American success who is destroyed when he is forced to see that image in another context through the eyes of his idealistic son. But even the idealistic son cannot escape the clutches of society. Chris realises that he must, to some extent, sacrifice his ideals, if he has to survive in this success-oriented society. The role of Dr. Jim Baylis in the play emphasises this theme. He is the one who compromised his youthful idealism under pressures of family obligation; he gave up his dream of becoming a researcher. In one of his consoling speeches addressed to Kate, Jim hopes that Chris too will give in to the sad necessity to make compromises.

These private little revolutions always die, the compromise is always made. In a peculiar way Frank is right, every man does have a star. The star of one's honesty. And you spend your life groping for it, but once it's out, it never lights again. (A.M.S, P. 113).

Thus, both Joe Keller and his son Chris do not have the ability to face up to the truth of their selves. They have

built their world around lies and illusions and are destroyed by it but how far are they responsible for their tragic existence ?

Joe Keller's arguments in self defence are mostly evasive. Still at one point in his confrontation with Chris, when he is forced to admit his responsibility for sending out the defective plane parts, Joe tries to shift the blame on the capitalist system which demands that the industrial production should go on even at the expense of human lives.

You want me to go to Jail ? If you want me to go say so : Is that where I belong ? Then tell me so....Who worked for nothing in the War ? When they work for nothing, I will work for nothing. Did they ship a gun or a truck out of Detroit before they got their price ? Is that clean ? It's dollars and cents, Nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean ? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go. (A.M.S, P.124-125).

While there rationalizations donot serve as an excuse for Joe's criminal deed, they do open up an angle to the underlying horror of the play. There is little doubt that Joe Keller's values are derived from his social environment and that his crime had its roots in the dog-eat-dog morality of American capitalism. Raymond Williams believes that "Joe Keller's alienated consciousness is essentially derived from the false values of his society".³³ Joe's ideology was in one sense created for him by the callous business world of which he was a part. In ALL MY SONS, as DEATH OF A SALESMAN, Miller condemns a commecial society with its worship of strange Gods. In ALL MY SONS Joe commits suicide partly because of his guilt but also because he is a product of his society which believes in money and power even at the cost of morality. Another critic Blumberg remarks that

Joe's crime could be traced back in part to his relationship to his work which encouraged unrestrained and boundless individualism, a social indifference and a measuring of values in terms of personal profit and loss rather than in terms of wider social values. 34

Keller is made to understand the full horror of his crime on reading Larry's last letter to Ann. Larry's suicide was a token gesture of protest hurled in the face of society which puts self-interest and efficiency above an elementary conception of human responsibility. The horrifying fact is that the surrounding neighbourhood of Joe Keller, the nucleus of society, knew the truth but were willing to sustain his illusion. They thought that Deever deserved his fate and that Keller was 'Smart'.

Sue : Everybody knows Joe pulled a fast one to get out of Jail.

Ann : That's not true.

Sue : Then why don't you go out and talk to people? Go on, talk to them. There's not a person on the block who doesn't know the truth. (A.M.S, P.94)

Thus, upto a point, the social ethic condones things as they are. In plays, which belong to the first half of Miller's career, society is basically seen as an image-making machine and the individual has no choice; he either conforms and gets destroyed or he can refuse to conform and be destroyed. Thus, Joe and even to some extent, Chris, are victims of the fake illusions thrust on them by society. Thus, at the end of the play, Chris cries out -

We used to shoot a man who acted like a dog but honour was real there, you were protecting something. But here ? This is the land of the great

big dogs. You don't love a man, you eat him. That's the principle. The only one we live byThis is a zoo. (A.M.S, P.124).

Thus, in ALL MY SONS, Arthur Miller gives us an indication as to what shapes human nature and the role the individual himself plays and the role the society plays in shaping the individual's life. It is a judgement of a Man's failure to maintain a viable connection with his surrounding world because he does not know himself. On the other hand, it cannot be denied the social system is shown to be in some ways responsible for creating the very conditions that provoke the protagonist's downfall. This theme is even more intensively explored in Miller's next play THE DEATH OF A SALESMAN which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Chapter II

DEATH OF A SALESMAN - "The Success Story"

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Nothing to look backward to with pride; And Nothing to look forward to with hope, He never did a thing so very bad, He don't know why he isn't so good. As anyone, he won't be made ashamed, to please his brother, worthless though he is.

(Death of a Hired Man
by Robert Frost)

Directed by Elia Kazan, with a marvellous prop of setting and lighting devised by Jo Mielziner, Death of a Salesman created a sensational impact when it was first produced in February 1949. It won the 'Pulitzer' prize and was turned into a film. Later it met with a world-wide reception, and was translated into almost all the major languages. Rated as the best play in the Miller cannon and as one of the best American plays written in the present Century, DEATH OF A SALESMAN still provides the basis for Miller's international reputation.

The writing of DEATH OF A SALESMAN marked a milestone in Miller's artistic career, and the general tendency of critics has been to explain the difference between DEATH OF A SALESMAN and Miller's earlier works in the terms of its technical sophistication. While DEATH OF A SALESMAN surely derived its exotic brilliance from Miller's conscious striving after a new expressive idiom, this, in itself might not explain the play's unique place in the Miller canon. At the centre of the play is a character,

Who is so complex, and contradictory, so sad and yet so stupid, so proud and still meanly evasive, who almost

steps out of the Frame of the play to acquire a larger than life reality. 1

The entire play is structured around the point of view of Willy Loman and in one sense, Willy's mind is on the stage. Miller tells us some interesting facts about the genesis of the play in his INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTED PLAYS -

The first image that occurred to me, which was to result in DEATH OF A SALESMAN was an enormous face to the height of the proscenium arch which would appear and then open up and we would see the inside of a man's head. In fact, The Inside of His Head was the first title. It was conceived half in laughter, for the inside of his head was a Mass of contradictions. (C.P, P.23).

The basis of the play is a series of scenes relating chronologically what is happening to Willy Loman at the age of sixty during one late evening and the next day. This is interwoven with events of the past or fantasies outside time which sometimes overlap with the present. Arthur Miller has explained that this unusual structure arises directly from what he wants to say about his hero. This accounts for the treatment of time in the play; for the concept that -

Nothing in life comes next, but that every thing exists together and at the same time within us; that there is no past to be brought forward in a human being, but that he is his past at every moment and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to. (C.P, P.23).

Hence we are less concerned than in conventional plays with the question, what happens next ? The end is already half-realised in the beginning. Miller writes -

The play was begun with only one firm piece of knowledge, and this was that Loman was to destroy himself. How it would wander before it got to that point I did not know. I was convinced only that if I could make him remember enough he would kill himself, and the structure of the play was determined by what was needed to draw up his memories like a mass of tangled roots without end or beginning. (C.P, P.25).

The play, is not then, merely a series of chronological events originating in Willy's past, nor a set of revelations of the past show how it created the present. It is primarily a progress towards a deeper understanding of Willy's predicament; this is achieved by seperating what Willy says from the real truth; by distinguishing Willy's view of the other characters from what they really are. The form of the play reflects its subject, Willy Loman. It suits a disintegrating character like Willy.

As in ALL MY SONS, in DEATH OF A SALESMAN too, we have a world of illusion and reality. We have the hero Willy Loman, a salesman who is unable to come to terms with his own limitations and who is desperatly clinging to his illusion of "being liked and well loved". When we meet Willy, he, like Joe Keller, is past the point of choice. From the conflicting success images that wander through his troubled brain comes Willy's double ambition to be rich and to be loved. As he tells Ben -

The wonder of this country is that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked. (D.S, P. 184).

Willy's faith in the magic of 'personal attractiveness' as a way to success carries him beyond cause and effect to necessity. He assumes that success

falls inevitably to the man with the "right smile, the best line, the most charm", the man who is not only liked but well-liked. He has completely embraced the American myth; for this reason, the brand names that turn up in Willy's speeches are more than narrow realism. He regularly confuses labels with reality. In his last scene with his son Biff, Willy cries out - "I am not dime a dozen, I am Willy Loman and you are Biff Loman" (D.S, P.217). The strength and pathos of that cry lies in the fact that Willy still thinks that the "name" should mean something, it is effective within the play because we have heard him imply that a punching bag is good because, as he says, "its got Gene Turney's signature on it". (D.S, P.144).

"Any play of character," says Miller, "must show characters who are somewhat self-deluded or less than fully aware". (C.P, P. 32). Miller believes that "tragedy springs from the underlying fear of being displaced. The disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world". (C.P, P.32).

These words aptly sum up the character of Willy Loman, the salesman - hero of the play. Willy with his endless capacity for self-deception has chosen to live in a make-believe world, lying to himself and his family about matters ranging from details regarding the size of his sales to the crucial facts about his true station in life. The play is about the situation of 'Little Men' in our society, but in particular about one individual, Willy Loman, at the end of his tether, the other principal characters are seen much of the time through his eyes and tend to represent aspects of his personality or to be set against him for contrast. He and his sons are dreamers of

wrong dreams, dreams which allow them to escape^e from facing their own inadequacies, to shrug off their load of guilt. Willy Loman struggles with lies and dreams because his motive is to belong. He has built up a wonderful image of himself as a successful man; as a salesman, as a father as a husband and as a friend.

I can park my car", says Willy, "on any street in New England and the cops protect it like their own" (D.S, P. 145). "Be liked and you will never want", he tells his sons. "You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. Willy Loman is here. That's all they have to know, and I go right through . (D.S, P. 146).

But there are poignant moments in the play when harsh reality exposes the phony illusions of Willy's success myths. The moments of self-realizations are painful and cruelly intrude into Willy's make-believe world of success and fame. Biff rightly tells his father towards the end that "we never told the truth for ten minutes in this house" (D.S, P. 216). The tragedy of Willy is that though he lies and concocts dreams about himself, there is also a sharp and painful awareness of his self-deceit and self-delusion. When Willy declares that he is one of the best salesman who can sell anything, he knows it isn't true, even of his younger days. He admits to Linda,

If business don't pick up, I don't know what I'm going to do. You know, the trouble is Linda, people don't seem to take to me.....I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me". (D.S, P. 148).

He goes on to reflect that he talks too much, jokes too much, (though elsewhere he claims that a couple of jokes establishes the right basis for business deals). "I'm fat", he says, "I'm foolish to look at, Linda". (D.S, P.149). The Loman recipe for success deceives Willy and his sons only part of the time. But we can see why Willy is attracted by another woman on his travels. She encourages his dream of himself. She thinks he is wonderful, or she says so; she likes him because "he is such a kidder".

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

We only see a world which is mutually infected by Willy's helplessly perverted dreams and codes. His self-building only develops the ground for his latest paronia, when he decides the world has treated him badly in the light of his greatness as he imagined it. 2

The only development in the play to add suspense is about the outcome of the illusion of the possibility of Biff and Happy going into the sporting goods business together, sponsored by big businessman Bill Oliver. But the idea of Oliver's starting the two boys in business is only another of Willy's inventions. Willy rarely thinks; he concocts, dreams, imagines; when he does stop to think, it is a pessimism, born of continuous defeat. Although Miller

points out that Willy goes to his death happily, doing something he believes will solve Biff's problems and thereby of the whole family; Willy dies in joy because

in terms of his character, he has achieved a very powerful piece of knowledge, namely that he is loved by his son and forgiven. (C.P, P.34).

The effect is not one of hope for the audience or the rest of the people in the play. Biff does not change; the crowds in Willy's dream donot come to the funeral, Willy's family does not glorify him for what he has done - twenty thousand dollars which he has given them by his death. The cycle will only continue. The Loman men feed on each others' empty values, resulting in the eventual cynicism about modern life in the city. Willy thought that the surest way to success in a consumer society was selling himself - his character, his smiles, his winning ways, his confidence in others. Willy is an excessively material creature. His philosophy is the personality cult of Dave Carnegie, the 'win friends and influence people' theory which exploits human relations for purposes of gain. "Be liked and you will never want " and being "well-liked" seems to rest on whether or not the liking can be exploited for practical ends. Such using of friendliness personifies it and invokes a 'law of diminishing returns', as Willy's lonely funeral shows. The attitude also encourages empty dreams, reflected economically in advertising and time payments, it is essentially parasitic; producing, building, planting nothing and the logical extension of its unrestrained competition is Biff's downright theft of the

fountain-pen. The psychologists explain theft as a form of love substitute and it is true that Biff's stealing only becomes obsessive after his disillusionment with Willy, but much more important is the fact that in the past Willy not only condoned but tacitly encouraged Biff's stealing of a football and lumber from a building lot. Proved by Willy's bluffing advice to Biff. "Remember, start big and you will end big". (D.S, P. 146). Willy has brought up his two sons on the "Loman theory of exclusive immorality", stealing is all right for Biff, because he is going to 'charm' people. To cultivate an athletic personality is better than studying because appearances are what counts. Willy's love for his boys stresses their exterior attractions - "one must act one's way into being noticed, through sham". Willy has got a poignant dream and we can sympathise, but his means to the object seems immoral or amoral. Willy's dangerous thinking forced on him by society is also somewhat inherited and Willy in turn will pass this on to Biff and Biff would pass on to his children. Willy's main idea in bringing up his two sons Happy and Biff was to teach them to cash in their personal attractiveness. He spoiled them from their very childhood with inflated ideas of success. As Biff aptly cries out -

I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody. (D.S, P. 216).

So Willy is destroyed by his values, situational and material codes not moral or ethical. He is unable to rise above his meaningless existence.

Willy's ideal may have been the old salesman, Dave Singleman, who at the age of eighty four, could through the strength of his personality, sit in a hotel room and command buyers but his model is that American 'mythic' figure, "the travelling salesman of the dirty Joke".³

Willy shares his culture's conviction that personality is a matter of mannerism and in the sharing develops a style that is compounded by falseness, the mock assurance of what his son Happy calls "the old humour, the old confidence". (D.S, P. 169). His act, however is as much for himself, as it is for his customers. The play shows quite clearly that from the beginning of his career, Willy has lied about the size of his sales, the warmth of his reception, the number of his friends. It is true that he occasionally doubts himself, but usually he rationalises his failure. His continuing self-delusion and his occasional self-awareness serve the same purpose, they keep him from questioning the assumptions that lie beneath the failure and his pretenses of success.

By the time we get to him, his struggle to hold on to his dream has become so intense that all control is gone. Past and present have become one, and so have fact and fiction. When the action of the play begins, Willy's tragic course towards self-loss has come to a terminal point, Willy has touched the heart of his bankruptcy, as there is less and less of him to be sold. When the play starts, Willy is past the point of choice, he has exhausted or emptied himself through long years of futile search for the elusive goal of personal success. His intense feeling of guilt over his failure as a salesman, and as a father has set his mind cracking up, and the

technique of the play, with its fusion of 'Realism' and 'Expressionism', is designed to convey to the audience the concentrated horror of the self-trial which marks his last days.

We watch him standing against the darkness of the commercial milieu groping his way through the maze of illusion and reality, signalling distress, with a persistent cry, "The woods are burning".⁴

DEATH OF A SALESMAN takes up the battle of fathers and sons and removes the argument from the clearcut war case of ALL MY SONS to the every day case of Willy Loman destroying himself for business and family. Here, once again, Miller leaves the conflict between a man and his society hanging fire between 'suicide' and an intolerably unchanging world. Where ALL MY SONS concentrated its retributive action into fifteen hours, DEATH OF A SALESMAN uses flashbacks within an expressionist set in order to present the contents of the sixty year old hero's mind as he draws towards suicide, after a self-perceived wasted life. Again, like in ALL MY SONS, the waste is not countered with any suggestion of radical change in society's ethic which caused it. We are offered only the wife's cry of warning to her two sons -

I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the papers. He's not the first 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 to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. (D.S, P. 162).

But what terrible thing has happened to Loman ? What attention must be paid ? What has exhausted him and what kind of balance has he lost ? He is not a murderer like Joe Keller but he too reaches the shocking realisation that his life has been work and for nothing. As in ALL MY SONS, Miller adopts Ibsen's technique of retrospective structure in DEATH OF A SALESMAN, in which an explosive situation in the present is both explained and brought to a crisis by the gradual revelation of something which has happened in the past; in DEATH OF A SALESMAN, this is, of course, Willy Loman's adultery, which by alienating his son Biff, has destroyed the strongest value in Willy's life. The blending of the realistic and the expressionistic technique is used by Miller as a means of revealing the character of Willy Loman, the values Willy holds and particularly, the way his mind works. Miller's reason for blending realism and expressionism in DEATH OF A SALESMAN is that this combination reflects the protagonist's actual way of thinking.

It is Willy Loman's character, therefore, which is the chief link between the two dramatic modes; and this is possible because technically Willy is a schizophrenic-overwork, worry and particularly, repressed guilt have resulted in a mental breakdown in which present and past mingle for him inextricably, where in Miller's own phrase, "time is exploded".⁵

This technique is not exactly a 'flashback technique', what it does is to present a past distorted by the rememberer's mind - a subjective not objective record; and the memories have an extra tension because they may occur simulataneously with events in the present.

The form of the play, then depends on the gradual admission by Willy to himself of his own guilt, it differs from the public expose's of Ibsen's form in that Willy's adultery is never openly discussed between him and Biff, and Linda and Happy never learn of it at all. Certain things always 'trigger' a kind of mental relapse in Willy's mind because they are associated with his guilt; silk stockings for instance or the sound of women laughing. The play's technique thus forces the audience to become Willy Loman and for the whole duration of the play, to sympathise with his predicament in a way they could not do in real life. It allows them to see more than he might have seen, they are expected to criticise Willy, but the technique forces them to criticise him from within as Willy criticises and condones himself. The author intends us to feel

The horror in the spectacle of a man losing consciousness of his immediate surroundings to the point where he engages in conversation with unseen persons. (C.P, P.30).

Willy's tragedy springs from some deep-seated flaws in his personality - his misjudgement, dishonesty, evasiveness, and comic stupidity. Working on an internal plane, the playwright tries to show some of the glaring defects of Willy's personality, stemming chiefly from his pathological immaturity, as contributing to his gradual destruction. The note of moral condemnation is clearly struck in scenes showing the effects of Willy's adultery on his family.

He fails because of his incorrigible inability to tell the truth even to himself, his emotional, non-logical mode of thought, which allows him flatly to contradict himself and of which schizophrenia is merely an intensification. Where once he confused reality and wish-fulfillment, he now confuses reality and an idealised past.⁶

Willy is not aware enough to be a fighter. This explains Willy's perennial defensiveness. Willy can never accept the truth of his self, that he is a professional failure and hence can never stop lying to himself. When Biff tries to give him peace by making him aware that there is no crime in being a failure and a mediocrity, Willy hears only what he wants to hear. He takes Biff's tears not only as evidence of love, which they are, but as a kind of testimonial, as assurance that Willy's way has been the right one all along. Once again, secure in his dreams, Willy goes to his suicidal death, convinced that when Biff gets the insurance money, "that boy is going to be magnificent". (D.S, P.213).

Using as the focal point, the idea of the individual's loss of identity, Miller builds up a massive indictment of the hollow American dream which fosters false images of success through the pseudomagic of advertising and propaganda. Admittedly Miller does not blame the society squarely for Willy's ills. John Gassner said long ago that Miller had -

Split his play between social causation and individual responsibility for Willy's fate.⁷

Willy's tragedy is seen both as the consequence of the system of values which was forced upon him by a society which worships the Mammon God, and as springing from some deep-seated flaws in his personality. While Willy's share of responsibility in his disaster should not be minimised, it is equally important not to lose sight of the fact that the false standards by which he shaped his life were mostly derived from outside, as part of a readymade ideology which ruled his social environment. Willy wants to be rich and to be loved, for society will not accept failure. Thus, Willy

spends his whole life trying to fit himself into one of the pigeon-holes of society, for "Society measures the esteem of each of its members by what each has and not by what each is." 8

Willy Loman is a social product and whose personal values and family relationships are alike conditioned by social forces.

The characters in DEATH OF A SALESMAN find themselves enmeshed in a world which manufactures cheap fantasies of success and whose governing preferences unconsciously seep into their inmost dreams and beliefs.⁹

The structure of the play is filled out with a detailed evocation of modern, urban, lower middle class life.

Miller documents a world of arch-supports, aspirin, spectacles, subways, time-payments, advertising, Chevrolets, faulty refrigerators, life insurance, mortgages and the adulation of high school football heroes - all giving us a highly realistic picture of American life.¹⁰

A key to the underlying theme of the play is given by Arthur Miller's description of the images from which the play grew in his mind.

A little frame house on a street of little frame houses, which had once been loud with the noise of growing boys and then was empty and silent and finally occupied by strangers who would not know with what conquistadorial joy Willy and his boys had once resingled the roof. Now it was quiet in the house, and the wrong people in the beds.

It grew from images of futility - the cavernous Sunday afternoons polishing the car; where is the car now ? And the chamois clothes carefully washed and put up to dry, where are the chamois clothes ?

And the endless, convoluted discussions, wonderments, arguments..... and all in the kitchen now occupied by strangers who cannot hear what the walls are saying.

The image of aging and so many of your friends already gone and strangers in the seats of the mighty who donot know you or your triumphs or your incredible value.

The image of the son's hard, public eye upon you, no longer swept by your myth, no longer rousable from his seperateness, no longer knowing you have lived for him and wept for him.

The image of ferocity when love has turned to something else and yet is there, is somewhere in the room if one could only find it.

The image of people turning into strangers who only evaluate one another. Above all, perhaps the image of a need greater than hunger or sex or thirst, a need to leave a thumb print somewhere on the world; a need for immorality, and by admitting it, the knowing that one has carefully inscribed one's name on a cake of ice on a hot July day. (C.P, P.29).

S far none of these images refer particularly to the American dream, or to capitalism or salesmanship rather they are concerned with human life and what time does to our youthful hopes of it. Disillusionment and the sense of futility will be most painful where a man recognizes himself to be a failure and this recognition will be stark where the failure can be assessed in figures - that is, the world of business. Here, we are coming closer to Willy Loman. Out of the complex web of images used by the playwright to capture the impressions of Willy

Loman's loneliness, there emerges a suitable visual suggestion which has proved quite effective on the stage. We are shown at the beginning of the play Willy Loman's little apartment hemmed in by huge skyscrapers. Thus, before a single word is spoken in the play, Miller has conveyed to the audience the substance of his theme - the entrapment of his salesman hero in the inhuman surroundings of the industrial city -

The image of a private man in a world full of strangers, a world that is not home nor even an open battleground but only galaxies of high promise over a fear of falling. (C.P, P. 30).

Willy Loman is certainly the victim of the capitalist system, exploited and then cast aside.

He works for a company thirty years", says his wife Linda, "opens up unheard of territories to their trademark and now in his old age they take his salary away". (D.S., P. 163)

Against this view is set the realism of the businessman. "When a man gets old you fire him. You have to, he can't do the work". (D.S, P. 180). Miller says that he meant (among other things) to "celebrate the common sense of businessmen, who love the personality that wins the day, but know that you've got to have the right goods at the right price". (C.P, P. 31).

To the extent that their success depends on the salesman it is in the life of the salesman that the harsher aspects of the capitalist machine are most apparant. One of the experimental devices in the play relates to Miller's symbolic use of the salesman's profession. The playwright is deliberately vague about the name of the product which Willy is selling. He writes in the "Introduction"

That I have not the slightest interest in the selling profession is probably unbelievable to most people, and I very early gave up trying to say so-. And when asked what Willy was selling, what was in his bags, I could only reply 'Himself'. (C.P,P.28)

Nevertheless, the whole flavour of the play would have been different if Willy Loman had been a school teacher or a musician.

"Willy was a salesman", says Charley at the end, "and for a salesman there is no rock bottom to life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He is a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. When they start not smiling back - that's an earthquake". (D.S,P.220,221).

Advertising, mass production values, worship of gadgetry, narrow love of family and mystical faith in commercial success; Willy being a salesman must represent these values to the consumers. Miller defending Willy says - "Willy is a victim, he didn't originate the thing. He believes that selling is the greatest thing anybody can do".¹¹

The same interpretation of the play, but with a different emphasis, is suggested by the American critic Mary Mccarthy - "What is the matter with Willy Loman", she asks and goes on, "America is what is wrong with him".¹² Arthur Miller would answer and to some extent this is true. The conception of the salesman's house, as a house of shabby lies and competitive boosts is sadly close to the American life. She thinks that the play is saying to the advertising men, "This is your pretty picture from the inside".¹³

America is the country where the values of capitalism, free enterprise, big business are seen at their most rewarding and their most destructive.

Willy Loman experiences both aspects. Although he is a victim of the system, he is its devoted adherent. One side of Willy Loman is completely absorbed in these American dreams; he is very much a conformer, wanting to be in the swim. At the same time he is bewildered; he cannot understand why it has all gone wrong for him.¹⁴

Arthur Miller says explicitly, "There was no attempt to bring down the American edifice, nor to raise it higher, however American values are powerfully questioned in the play".(C.P, P.33).

In a conversation in Act One, Happy tells Biff how he seduced the financier of one of the executives of the firm where he is employed. Happy says that he did this out of an "overdeveloped sense of competition" (D.S,P.141). Willy who feels that his life has been "boxed into" the mechanical surrounding of the teeming city, voices the emotional insecurity of the lonely crowd.

There is more people : That's what ruining this country, population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening. (D.S, P.135).

Uncle Ben gives a piece of advice to young Biff in the scene of their mock fighting - "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy, you will never get out of the Jungle that way".(D.S, P.148).

The implicit idea of competition here, which is built into the acquisitive philosophy of the business society, is again echoed in a chance remark made by the

waiter Stanley in Act Two - "Cause what's the difference ? Somebody steals ? It's in the family. Know what I mean ?" (D.S, P.194).

Obviously, DEATH OF A SALESMAN is a criticism of the moral and social standards of contemporary America, not merely a record of the particular plight of one man. And also, obviously it presents Willy, as a victim of the deterioration of the 'American Dream', the belief in the untrammelled individualism is traced through the Loman generations in a descending scale; from Whitman like exhuberance of Willy's father, the American pioneer ideal.

Father was a great and very wild-hearted man", says Ben, "He would start in Boston, and he'd toss the whole family into the wagon, and then he'd drive the whole team right across the country, through Ohio and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and all the western states. And he'd made on the way. (D.S, P.157).

This is a Romantic dream of the 'great outdoors'. Willy Loman's brother Ben is the next stage : the man self-made outside America'.

Why, boys, when I was seventeen, I walked into the jungle and when I was twenty one, I walked out (He laughs); And by God I was rich . (D.S, P.157).

This all-American business adventurer is aggressive and unscrupulous. He is Willy's idea of success. He and Willy agree about the ideal of the American boy, 'keen on games, rugged, well liked, all-round' (D.S, P.157). In stage three, the jungle is New York, the American city, where Willy Loman stays, burdened by a house overtopped by skyscrapers, household payments on equipments with mortgage

and insurance worries and a built-in belief that the competitive society is life itself at its best. His second son is also a salesman already lost to Booze and sex, obsessed with the empty word 'future' always on his lips. Like his father, he is locked in the national myth of youthfulness. Like Willy, he too is a dreamer but more contemptible because he deceives himself more successfully or more insistently. The name 'Happy' suggests a superficial brightness resulting from insensitiveness. He wants to smooth over all unpleasantness instead of facing it. If he is not a success, others are to blame.

"I can outbox, outrun and outfit anybody in that store and I have to take orders from these common, petty son of bitches, till I can't stand any moreEverybody around me is so false that I am lowering my ideals". (D.S, P.139,140).

He claims that he is the assistant buyer, but he is one of the two assistants to the assistant. He devotes his energies to chasing girls. He tells lies to impress the waiter at the restaurant and the girl he picks up there and he is not aware of the realities even at the end;

"Willy Loman did not die in vain", he says, "He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have; to come out number one man". (D.S, P.222).

He is a lesser man than Biff, whose concern for his father will not let him rest. Happy's anxiety seems at times genuine, but he finds no difficulty in walking away from it. He can even desert his father for a casual girl, telling her, "That's not my father. He's just a guy".(D.S, P.205).

As in ALL MY SONS, the son penetrates some of his father's illusions. Biff Loman tried life on a Texas ranch but remained inhibited by his father's standard. In a flashback technique, Miller presents the father-son relationship as - "A maniac cult of youthful athletic prowess operated at the expense of maturity with Dad as the great pal and Mother the source of blinding love".¹⁵

Like his father and his brother, Biff too is a dreamer, but he is much more the product of his father's dream of him. Right to the end, "that boy is going to be magnificent" (D.S, P.218). The collapse of the first dream - Biff the hero of thousands, the star of Ebbets field - dates from the occasion when Biff found his father out as a 'phoney little fake' (D.S, P.215). The hotel room scene, which is at the root of the estrangement between Biff and his father, occupies an important place within the structure of the play. This scene is carefully prepared for. The constant reference to 'Stockings' and the growing tension around the question of what had happened to Biff after he had gone to ask his father's advice in Boston serves to highlight this scene. The mysterious laughter and the glimpse of a strange woman quite early in the first Act make a striking impression on the audience. Biff's discovery of his father's adultery is shown through Willy's recollections in the present, as he sits in the restaurant abandoned by his two sons who had promised to treat him to a dinner.

The most powerful, positive value that the play offers is the value of family loyalty. There is no

doubt of Willy's love for his family, particularly for his son, Biff. It is the betrayal of this loyalty which ruins Willy's life, rather than a commercial failure, and it is in the name of family love that he finally kills himself, dying "as a father, not as a salesman".¹⁶

But, perhaps because he romanticizes his own father, whom he never knew, Willy has a false ideal of fatherhood, exposed most blatantly at the very moment when he decides to sacrifice himself for Biff, "Ben, he will worship me for it" (D.S,P.219). The shock of discovering the truth about his father, whom he had worshipped, is a cruel blow for young Biff. Biff achieves nothing further, he remains like a boy. But this shock does not entirely account for the flaws in Biff. There is evidence much earlier that he was not so 'well liked' as the family wished to believe : Clearly, the staff of the school, the parents of the neighbourhood girls, the watchman on the building site, Bill Oliver, all had their reservations about him. Nor does the shock cure Biff of dreams which are mainly excuses of failure, especially the dreams (like his father's) of the great open spaces.

Men built like we are should be working out in the open", he says, "with a ranch I would do the work I like and still be something..... we don't belong in this nut house of a city : we should be mixing cement on some open plain . (D.S, P.138).

He is a more contemptible failure than his father, who has atleast worked hard; of course, some of this is his father's dream of him; the scorn of the city, the fantasy

of the open, even the interest in cement, recall his father. But in the end he breaks away from his father's dreams of him and from his self-justifying dreams of himself; he comes to see through himself more pitilessly than he has seen through his father. After the theft of the pen, he says,

I realised what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been, we've been talking in a dream for fifteen years . (D.S, P. 217).

In the poignant confrontation with his father he shatters the Loman myth.

We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air, I could never stand taking orders from anyone..... I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hardworking drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them. I'm one dollar an hour, willy :I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you are going to stop waiting for me to bring them home . (D.S, P.216, 217).

Such merciless honesty has its nobility. It goes much further than Willy's progress towards self-realization, for Willy is still deluding himself, both about himself and about Biff, to the end. He still clings to the illusion that he will count for something in the salesman's world when he is dead, and he still believes in Biff's 'magnificience', which only needs the backing of money to set him ahead of Bernard. Biff has gone deeper and learnt more. He sees all his father's weaknesses and is enraged by them and yet he loves him : and - " His love is not measured by reason, to be given in reward for virtue, nor fed by mirages of virtues that will never be there".¹⁷

It has been said that DEATH OF A SALESMAN offers no sure values. Arthur Miller appears to recognize this when he says it is a contribution to the "steady year by year documentation of the frustration of man".¹⁸ But even in DEATH OF A SALESMAN, there is one positive gain : Biff atleast comes out of the experience with enhanced self-knowledge "I know who I am, kid" (D.S, P. 217). It is not a proud knowledge, rather an admission of limitation and weakness. Biff admits he will never be a big success in the eyes of the world, but such an admission is the beginning of truth. It has been objected and admitted by Miller, that Willy's stature as a tragic hero is questionable because he dies self-deceived. But the new truth is there in Biff.

Lost honour and comradeship permeate Miller's work. His men live on a vision they cannot make work. Loman lives in a world where his sons are -

Adonises with Biff on the football field in a golden helmet, like a young God, something like that, and the sun, the sun all around him. (D.S, P.179).

Like Keller, Loman perceives that he has 'accomplished nothing' but America is still "the greatest country in the world even if personal attractiveness gets you nowhere". Once Loman's energy is drained by his society, he is thrown aside, in this case, casually sacked by the son of the man who has been his boss for thirty four years. Willy protests -

You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away, a man is not a piece of fruit. (D.S, P.181).

The troubled echo of this speech points at a social system which treats human beings as expendable and demands from Willy his final sacrifice.

It is into this world that Willy is cast adrift chasing the will of the wisp of material success. A measure of his displacement of perspectives is suggested by his desperate concern for his identity, his 'name'.¹⁹

Willy Loman has been unable to learn the business ethics, the morality of his work-community. "He speaks the very language of that acquisitive society, without hypocrisy, the terminology of the world which throws him off balance".²⁰

In his climactic encounter with Biff, Willy cries out,

I am not dime a dozen : I am Willy Loman and you are Biff Loman. (D.S, P.217).

There is both pride and pain in this assertion made by a person who, broken by the external world, tries to cling fast to his self-image. The terrible pathos of Willy's near-heroic effort to preserve his integrity is concentrated in the tape-recorder scene in Act Two, where Willy confronts his young employer, Howard, with his request for a hike in salary. At the imagistic level, this scene carries a potent hint. Willy's panic over his hysterical inability to switch off the tape-recorder symbolizes his pathetic inability to switch off his recorded past, his bewilderment before a life that has careened out of control. This is a point in the play at which the spectator is made joltingly aware of Willy's obsessive preoccupation with time which finds its reflection in his speech to Linda -

More and more I think of those days, Linda : This time of the year, it was Lilac and Wisteria. And then the peonies would come out and the daffodils. What fragrance in the room. (D.S, P.135).

Commenting on the scene of Willy's brutal sacking, there is a view expressed by Eleanor Clark who saw Miller as a marxist -

It is of course the capitalist system that has done Willy in : the scene in which he is brutally fired after some forty years with the firm comes straight from the party-line literature of the thirties and the idea emerges lucidly enough through all the confused motivations of the play : that it is our particular form of money economy that has bred the absurdly false ideals of both father and son.²¹

Although to some extent, the play does present a rather conventional expression of left-wing attitudes to capitalism, DEATH OF A SALESMAN cannot be simplified into mere propaganda. The naive interpretation of Willy Loman's plight as a result of exploitation of workers by capitalists is qualified in the play in several important ways. In the first place, Willy's employer, Howard, is not presented as a 'conscious monster' but as a man very like Willy himself, with the same narrow love of family, the same empty friendliness, the same love of gadgetry. The resemblance of the two men suggests that the basic error must be sought in human nature, not just in a particular economic system. Secondly, Willy's plight is shown to be at least, partly, the result of his own character. Thirdly, the play balances the failure of Willy and his children with the success of Charlie and his son Bernard, who thrive in the same system. Charlie and his son do not cheat, they merely work hard; they prosper, yet remain kindly, unpretentious, sensitive, helpful. They are not dreamers. They achieve the success which eludes their

neighbours, but they donot exult in it or boast about it. In the early days, the contrast is not in their favour : 'they are liked but not well-liked' and between them "can't hammer a nail"; even Charley's trousers are a subject of laughter which is not kindly. Charley disapproves of the Loman boys stealing from the building site and Bernard lets out that Biff is driving the car illegally and is in danger of 'flunking Math'. When Linda says that Bernard is right about Biff, Willy explodes, 'you want to be a worm like Bernard ?' (D.S, P.151).

But Bernard turns into something more than a worm. Not only does he achieve the distinction of pleading a case before the Supreme Court, but he is modest and tactful enough not to tell the neighbours about it. Charley sees through Willy's phoney talk, tolerates his jealous hostility; and gives help without expecting gratitude. Willy is grateful to Charley - "Charley, you're the only friend I got. Isn't it a remarkable thing ?" (D.S, P.193). Thus, the presence of Charley and Bernard destroys any interpretation of DEATH OF A SALESMAN as left-wing propaganda.

The futile philosophy of Willy Loman is opposed by three main alternatives in DEATH OF A SALESMAN : the pioneering adventurousness of Ben, the sensible practicality of Charlie and the loyalty of Linda. But all of them are limited and inadequate. Miller's work as a whole does reflect a certain admiration for the pioneer virtues of courage and self-reliance, but this is matched by an awareness that such an attitude is dangerous in modern society; the aggressiveness which is admirable in

combating raw nature becomes immoral when turned against one's fellowmen. It is the latter critical attitude which predominates in Miller's picture of Ben, who advises Biff to 'Never fight fair with a stranger'. Clearly, if Willy had gone to Alaska with Ben, he might have been a richer, but he would not have been a better man.

The values represented by Charlie are more important. Charlie is presented as an almost sympathetic figure, but Miller includes a few details, which prevent any acceptance of Charlie's career as ideal. In the first place, it is suggested by Charlie himself that he had to pay a certain price for his business success; the price of not caring; "my only salvation is that I never took an interest in anything". (D.S, P.191). In human terms, Willy's ideal of business represented by Dave Singleman though it is disastrously inaccurate, is more generous than Charlie's calm assurance that "the only thing you got in this world is what you can sell". (D.S, P.192).

The difference in human warmth between Willy and Charlie comes out in Charlie's tight-lipped reticence, remarked on by Willy as a contrast to his own inability to refrain from chatter. However, the conclusive rebuffal of Charlie's acceptance of the business world comes in the 'requiem' scene : his defence of Willy in the "Nobody dare blame this man" (D.S, P.221, 222) speech which romanticizes the salesman whose job requires him to dream great things, is immediately rejected by Biff, who maintains, that Willy was to blame because he lacked self-knowledge, because his "dreams were all the wrong dreams" (D.S, P.221) because he let himself be caught in an inhuman system, for all his sympathetic qualities, therefore, Charlie's position is

shown to be a compromise; he has succeeded by fitting his character into the existing system; meeting business on its own cold terms.

Linda is the most sympathetic character in the play. Her famous "Attention, attention must be paid" (D.S, P.162) speech is terribly moving : perhaps, too moving Miller has said that his greatest temptation as an artist is that he finds it too easy to create pathos. And Linda is so sympathetic not only because she is the loyal, downtrodden wife, but also because her attitude seems to sum up many traditional American values. Her appeal to these traditional values and her downtrodden, loving loyalty are however apt to blind the essential stupidity of Linda's behaviour. Surely, it is both stupid and immoral to encourage the man you love in self-deceit and lies. We are told in the stage directions that Linda has the same values as Willy, but that she lacks his energy in pursuing them; it was she who persuaded him not to risk Alaska. Linda does not really believe his dreams - atleast not at the point where we meet her. She humours him to keep things going after thirty-five years of marriage. Linda is apparently unable to comprehend her husband - her pathetic cry at the funeral emphasises this fact,

Willy dear, I can't cry, why did you do it ? I reach 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 will be nobody at home. (D.S,P.222).

Discussion of DEATH OF A SALESMAN has always been be-
-devilled by the question, is it a tragedy ? The presentation of the play invited a certain hostility from

critics. Eric Bentley attacked it when it opened in February 1949, directing his onslaught particularly at what he saw as the play's conflicting aims ;

The tragedy destroys the social drama, the social drama keeps the tragedy from having a genuinely tragic stature. By this last remark I mean that the theme of this social drama as of most others, is the 'little man' as victim. The theme arouses pity but no terror. Man is here, too little and too passive to play the tragic hero.²²

At about the time of the play's opening, Miller himself, interviewed by the New York Times, stressed the tragic intention :

The tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing, his sense of personal dignity.²³

But critics were quick to point out what the play itself demonstrated - "That Willy Loman's sense of personal dignity was too precariously based to give heroic stature".

The title of the play was first to have been THE INSIDE OF HIS HEAD and this in itself is an admission that this is not tragedy in the usual sense of the word for tragedy postulates some external criteria, criteria which this conception deliberately precludes. It has often been pointed out, too,

"That tragedy requires of its hero a final recognition, of which by his very nature, as well as by the nature of the play Willy Loman is incapable".²⁴

Tragedy implies values and to the repeated complaint that Willy has no values, Miller has replied to these terms

The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendous powerful ideals. We are not accustomed to speaking of ideals in his terms; but if Willy Loman, for instance, had not had a very profound sense, that his life as lived had left him hollow, he would have died contentedly polishing his car on some Sunday afternoon at a ripe old age. The fact is he has values. The fact that they cannot be realised is what is driving him mad - just as unfortunately, its driving a lot of other people mad. The truly valueless man, a man without ideals is always perfectly at home anywhere. ²⁵

Later, in the same broadcast, however, Miller defined his aim in the play as being "to set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of life and has no sense of values which will lead him to that kind of grip".²⁶

So Willy dreamed because he failed on both levels. The two statements are not, as some critics argue, contradictory. They are in fact reconciled by Biff's epitaph on his father - "He had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong". (D.S, P.221).

The phrase that Miller used in his broadcast - "A man without ideals is always perfectly at home anywhere". Taken in conjunction with another already quoted - "How many a man make of the outside world a home?" ²⁷ is revelatory. To be at home in the world is Willy's greatest desire and it is not an unworthy one. In some respects, DEATH OF A SALESMAN is more important, to its generation than if it had been the tragedy it is sometimes consured for not being. Miller himself made an observation in a letter in 1949.

However, it is obvious that I write out of life as I know it, rather than construct plays out of a theatrical imagination, as it were. The remembered thing about 'salesman', is really the basic

situation in which these people find themselves - a situation which I have seen repeated throughout my life.²⁸

Miller has observed for himself the truth that Thoreau enunciated at the beginning of Walden - "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation". To this extent, Willy is 'Everyman'. Again, quoting from Thoreau - "We see one of ourselves fighting, struggling and finally fainting in this inescapable American situation".

Miller presents a fairly fully context for the suicide of Willy Loman, but he cannot show his hero attaining any profound, understanding in the end. Charley, Loman's old friend, points out to Willy that personal relations and codes of honour are meaningless now.

"Why must everybody like you ? Who liked J.P. Morgan? Was he impressive ? In a turkish bath he'd look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was well liked ". (D.S, P.192).

But Loman is beyond advice and change. In fact he is dead already, believing that, through his insurance, he is worth more in cash, dead than alive and this atleast would atone for his cruelty to his wife and betrayal of his sons.

"We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house", says Biff.

They were all victims of a phoney dream and it is the 'American dream'. Miller wants - "Theatre to present a balanced concept of life, in which there is the hero's need to wholly realize himself." ²⁹

But Willy Loman is betrayed by the myths and ethics of his society. He is seen primarily as the victim; his

warped values, the illusions concerning the self he projects reflect those of his society. His moments of clear, self-knowledge are few and even fewer are the moments when he asserts with strength and dignity his worthwhilenss; that of a common man; as he does when he angrily rejects Biff's estimate of himself and his father (Pop, I am dime a dozen and so are you) with his cry "I am not a dime a dozen ! I am Willy Loman and you are Biff Loman". Though there are occasions too, when Willy emerges from the fog of self-deception and illusion, when he sees himself clearly and at the end he does realise that Biff loves him for himself alone, he goes to his death clinging to his illusions. Perhaps the best summing up of Willy's character and his tremendous impact on the audience has been stated by Gerald Weales :-

It is Willy's vitality, in his perverse commitment to a pointless dream, in his inability simply to walk away, what I am saying about DEATH OF A SALESMAN, I suppose, is that Willy Loman is a character, so complex, so contradictory so vulnerable, so insensitive, so trusting, so distrustful, so blind, so aware - in short, so human that he forces man on us being one.³⁰

It is this real, naked human quality of Willy that makes him so important and appealing. It does not matter whether Willy is a tragic character or whether he is a spokesman for anti-capitalist sentiments. What matters is he is so real that anyone from any part of the world can identity himself with him. He is the kind of man you would see muttering to himself on a subway, decently dressed, on his way home or to the office, perfectly integrated with his surroundings. Hence, DEATH OF A SALESMAN is still regarded as one of Miller's most controvrstial plays and continues to attract interest even today.

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Chapter III

THE CRUCIBLE & A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

"Self Awareness Vs Social Restraint"

THE CRUCIBLE (1953)

The best lack all conviction; while, the worst
are full of passionate intensity.

(Easter 1916 by W.B.Yeats)

The concept of 'self in society' and the individual quest for self-realization discussed in the previous two chapters finds further emphasis in one of Miller's other plays THE CRUCIBLE. But there is a slight difference here. Although Society also plays a very important role in Miller's powerful play THE CRUCIBLE, unlike Joe Keller and Willy Loman who are swamped by the demands made by society on them, we have a hero, John Proctor, who refuses to accept the label that his society tries to force on him. John Proctor dies at the end and his society kills him but his death is a romantic one, a kind of triumph, an assertion of the individual. With John Proctor, Miller goes for something deeper than the one-dimensional good guy, Proctor is enough a product of his society to think of himself as a sinner for having slept with Abigail Williams, so he carries a burden of guilt before he is charged with having consorted with the Devil.

When he is finally faced with the choice of death or confession, his guilt as an adulterer becomes confused with his innocence as a witch; one sin against society comes to look like another. The stage is set for yet another victim-hero; for a John Proctor who is willing to be what men say he is, but at the last minute, chooses to be his own man.¹

He cries out : "How may I live without my name?" (CR, P.328) and finding no answer, tears up the confession and goes to the gallows. A "man's name", becomes, for Miller, the symbol of ultimate dignity. Man's ultimate self resides in his uniqueness, his name.

For years, the evaluation of THE CRUCIBLE ran into serious distortions as a result of the inability of many critics to view the play detached from the topical question to which it was supposedly addressed. The play was either denounced as cold, anti-Mccarthyite tract or praised for its author's courage of convictions which gathered into an articulate expression of contemporary protest in the play. Without doubt, THE CRUCIBLE drew its impetus from the special circumstances of the Mccarthy era.

The ugliness of that affair, which caused so much of perplexed anxiety to friends of the United States, was not the megalomaniac aspirations of a cynical demagogue, but the appalling ease with which his methods achieved results. So far and so wide did the infection spread that it could only be visualised as a force of evil of which ordinary men and women were the unintentional agents and the unrecognising victims. In many ways its moral damage was more serious to those who accepted it than to those who fought against or were victimised by it; and this is what THE CRUCIBLE so splendidly communicates.²

THE CRUCIBLE exposes a shameful period in American history when fanaticism destroyed reason and witch hunts reduced man to a fearful animal. When THE CRUCIBLE opened on January 22, 1953, the term witch hunt was nearly synonymous in the public mind with the congressional

investigations then being conducted into allegedly subversive activities. "THE CRUCIBLE which pillories the ignorance that mass hysteria can ferment was Miller's bold reply to the Mccarthy 'investigation".³

But is THE CRUCIBLE to be viewed as only a political tract or as a denouncement of the Mccarthy era or does Miller intend to discuss a wider social issue? Miller himself dismisses the suggestion that THE CRUCIBLE is a simple, propaganda play. Somewhat annoyed over the speculation what THE CRUCIBLE was 'about', Miller once stated that the "real and inner theme of the play" was the handing over of conscience to another. (C.P, P.40).

In a short article written in 1958 under the title BREWED IN THE CRUCIBLE, he repeated this view. Recalling the fact that he was drawn to write THE CRUCIBLE not merely as a response to Mccarthism, he said that

he examined in the play the question of what happens when a whole community hands over its conscience to a bunch of charlatans and self-appointed saviours.⁴

This is an adequate description of the play's moral focus. In one sense THE CRUCIBLE exhibits a remarkable similarity with the struggle of the individual against the false images which the society forces on him. Where THE CRUCIBLE reaches beyond the preceding plays is

in the breath and sweep which this concern newly acquires, with the kind of heightened consciousness which Miller brings to bear upon his analysis of human pretensions and awakenings in the wake of a major disaster in American civilization.⁵

THE CRUCIBLE was Miller's first attempt at a historical document, with many characters. The story of THE CRUCIBLE involves the fate of a whole community caught in the tidal waves of some political paranoia.

Coming after ALL MY SONS and DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRUCIBLE appeared to complete a cycle, or pattern of experience which impinges upon the disfiguration of human reality inherent in the American way of life owing to different forms of social evil like the false mystique of the world of business and commerce (A.M.S and D.S) and the malign pressures of Mass conformism (CR).⁶

The witch hunts that took place in Salem in 1692 were in the minds of many people for many years. Hawthorne and his contemporaries saw it primarily as an illustration of man's inhumanity to man and a matter of sin and personal guilt. They donot have our reasons for looking at it in the wider social context that leads Marion Starkley to speak of

the ideological intensities which rent its age no less than they ours and to remind us that, only twenty witches were executed, a microscopic number compared to the millions who have died in the species of witch hunts peculiar to our rational, scientific times.⁷

By the autumn of 1952, these words had been given greater immediacy by the mounting fury of the latest species of Witch hunt being conducted by Senator Joseph Mccarthy. Here was an important subject ready to handle; for an able dramatist to exploit and Miller was the obvious man to tackle it.

His background of the Depression-endangered liberalism, his passionate belief in social responsibility, and his proven ability to handle themes of guilt, punishment, all qualified him for it.⁸

Miller had been moving towards the main issue in THE CRUCIBLE for a long time. The reason he adapted AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE was because it dealt with;

The Central theme of our social life today. Simply, it is the question of whether the democratic guarantees protecting political minorities ought to be set aside in time of crisis. More personally, it is the question of whether one's vision of the truth ought to be a source of guilt of a time when the mass of men condemn it as a dangerous and devilish lie. It is an enduring theme..... because there never was nor will ever be, an organised society able to countenance calmly the individual who insists that he is right while the vast majority is absolutely wrong.⁹

Miller says that THE CRUCIBLE concerns pure evil. He removes his action now to the seventeenth century. Related to contemporary Mccarthy hysteria, THE CRUCIBLE reconstructs the Salem Witch trials of 1692 and therefore requires a lengthy exposition to establish the community's ethic, law and attitude towards non-confirminity and truth telling before the moral climaxes of Act III and IV. The characters are figures in a morality play as usual in Miller but for the first time he shows

Insecure authority violently enacting its neurosis against the man who says no to law and yes to his inner-directing conscience.¹⁰

In Act I, we are presented with the personal feuds, economic rivalries and sexual motivations at work behind the Witch trials. Some of the interesting details dropped in the opening Act serve to illuminate the context of the irrational madness which suddenly erupted into the life of the Salem community; the quarrel between Putman and Proctor over Lumber, Reverend Parris's preoccupation with firewood and candle holders and Giles Corey's propensity for litigation. The acquisitive urge in the Puritan Community is shown to be as strong as the religious one and this, working in consideration with long standing personal hatreds, seems to have provided the force which propelled the orgy of hysteria. The real reason for John Proctor's resentment of Parris is the latter's grasping materialism, hiding behind the facade of his self-righteous piety. Some of the characters who stir up fears about the witchcraft are revealed from the beginning as suffering from deep-seated complexes. The Putnams, for instance. Putnam, who is not reconciled to the defeat of his religious faction in the tussle in the Church, and his wife who lost her seven babies during childbirth have reasons to be embittered.

Added to this is the lack of love and sexual repression which characterised the life of the Puritan Community in the seventeenth century. Dedicated to the life of self-restraint and self-denial, and chiefly preoccupied with the mystery of heavenly salvations, the Puritan Community followed a code of sexual ethics, which resulted in a great deal of hypocrisy. Thus, the girls who are reported to have performed naked witch dances in the forest in moonlight were indulging in the rebellious pleasure of breaking out of the restrictive forms of proper behaviour;

the erotic content of the dark rituals in the forest practised by Abigail and her young friends was lost upon the adult world which believed all their concocted lies. Abigail is motivated by sheer jealousy. Her desire to supplant Elizabeth as Proctor's wife proves to be her chief source of excitement in starting the "crying up" business.

Commenting on the urgency of Miller's moral message, Paul West noted; "THE CRUCIBLE shows the burning away of human decency, of humanity its very self".¹¹

Caught in a vicious cycle of evil and guilt the Salem Community undergoes a change of identity. In his "Introduction" to COLLECTED PLAYS; while debating the reasons for the sensational rise of Mccarthyism in the early fifties, Miller alludes to a

Veritable mystique created in the American public mind through a well-orchestrated campaign from the Extreme right which played upon the average American's apprehension about the threat from international communism. (C.S, P.39).

In THE CRUCIBLE Miller traces the relentless unfolding of this mystique; from the girls who lied about their illicit sport in the woods upto the Deputy Governor Danforth, a whole number of characters contribute to "The creation of a hallucinatory atmosphere in which the rational faculties of man are either surrendered or forgotten".¹²

We are presented with a bizarre sequence of events originating from a chance mischief played by a group of perverse children. Abigail's bullying tactics, her intimidation, forces her other friends and the Negro servant

Tituba to join her in her 'witch hunting game'. In a private conversation with John Proctor in Act One, Abigail admits that the whole business was a prank;

We were dancing in the woods last night, and my uncle leaped in on us. She took fright, is all. (CR, P.240).

But spurred on by her jealous hatred of Elizabeth and carried away by the heady logic of the situation which she invented, she persists in her role-playing. Thus, at the end of the first Act, as the names of villagers who are in league with the Devil roll murderously off her lips, her friends join her in a Maniac chant which marks the beginning of mass hypnosis in Salem. The hysteria instigated by her is quickly and furiously fanned by some leading members of the community. There follows a mounting tide of evil gaining ascendancy over the Salem society.

No where else in Miller's theatre is the grouping of characters into "good guys" and "bad guys" made so neatly possible as in THE CRUCIBLE. The spectators know that John Proctor, Giles Corey, Elizabeth Proctor and Rebecca Nurse stand for decency and commonsense, just as Parris, Hawthorne, Putman and Danforth represent the irrational beliefs of a bigoted theocracy. The Courts represent Evil which meets with the moral resistance of ordinary, innocent people who have only truth and honesty to aid them. These neat polarities emphasize the play's parable-like quality; a modern morality play where the characters are dramatized symbols of good and evil.

The action of the play spreads from spring to Autumn and needs the sense of accumulating time for its development. The theme of masculine honour is there at the outset in the Reverend Parris's fear for his good name and character in the community he needs to win; but his daughter appears to be under a witch's spell and the old man fears for his reputation and power if his house is claimed to be devil-haunted.

In fact, the 'Spell' is part of a clever fraud perpetrated by his seventeen year old niece into denouncing John Proctor, a good man whom she seduces without much difficulty. Gradually girls and adults believe in the magic and act on their beliefs, even though they involve torturing burning and hanging their neighbours and friends. The law becomes a tool of acquisitive power and fearful irresponsibility. But even Abigail cries to her uncle,

My name is good in the village, I will not have it
said my name is soiled! (C.R, P. 232)

She is in fact a delinquent, taking her morality from the world she knows. The centre of adult truth she attacks is John Proctor, a farmer in his middle thirties and his wife Elizabeth, idealists with their vision of decent conduct which is not the law of the trials.

Proctor has 'sinned' with Abigail, to use the language of the play and it is an acknowledged sin of the flesh, punished by his wife's coldness. He is not a bad man but he "likes not the smell of authority" (C.R, P.246), and he has factual evidence that Abigail's accusations are fraudulent.

Proctor, with difficulty : I have no witness and cannot prove it except my word be taken. But I know the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft.

Hale, stopped, struck : Naught to do.....?

Proctor : Mr. Parris discovered them sporting in the wood. They were startled and took sick.

Hale : Who told you this ?

Proctor, hesitates, then : Abigail Williams, Reverend.

(C.R, P.275).

Proctor is challenged by the Reverend Hales, an intellectual, proud of his specialized knowledge of the Devil, a theorist whose blind ignorance of what 'authority' may do with his learning drags him weeping into degradation.

Miller's encompassing theme is man judging man, a theme present in his two previous plays discussed in this 'study'. John Proctor's stance of judgement annoys the community and especially its Judges Danforth and Hawthorne.

Danforth to Proctor : What are you ? You are combined with anti-Christ, are you not ? I have seen your power; you will not deny it ! What say you, Mister ?.....

Proctor, his mind wild, breathless : I say - I say, God is dead !.....A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face for them that quail to bring man out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your blackhearts that this be fraud-God damns our kind, especially, and we will burn, we will burn together.

(C.R, P.311)

The Courts which condemn innocent and righteous people for a mysterious crime are carried away by the power of ruinous slander. The Courts donot investigate the charges. There is no evidence to substantiate the allegation that Proctor, Corey and Nurse entered into a pact with the Devil. The rationale underlying the trials might be summed

up by the phrase "guilt by association with the devil". People are persecuted on the basis of rumour and hearsay. Just as calumny becomes the weapon of the opportunists, the advantage of confession, together with the necessity of naming names stares at the conscience of the victims. Faced with the threat of hanging, many people confess to crimes which were totally unknown to them. To others, freedom is possible only at the price of betraying their friends and neighbours. The theme of "informing" figures conspicuously in Act II and Act IV, as part of the political morality of those times. In introducing this theme into the play, Miller might have been prompted by the memory of the Mccarthy era in which 'informing' was commonly mistaken as a sign of patriotism. It may be that Proctor's decision to hang rather than to confess grew out of Miller's involvement in the immediate political situation from which THE CRUCIBLE was drawn. It was the Mccarthy era when so many writers and performers moved by fear or economic necessity or a genuine break with their ideological past stepped forward to confess their political sins and to name their fellow sinners. Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that Miller chose a hero who would say 'No'.

By treating the problem of the witch-hunt in a seventeenth century context, Miller sacrifices the questionable advantage of extreme topicality for the greater gain of perspective. He is insisting on this as a perennial American problem, not merely a present day one.¹³

Miller says :

I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter but one of state

administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so. (C.P, P.40).

THE CRUCIBLE is more than just a tract against Mccarthyism or as a historical play. "It is not so much a story of two ideologies in conflict; as a story of conscientious endeavour in an uncertain world".¹⁴

The struggle of the individual against the evil forces of society is explicitly stated in THE CRUCIBLE,

The judges think that they are engaged in the sacred mission of ridding the Salem people of an alien influence from the underworld, whereas the victims feel that the fires of fanaticism are choking the society or another wise sound community.¹⁵

Dennis Welland sums up the role the Society plays in the life of the individual.

The very considerable dramatic power of the THE CRUCIBLE derives its revelation of a mounting tide of evil gaining, in an entire society, an ascendancy quite disproportionate to the evil of an individual member of that society. What is so horifying is to watch the testimony of honest men bouncing like an Indian rubber ball off the high wall of disbelief, that other men have built around themselves, not from ingrained evil, but from over-zealousness and a purblind confidence in their own judgement.....what meaning has proof when men will believe only what they want to believe and will interpret evidence only in the light of their own prejudice. To watch THE CRUCIBLE is to be overcome by the simple impotence of honest commonsense against fanaticism that is getting out of control, and to be painfully reminded that there are situations in which sheer goodness ("Mere unaided Virtue"), in Melville's phrase about starbuck is just not enough to counter such deviousness.¹⁶

Etched against the backdrop of the Salem Society, we have the drama of John Proctor, the hero of THE CRUCIBLE. As in his earlier plays, Miller focuses on the intimate relationship that exists between the individual and his society and the individual quest for self-realization. As Raymond Williams puts it -

Neither element, neither the society nor the individual is there as a priority. The society is not a background against which the personal relationships are studied nor are the individuals merely illustration of aspects of the way of life. Every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life, yet the general life is seen at its most important, in completely personal terms.¹⁷

Miller is clearly interested in showing the larger effects of the particular blight that concerns him here. Although, THE CRUCIBLE is not merely a response to Mccarthyism, or an attempt to cure witch-hunting, nevertheless the concern with the political problem was obvious when the play appeared in 1953. Indeed Miller, in an article on THE CRUCIBLE reiterates his earlier statements that the dramatist cannot consider man apart from his social context and the problems that his environment presents.

"I believe", he writes, "that it is no longer possible to contain the truth of the human situation so totally within a single man's guts as the bulk of us presuppose. It is not merely that man and environment interact, but that they are part of each other. The fish is in the water and the water is in the fish. We, in the twentieth century, are more aware than any preceding era of the larger units that help make us and destroy us....The vast majority of us known now, not merely as knowledge but as feeling... that we are being formed, that our alternatives in life are not absolutely our own, as the romantic plays inevitably presuppose."¹⁷

Then, with specific reference to THE CRUCIBLE, he says further,

The form, the shape, the meaning of THE CRUCIBLE were all compounded out of the faith of those who were hanged. They were asked to be lonely and they refused. It was not good to cast this play, to form it, so that the psyche of the hero should emerge so commonly as to wipe out of mind the process itself, the spectacle of that faith.....¹⁸

And yet the play, after the opening scene, becomes increasingly concerned with the role of one man, John Proctor, and the crisis that is inner though promoted by outside forces. The intensity of the tragedy results from this increasing concentration on the individual, the tragic hero, who in his dilemma, epitomizes the whole tragic situation. Whether Miller intended it or not, the play compels us to focus on John Proctor and through him we realize clearly Miller's theme which as he tells us ;

Is the conflict between one man's raw deeds and his conception of himself; the question of whether conscience is in fact an organic part of the human being and what happens when it is handed over, not merely to the state or the mores of the time but to one's friend or wife. The big difference, I think, is that THE CRUCIBLE sought to include a higher degree of consciousness than in the earlier plays. This higher degree of consciousness is very important, as it raises the stature of the hero, makes him a worthier protagonist and renders more significant the role of will.¹⁹

As Miller himself says - "I had explored the subjective world in DEATH OF A SALESMAN and I wanted now to move closer to a conscious hero".(C.P,P.44). "No critic, as far as I know, has questioned John Proctor's status as a tragic hero!" wrote Edward Murray.²⁰

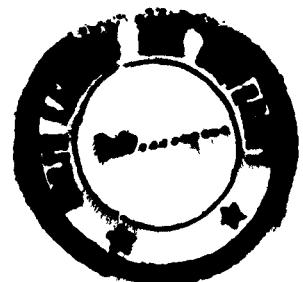
Proctor is Miller's first self-aware tragic protagonist in a play where Miller uses social forces to convey the sense of the tragic. At the beginning of the play, John Proctor is trying hard to overcome the guilt feelings he has on account of his marital infidelity to his wife Elizabeth. But unlike Joe Keller and Willy Loman who are constantly trying to evade the truth about themselves, Proctor comes to terms with his own character and chooses to die, consciously, with his self-respect and dignity restored. It is significant that Miller chose to dramatize the story of John Proctor, a plain farmer. Miller's invention of Proctor's earlier adultery with Abigail is not the outcome of a mercenary desire to add a spice of sensationalism to the play.

It is a similar insistence on the human vulnerability of a man who is not a saint, not even an ordained minister fortified by a theological training, but just a decent man trying to understand and to translate into action, the dictates of his conscience, trying to do, not what he feels, but what he thinks is right.²¹

The trial scene, represents for Proctor, in the words of a critic, "a personal crucible of self-discovery through commitment"²². Here, Proctor discovers that he is willing to sacrifice his reputation and go to jail to save his wife. He calls Abigail a 'whore' and asserts that the witchcraft hysteria is in reality a 'whore's vengeance', directed at Elizabeth. In a moment of tragic self-awareness, he reveals his guilt as an adulterer in front of society -

Proctor, trembling, his life collapsing about him
: I have known her, Sir, I have known her.
Danforth : You..... you are a Lecher ?
Francis, horrified : John, you cannot say such a

102682.



....

Proctor : Oh, Francis, I wish you had some evil in you that you might know me. A man will not cast away his good name, you surely know that.

Danforth, dumbfounded : In what place ? In what time ?

Proctor, his voice about to break, and his shame greater : In the proper place - where my beasts are bedded. On the last night of my Joy, some eight months past she used to serve me in my house, Sir....She thinks to dance with me on my wife's grave! And well she might for I thought of her softly....But it is a whore's vengeance and you must see it.

(C.R, P.305).

John Proctor's inner-directed stability cries out against the witchcraft and injustice in Act II -

Is the accuser always holy now ? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers...? Now the crazy little children are jangling the keys of the Kingdom and common vengeance writes the law - This is warrant's vengeance! I will not give my wife to vengeance. (C.R, P.281).

As Elizabeth is cried out for a witch, Proctor feels himself exposed to more than society's criticism, to "God's icy wind". Sensing with terrible clarity the irony of the spectacle which overtakes life in Salem, Proctor declares,

We are only what we always were, but naked now....Aye, naked ! and the wind; God's icy wind, will blow ! (C.R, P.284).

Act III presents trials and denunciations in which, inspite of Proctor's clear proof of the girl's fraud, the Judges and accusers go too far and Hale awakens to his responsibility :

I have signed seventy two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not take a life without there be proof so immaculate nor slightest qualm of conscience may doubt. (C.R,P.297).

But he is overruled by another infalliability, that of law, and therefore, Proctor is driven to attack law when he attacks the trials. In doing so, he attacks authority and the trap begins to close on him.

The play turns on a trick of authority by which Elizabeth is forced to lie for the truth. Proctor accuses Abigail of being a 'whore' and claims his wife cannot lie. Elizabeth denies he is a lecher when he has already admitted his lechery. Now, there is double proof that he has "cast away his good name". He cries out that Elizabeth "only thought to save my name" (C.R, P.307) but the girls play their witch game again to enable the judges to bring Proctor down, until, faced by the perversity of the events against him, he says "God is dead" (C.R, P.311) and damns himself finally.

Proctor's agonizing search for his honesty continues in the Prison scene in Act IV. The nature of the temptation experienced by Proctor, who is faced with the prospect of imminent death, is summed up by the logic of Hale's words addressed to Elizabeth ,

Life, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it. (C.R, P.320).

Proctor for a moment seems convinced of the efficacy of Hale's argument. He suddenly feels that he "cannot mount the gibbet like a saint" (C.R, P.322). He

signs a prepared confession in order to save his life. But as Danforth insists on making his confession in order to save his life, realizes that his own confession will be used as an instrument against others, he tears it up. Indignation compels him to salvage self-respect - "You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me"(C.R, P.327). Proctor, at this stage exhibits a compelling concern for his 'good name'- 'his identity' - which has been located by many critics as one of the running themes which underlie the fate of the protagonists in Miller's plays. Thus, in the end, Proctor makes a proclamation for total integrity;

Because it is my name ! Because I cannot have another in my life, Because I lie and sign myself to lies. Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang ! How may I live without my name ? I have given you My Soul; leave me my name. (C.R, P.328).

He exits so voluntarily that it has suicidal qualities of self-sacrifice, even though he is a victim of the system. But Proctor, unlike Keller and Loman, chooses his own fate, in defiance of authority for personal honour, "The pattern of strength through self-knowledge is undergone by Proctor while he is done in by the theocracy".²³

THE CRUCIBLE's concern with the individual's indentity 'his name' finds further emphasis in Miller's next play, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1957) :

The wrong is mixed in tragic life, God wot no
Villian need be ! passions spin the plot; we are
betrayed by what is false within.

(Modern Love, Sonnet NO. 43
By G. Meriedith)

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE was originally published as a one-act verse drama in 1955. It was revised as a two-act tragedy in prose and produced in London in 1956. The two-act version was first published in 1957. It was also included in Miller's COLLECTED PLAYS which appeared in the same year. A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE is usually categorised as "a social play". In fact Miller himself has preferred to describe it as a social play as indicated by his long "Introduction" to the one-act original version of the play (On Social Plays). The material of A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE is to most people disturbing and Miller's first impulse was to keep it abstract and distant, to hold back. "The empathic flood which a realistic portrayal of the same tale and character might unloose".(C.P, P.50).

But, in his own view, he went too far in this direction and subsequently revised the play towards a more intense realism. Miller, talking about the revised edition says,

Therefore, many decisive alterations.....began to flow into the conception of the play. Perhaps the two most important were an altered attitude towards Eddie Carbone, the hero and towards the two women in his life. I had originally conceived Eddie as a phenomenon, a rather awesome fact of existence, and I had kept a certain distance from involvement in his self-justifications.

Consequently, he had appeared as kind of biological sport and to a degree, a repelling figure not quite admissible into the human family. In revising the play it became possible to accept, to make clear in the original version, which was that, however one might dislike this man who does all sorts of frightful things, he possesses or exemplifies the wonderful and human fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself, for his conception, however misguided of right, dignity and justice. (C.P, P.51).

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE is a social play not in the sense that it deals with the direct and immediate conflicts in American Society as the preceding plays of Miller did; but the term is used here in a more generalized sense. Set in contemporary Brooklyn and centering upon the plight of a long shore man who is torn between his loyalty to the traditional code of honour followed by his community and the blind force of his psychological obsession, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE surely contains a system of social references. The theme of 'informing' which figures in THE CRUCIBLE moves into the foreground of dramatic action in this play. "A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE has in its object lesson the folly of betrayal. Here, Miller probes the soul of a betrayer with the view of uncovering the sources of his antisocial crime".²⁴

The memory of Mccarthyism must have been still fresh, and Miller may have in mind "the rat who broke the law of solidarity and conscience and betrayed their friends to the congressional committee. Eddie's death might be interpreted as the writer's verdict on those who testified."²⁵

Pursuing the line of social criticism in A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, we may arrive at the fact that the play deals, atleast on the surface level, with the problem of illegal immigration into America. The Immigration Bureau is shown to be callously indifferent to the hopes and fears of the long shore men; the cruelty of the immigration service is balanced against the simple trust and mutual bondage which permeate the life of the Brooklyn neighbourhood. As in ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, and THE CRUCIBLE, Miller has carefully presented a picture of 'society' which stands in the background, of the hero's trials and choices. It is this 'society' which finally ostracizes the informer who has violated an unwritten code of honour out of feelings of private jealousy. How strong the code of honour is in the society is emphasised by Eddie's reference to Vinny.

Eddie : I don't care who sees them going in and out as long as you don't see them going in and out. And this goes for you too, B. You don't see nothing and you don't know nothing.

Beatrice : What do you mean ? I understand.

Eddie : You don't understand; you still think you can talk about this to somebody just a little bit. Now lemme say it once and for all, because you're making me nervous again, both of you. I don't care if somebody comes in the house and sees them sleeping on the floor, it never comes out of your mouth who they are or what they're doing here.....

Eddie : Tell her about Vinny.

Beatrice :.....the family had an uncle that they were hiding in the house and he snitched to the Immigration, Catherine.

Catherine : The kid snitched ?

Beatrice : Oh, it was terrible. He had five brothers and the old father. And they grabbed him in the kitchen and pulled him down the stairs-three flights, his head was bouncing like a coconut. And they spit on him in the streets, his own father and his brother. The whole neighbourhood was crying.

(V.B, P.388-389).

Thus, the fatal violation of an ancient law is exemplified in the story of Vinnie. The connection between a VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE and the earlier plays goes further. At the centre of this play is a character who shows a desperate concern for his personal identity, for his 'name'. The theme in A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE certainly carries its echoes back into Miller's early dramas where the protagonists struggled for preserving their good name even at the cost of their lives. Eddie Carbone's cry during his climatic encounter with Marco reveals the insistent nature of one of the main moral concerns which inform almost all the social plays of Miller :

Wiping the neighbourhood with my name like a dirty rag ! I want my name, Marco.....Now gimme my name. (V.B, P.438).

This is a preoccupation with Proctor and Loman, who are similarly shocked into awareness of their personal identity as they stand face to face with their final doom. Eddie's final "I want my respect" (V.B, P.438) is the heart breaking cry of a man whose self-esteem had depended entirely on society.

Just like Joe Keller and Willy Loman, Eddie Carbone dies because he cannot live with the truth of his self. Miller wants us to believe that "Eddie informs on Rudolpho, an illegal immigrant because he is driven by a passion as powerful and as impersonal as fate".²⁶

But the interesting thing about Eddie, is not the passion that pushes him but his refusal to recognize it for what it is. He has to get rid of Rudolpho because the

presence of the boy is forcing him to realize the truth of his self; his incestuous love for his niece and his homosexual attraction to Rudolpho himself. Thus, he dies crying for his 'name', but he is asking for a lie that will let him live, or failing that, for death. Eddie is like Joe Keller and Willy Loman in that he accepts the rules of his society but he dies because he violates them.

But Miller's entire approach to the theme of his hero's crisis of identity also reveals one crucial difference in degree between A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE and the earlier plays. Miller, here deliberately chose to turn away from social morality and enters the heroic world of classical tragedy. This explains the Introduction into the play of the narrator figure, Alfieri, who performs the role of the 'Choric' commentator in relation to Eddie's personal crisis and its fated result. In the play, Alfieri represents common sense in relation to Eddie's excess, his extremity of passion. An American lawyer of Sicilian origin,

Alfieri embodies the social and secular law, the law governing our civilized morality. This is opposed by a more ancient and tribal law operative among the Brooklyn community. It is an unwritten law based on the principle of manly honour. Eddie violates this law when he turns in the "submarines" to the Immigration service and he meets with blood revenge.²⁷

This play is a view from the Bridge not only because its setting is Brooklyn, but more importantly because it tries to show all sides of the situation from the detached eminence of the external observer, "Alfieri is essential to the play because he is the bridge from which it is seen".²⁸

His rational perspective is used to measure the raw agony of Eddie's tortured protests.

Thus, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE follows from the earlier works in that it shows a man being broken and destroyed by guilt. Its emphasis is personal, though the crisis is related to the intense primary relationship of an insecure and partly illegal group; a Brooklyn waterfront slum, with ties back to Italy, receiving unauthorised immigrants and hiding them within its own fierce loyalties. Eddie Carbone's breakdown is sexual and the guilt, as earlier, is deeply related to love. And the personal breakdown leads to sin against this community, when in the terror of his complicated jealousies Eddie betrays Immigrants of his wife's kin to the external law.

In A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, the focus of attention is almost entirely on the central character Eddie Carbone and his psychological obsession. The presentation of Eddie's character with its sexual emphasis has made one critic to term it as "Miller's most Tennessee Williamism play". Popkin shrewdly perceived that ,

At the centre of the play is a character who is not only troubled and guilty, but sick and whose symptoms resemble those that Tennessee Williams, the most typically internal of contemporary American dramatists had made the basic ingredient of Broadway drama in the fifties incontinent desires, morbid sexual jealousy, violent hostility to homosexuality.²⁹

What adds to the intense emotionality of the sexual theme in the play is the fact that Eddie is the most inarticulate character among Miller's protagonists. He is an uneducated dock labourer who is unable to comprehend the nature of the unease he suffers from, who is simply awed by

the mystery of his unacknowledged incestuous passion for his niece. Miller's presentation of Eddie's inarticulate life is brilliantly written as his terrifying bewilderment increases. Alfieri tries to explain to him what is happening but Eddie is obsessed and has no notion of the complexity of love and social understanding. When Eddie gets drunk and kisses Catherine he responds to Rudolpho's challenge by pinning his arms and kissing him as well. The grossness of the act carries with it a suggestion of Eddie's obsession with Catherine and his homosexual attraction for Rudolpho. This is emphasised by the stage direction which follow the violent sequence - "They are like animals that have torn at one another and broken up without a decision". (V.B, P.423).

The scene is prepared for in two ways which show what Eddie's condition is : First Beatrice saying to him, "when am I going to be a wife again" (V.B, P.399), and Eddie's refusal to discuss the matter and secondly, his statement to Alfieri :

I mean he looked so sweet there, like an angel,
you could kiss him he was so sweet. (V.B, P.408).

But he cannot stop the marriage, the process of natural law. Alfieri warns him :

The law is nature - the law is only a word for what has a right to happen. When the law is wrong its because its unnatural and a river will drown you if you buck it now.....you won't have a friend in the world, Eddie ! Even those who understand will turn against you, even the ones who feel the same will despise you ! (V.B,P.424).

But it is too late for such rationality to change an uneducated, passionate man like Eddie. He betrays Marco and Rudolpho to the law's representatives, in order to be

rid of the threat to his masculinity; and immediately Sicilian law takes over, condemning his betrayal of honour. Eddie stands alone as a man who has lost his respect. In betraying the brothers, he betrays himself and his cry "I want my respect" is futile, as his appalled wife knows and accepts.

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE dramatizes the passion of betrayal. A decent man is led to squealing on his kin because of jealousy. Miller says in his "Introduction" :

That reading was the awesomeness of a passion which, despite its contradicting the self-interest of the individual it inhabits, despite every kind of warning, despite even it's destruction of the moral beliefs of the individual, proceeds to magnify its power over him until it destroys him. (C.P, P.48).

Eddie's attractiveness or unattractiveness, his rightness or his essential wrongness becomes relatively important. What counts is that here is a man who as Miller says,

Possesses or exemplifies the wonderous or human fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided, of right, dignity and justice. (C.P, P.51).

Unlike the ending of ALL MY SONS with its moral tag that we are all one family and that selfishness which is prepared to destroy others leads to self-destruction, and unlike the ending of DEATH OF A SALESMAN with Charley's concluding remarks blaming society (Nobody dost blame this man) the conclusion of A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, spoken by Alfieri emphasizes the tragedy potent in man himself. ³⁰

Most of the time now we settle for half and I like it better. But the truth is holy and even as I know how wrong he was and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory, not purely good, but himself purely, for he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than any of my sensible clients. And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be ! And so I mourn him - I admit it with a certain alarm. (V.B, P. 439).

The curtain speech of Alfieri sets the story not in its historical but in its moral perspective and lifts it above the vendetta story by its insistence on Eddie's intransigence. As Eddie stands before us, naked and vulnerable, with his shameful weakness exposed to the accusing eyes of a restrictive society, the feeling of pity is powerfully evoked; a rushing tide of sympathy for an individual who never really knew who he was. Miller says -

Thus, his oddness came to disappear as he was seen in context, as a creature of his environment as well as an exception to it; and where originally there had been only a removed sense of terror at the oncoming catastrophe now there was pity and I think, the kind of wonder which it had been my aim to create in the first place. It was finally possible to mourn this man. (C.P, P.52).

All the plays discussed so far have a personality of their own, an action and an intention that separates them from each other but all of them are variations of the same theme. The relationship that exists between the individual and society

lying in a particular conception of the individual to society, in which neither is the individual seen as a unit nor the society as an aggregate, but both are seen as belonging to a continuous and in real term inseparable process.³¹

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29. Henry Popkin, "Arthur Miller : The Strange Encounter"
The Sewanee Review, P. 59,60.
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Tragedy" in Critical Essays", P. 90.
31. Raymond Williams, "The Realism of Arthur Miller" in
Critical Essays, P. 70.

C O N C L U S I O N

We can kid the world, but we can't fool ourselves,
like most people, no matter what we do - nor
escape ourselves no matter where we run away -

(A Moon for the Misbegotten
By Eugene O'Neill)

From the elementary conception of human responsibility embodied in ALL MY SONS, through the detailed documentation of the anxious plight of the American 'Little Man' in the illusion-ridden world of advertisement and propaganda (DEATH OF A SALESMAN) through the cry of rage against political intolerance (THE CRUCIBLE) to the struggle of the individual's self-realization in a society that restricts him (A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE); this describes the course of Miller's vision in the plays belonging to THE COLLECTED PLAYS. A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS completes this cycle where Miller takes up, on a very minor scale, some of the concerns which we located at the centre of the dramatic world in ALL MY SONS and DEATH OF A SALESMAN.

A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS, a short one act play was produced in 1955; of this play Miller wrote in his 'Introduction' "Nothing in this book was written with greater love, and for myself I love nothing printed here better than this play" (C.P, P. 41). A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS is a deeply felt piece of "autobiographical nostalgia". It is Miller's farewell homage to his friends and colleagues in the warehouse where he worked during his boyhood. Bert, the American boy in the play who reads WAR AND PEACE and wants to go to college is Miller himself. Using Bert as his representative, Miller here looks back upon his experience in the warehouse as an adolescent during the years of the Great Depression and what it foretold for his future in terms of his attitude to success in life. Miller has termed this play as a "Pathetic Comedy" (C.P, P.49) which aims to

blend comedy with pathos resulting from the loveless drudgery of Bert and his friends in the Warehouse and moments of banter which enliven their dull preoccupations.

Like the other social plays of Miller, discussed in this study, the theme of the individual's entrapment in modern industrial society is emphasized in A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS. The characters in A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS suffer from the alienating nature of their labour. They are poor, trapped people condemned to spend their entire working lives in a dusty, shabby warehouse but where A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS differs from Miller's other plays is that there is no emphasis on the individual's quest for self-realization nor is there any attempt to develop any one character in particular. Unlike Joe Keller and Willy Loman who are swamped by the demands made on them by society, A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS is more hopeful in the way Bert who is able to save money to go to college finally escapes the drudgery. In deciding to leave the Warehouse, Bert is leaving behind him a whole world of sad and bored people whose memory will pursue him for the rest of his life. The central image of the play when the workers clean the windows to let in a sight of sun and trees, and let in actually the view of a Cat-house (brothel) - telescopes, as it were, the comic despair of the life inside the warehouse. The last long speech of Gus in which he traces his twenty two years with the firm in terms of car models he has outlived also provides a poignant comment on the daily tedium of the workhouse atmosphere.

Gus : Them mice was here before you was born....When Mr. Eagle was in High School, I was already here. When there was Winton Six I was here. When there was Minerva car I was here. When

there was Stanley Steamer I was here, and Stearns Knight, and Marmon was good car, I was here all them times.....all them was good cars. All them times I was here. (C.P, P.370).

Gus is very much a product of the work atmosphere in the Warehouse; all his values seem to derive from the life he lives there. As with Willy Loman, Miller has turned his whole personality as a comment on the system. All the characters like Kenneth, Tom, Gus, Jerry, Willy have their interesting peculiarities, but Miller does not allow himself time or space to develop the social commentary which is implicit in their predicaments. Hence, A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS never enjoyed the same luck and popularity as Miller's other plays. It is a very minor play which is often passed over in the critical discussions of Miller's theatre. Although A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS is not as popular as the other plays discussed in this study, yet one cannot deny its importance in the Miller canon with its emphasis on social problems. The drudgery and loneliness of the individual trapped in a cruel, powerful Industrial society is poignantly expressed by Bert in the play,

I don't understand how they come every morning
Every morning and every morning,
And no end in sight;
That's the thing - there's no end !
Oh, there ought to be a statue in the park
"To All the Ones that stay"
One to Larry, to Agnes, Tom, Kelly, Gus....
(C.P, P.132).

At the very beginning of this study, it was stated that the real concern of this dissertation lay in exploring the very intricate relationship that exists between an individual and his society and also exposing the 'falsity' and 'illusion' that an individual weaves around himself to such an extent that he cannot discover his true identity,

his true self. His struggle to live in society leads him from true 'self' to an 'image' of himself that he cannot maintain or sustain for a long time; and when he discovers the stark and naked truth of his 'self', he either takes his own life because he is too ashamed to bear the truth of his self (Joe Keller) or he prefers to die, self-deluded rather than face up to the truth of his self (Willy Loman). Added to this, is the sinister thread working in all the plays; the part that society plays in the tragic existence of the individual. As already stated before, in all the plays discussed so far, "Society is seen as an image-making machine, a purveyor of myths and prejudices which provide the false faces and false values which modern man wears".² The implication is that the individual has little choice - that he can conform and be destroyed as Joe Keller and Willy Loman are, or that he can refuse to conform and be destroyed as John Proctor and Eddie Carbone.

Does this mean that there is no development in the plays of Arthur Miller from ALL MY SONS to A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE ? There are many critics who dismiss Miller's plays as being unduly pessimistic and dealing with characters who live self-deluded and die without achieving recognition of their true selves. Hence Miller's plays cannot be treated as 'tragedies' as no character achieves tragic stature. But to say this of Miller's plays is to deny the uniqueness of Miller's contribution to the development of modern drama. In the plays which belong to the first period of his artistic career, Miller reveals himself as a sensitive interpreter of the anger and pathos which characterized the American scene in the decade which followed the second world war. Miller's primary impetus in these plays is his "social consciousness"³ His plays deal with different forms of the disfiguration of

human reality brought about by the values and institutions of the American capitalist society. "They are theatrical demonstrations of some pressing contemporary questions which have their origins in the defeated ironies of the American dream". ⁴

Each of the plays written prior to THE MISFITS is a judgement of a man's failure to maintain a viable connection with his surrounding world because he does not know himself. The verdict is always 'guilty' and it is a verdict based upon Miller's belief that if each man faced upto the truth about himself, he could be fulfilled as an individual and still live within the restrictions of society. Despite the blackness of this description, the plays are not pessimistic, because inherent in them is a kind of vague faith in man, a suspicion that the individual may be able to retain his integrity. This possibility appears, most conventionally, in the platitudes of Chris, the avenging idealist of ALL MY SONS and in the kind of death John Proctor dies in THE CRUCIBLE. The evolution of Miller's theme of "Self in Society" reaches its climax in THE CRUCIBLE, where he was successful in creating a protagonist who rises to genuine tragic stature : "he achieved in this play a genuine fusion of searching social criticism and the tragic statement". ⁵

As was pointed out in the 'Introduction', this study aims to analyse only the early plays of Miller published in THE COLLECTED PLAYS in 1957. This, in every sense marked a turning point in Miller's artistic career. The plays included in this collection offered a continuous

pattern of artistic development "closely related in themes and styles and shielded by a sustained ideological outlook, these plays carried the living proof of Miller's definition of the social drama and his committed sense of human reality".⁶ Paul Blumberg's description of Miller as "a great respecter of the engaged, the committed, the connected, the political man",⁷ contains an eloquent summary of this phase of Miller's work in the theatre. Miller himself appeared to have been moved by this realization when he stated in his 'Introduction' that "the assumption - or presumption- behind these plays is that life has meaning"(C.P, P.8). It is precisely this assumption, resting on an optimistic belief in change and progress, it is this quality of certainty which characterizes the COLLECTED PLAYS which marks the first phase of his development. Miller in the 'Introduction' states :-

A new poem will appear because a new balance has been struck which embraces both determinism and the paradox of will. If there is one unseen goal toward which every play in this book strives, it is that very discovery and its proof - that we are made and yet are more than what made us (C.P, P.55).

No study of Arthur Miller will be complete without reference to the later plays that Miller wrote which includes AFTER THE FALL, THE PRICE and INCIDENT AT VICHY. Critics have noticed two different patterns of concern in the plays that Arthur Miller has written thus far. The first pattern emerges in the plays written up to and including the revised version of A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1957); the second pattern began to emerge in THE MISFITS(1960). Miller's only produced film and has been increasingly manifest in his last three plays. These two patterns can be treated as Miller's evolution as an artist.

His later plays mark a new departure not only in form but in tone and theme as well "The identity" crisis which is at the heart of the plays of Miller's first period is a 'crisis of consciousness' but that of his later plays is one of conscience".⁸

The protagonists of Miller's first period struggled for the most part unsuccessfully to discover who they were. In his last three plays, Miller is concerned with the effect his protagonists have had on others and their capacity to accept full responsibility for what they have or have not done. All of Miller's heroes have a tremendous sense of guilt. In the earlier plays, however, they could never really acknowledge that the source of guilt was themselves and therefore could not know their guilt - even though they were destroyed by it but that is not the case with his later plays. Here, we can take the example of Quentin in AFTER THE FALL who is aware and recognizes that "we are responsible for what happens not only to ourselves but insofar as we relate to others, to them as well."⁹

Although the later plays of Arthur Miller mark an important stage in the development of Miller's literary career, the purpose of this study has been to focus on Miller's early plays which form a cohesive group, although at first glance they seem very different.

In his early plays, Miller was able to create meaningful dramatic statements out of the apparent innocence and naivety which marked his perception of the American family and American institutions. The nature of Miller's contribution emerging in his four social plays is serious and impressive and no one can deny Miller's unique contribution to literature and more specifically to drama

the end of which he says "is the creation of a higher consciousness". The importance of Miller can be best summed up by Robert W. Corrigan who says

In a time when so many playwrights are dealing with modern man's isolation and loneliness, Miller, without denying either the loneliness or the isolation is convinced that "the world is moving towards a unity". His passionate concern that attention must be paid to the aspirations, worries and failures of all men and more especially of the 'little man' who is representative of the best and the worst of an industrialised democratic society, has resulted in plays of great range and emotional impact. 10

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