CHAPTER II

THE EARLY PLAYS

The Formative Years

The Great Depression of the Thirties was the most crucial factor in the development of Arthur Miller. One of the two truly national disasters, it at once shattered his life and formed his vision of reality. The Depression had so strong an impact on him that it preoccupied both the man and the artist time and again. Miller relates an early incident which proved highly instructive to the boy. The day before the United States banks closed, the fourteen-year-old Miller withdrew his twelve-dollar savings to buy a bike. He first thought himself armour-proof against the exigencies of the economy. But with the bike soon stolen, he acutely realised that no one could escape the disaster. He says :

> I came out to find no bike, and a block can never look as empty as it does to a boy whose bike should be on it and isn't. In that emptiness lay a new reality ("A Boy Grew in Brooklyn" 122).

As late as 1958, he could still write about his exposure to the determinative power of 1929 :

> Before the crash I thought 'Society' meant the rich people in the Social Register. After the crash it meant the constant visits of strange men who knocked on our door pleading for a chance to wash the windows, and some of them fainted on the back porch from hunger.

In the events of the time he found "no gods but ... god-like powers", the powers of "economic crises" and "political

imperatives" which had eroded everything around. It is something he could not believe till it was horridly visible (Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", TE 177, 181).

The paradox of the great Boom-and-Bust also impelled Miller to look back at the preceding era, the Twenties, with a new insight. He perceived not only the hollowness of all earlier promises but the "stimulation of the get-rich-quick instincts of an entire populace" (Horton and Edwards 326). The ideal of success was given the sanction of a religious creed. On the other hand, with the earthquakelike crackup, people started starving. It is at this juncture that Miller's commitment was made : "public issues be the congealing point of a writer's passions" (qtd. in Schlueter and Flanagan 2).

For him, the aesthetic question - "What is its [a play's] ultimate force ? How can that force be released?" - is inevitably tied up with the ethical query — "What is its ultimate relevancy to the survival of the race?" ("The Shadows", T.E. 182). Time, characterizations, and other elements are treated differently from play to play, "but all to the end that that ... commitment be brought forth" (Miller, Introduction 7). His approach to social drama, in this sense, is more human than heroic. His theatre of commitment follows the outline of what Sartre defines as "engaged" literature. Miller might have been influenced by What is Literature ? (1947) which views the

social responsibility of the writer against the human crisis of our times.

The desk-drawer plays reflect the author's strong leftist leanings. No Villain (1936), it subsequent revisions as They Too Arise (1936) and The Grass Still Grows (1938), Honors at Dawn (1937) -- all are typical of the social protest plays of the Thirties. Each is a Depression play, locating the sources of disintegration and injustice in the false ideals of capitalism. Miller felt drawn towards the leftist playwrights of the decade, such as Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, Elmer Rice and Maxwell Anderson. Each of them dealt with the break-up of the social system and protested against all forms of oppression. However, it is with the first two writers that Miller has greater affinities. As he says, they made the social themes "personal to themselves. They matured with the depression; the others before". He was "deeply moved" by their plays, he himself admits, and still remembers them "with love" ("The State of the Theatre", T.E 231). He echoes Odets in a number of plays, published and unpublished. They Too Arise, for example, is modelled on Awake and Sing! (1935), the title itself being a borrowing. The parallels between Death of a Salesman (1949) and Waiting for Lefty (1935) are no less striking. Lawrence Kitchin rightly points out that both are thematically concerned with economic survival and the depersonalising power of materialism (69). Equally remarkable is Miller's moral affinity

with Hellman. Both refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee against their fellows who were also blacklisted for their communist alliances. The Crucible (1953) and The Children's Hour (revived in 1952) bear direct or indirect references to the mass hysteria of McCarthyism. One deals with the seventeenth-century witchhunt and the other with the sensational Lesbian theme as contemporary parallels. If, like Odets, Miller is "the possessor of a bold and sensitive social conscience", then, like Hellman, he believes in making a definite critical observation (Miller, Jeanne-Marie A., 493). In respect of self-integrity, he resembles her even more because Odets also finally yielded to the demands of the Congressional Committee.

Miller's preoccupation with the victimization of modern man, in other words - with the destruction of individual freedom by the institutions of power, links him further with such writers as Philip Barry and S.N.Behrman. He also admires Thorton Wilder, the author of Our Town (1938), and seems to have shared his belief in New Humanism. No less does he echo John Steinbeck, especially in suggesting that corruption lies "self-evidently in a system which establishes competition not only as a natural adjunct of modern society but as a law of nature."

Despite his affinities with the propagandist dramatists of the 1930's and his respect for the legacy of the Group and the

Federal Theatres, Miller perhaps found no consistent "ideological or historical sanction" for the moral transformation which he wished to precipitate. Even after the second World War he continued his alliances with organizations and magazines of the political Left. However, in his writings he responds to economic determinism with "a kind of muted liberalism" (Bigsby, Critical Introduction 144). His emphasis is more on the socio-economic forces in general, and the individual is presented as working out his own destiny. On his own admission, Miller is "a disturbed radical". Symbolically enough, he deals with the "impulses" that create political conflicts, and they are "the human impulses, the human contradictions". His concern is to find out "a real argument" with the contemporary system, to prove that "it prevents a man from flowering freely" ("Brooklyn Boy", "Writing Plays", "Arthur Miller"; Conversations 17, 246, 147).

Miller also lived through the War, another factor shaping and reshaping his vision. The problems engendered by the Depression were attempted to be solved by the New Deal, but they were soon followed by a war economy. The Golden Years (1939-40) addresses more directly the fundamental issues of the time. More significantly, it presents the nature of "the liberal dilemma". Fascism must be defeated, but the War implied a collapse of the values so recently asserted. The Half-Bridge (1941-43) envisions the possibility of a resurgence of order by acts of individual "will and imagination" (Bigsby, Critical Introduction 149-50). The moral degeneration was caused simply

by some failures which could still be corrected. That They May Win (1943) attempted to make people aware of what they were doing them. Situation Normal (1944), a book based on the facts Miller gathered for a war film, expresses the same concern to prove something besides horror.

During the war years Miller fought more against fascism. In his Introduction to the 1984 edition of his fiction, Focus (1945), he writes :

> Focus is a view of anti-Semitism that is deeply social in this particular sense : the Jew is seen by the anti-Semitic mind as the carrier of that same alienation the indigenous people resent and fear ....they fear it because it is an alienation they feel in themselves ...(appeared as "The Face in the Mirror").

His bitter reaction to the evil of anti-Semitism is ascribable not merely to the fact of his Jewish origin but also to his sense of social responsibility as a writer.

One who influenced him most at this stage in his career is Henrik Ibsen, the author of The Pillars of Society (1877), A Doll's House (1879), Ghosts (1881), An Enemy of the People (1882) and The Wild Duck (1884). Miller confessed to have formed from his work, as well as from Dostoyevsky's, an idea of what a writer is supposed to be : "the great writer was the destroyer of chaos, a man privy to the councils of the hidden gods who administer the hidden laws that bind us all and

destroy us if we do not know them" ("The Shadows of the Gods", TE 180). Influenced by Hedda Gabler, he came to think that the writer should also suggest "the alternative values to those which misled the heroes or heroines of the action shown" ("Morality and Modern Drama", TE 196). His presumption goes still farther : the social dramatist today must "delve into the nature of man as he exists to discover what his needs are, so that those needs may be amplified and exteriorized in terms of social concepts" ("On Social Plays", TE 62). However, in practice he could hardly transform his values into any kind of action. It is a dichotomy the author could never resolve, because he probably failed to find a definite political system that he could completely rely on. Here we go back to our earlier proposition that his familiar mode is liberal humanism.

Miller's theatre of commitment invites a comparison also with the Epic Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. Asked to appraise the new trends in the theatre, he said in 1955 : "The only movement worth noting, and it is not American, is represented by Bertolt Brecht .... In short, whenever a play mixes 'I' with 'we' in a significantly original way I am interested"("American Playwrights" 19). What he finds admirably honest and theatrically powerful in Brecht is "his solution of the problem of consciousness" (Introduction 45). By this Miller means his great power to synthesize the contemporary and the universal. Yet his theatre is markedly different from Brecht's. Like Shaw, the German dramatist thinks in terms of concepts before he thinks in terms

of people, and his is an "anti-individual, anti-emotional, anti-illusory theatre of fact". Miller is as passionately interested in ideas as Shaw or Brecht, but in his hands the abstract becomes the human and the social embraces the psychological.

If his concern for the individual humanizes social drama, his refusal to view man as an isolated being "breaks the subjective circle in psychological drama" (Huftel 64, 70). Herein lies the basic difference between Miller and Tennessee Williams, his nearest contemporary. The latter's is "a new poetic, subjective theatre" which attempts to create a reality of the broken world (Donahue 220). His mode is personal lyricism which views drama as "a sensuous rather than a rational form" (Jackson 86). He presents his characters as essentially fragile and neurotic. If Williams and Brecht worked in two opposite directions, Miller has struck a balance in his theatre : "A great drama is a great jurisprudence. Balance is all" (Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", T E 194).

All My Sons : Self, Family and Society

Built around the crime and self-expiation of a wartime profiteer, All My Sons (1947) offers an inkling of Miller's humanistic ethic. The playwright has always been in love with wonder — "the wonder of how things and people got to be what they are...." He had tried to grasp it in The Man Who Had All the Luck (1944), but failed to discover what "exact" part a man plays in his own fate. In All My Sons, the next play that was his first success on Broadway, he modified his method. Later it was

> to seek cause and effect ... to hold back any tendency to express an idea in itself unless it was literally forced out of a character's mouth; in other words, to let wonder rise up like a mist ... from the gradual and remorseless crush of factual and psychological conflict.

The action centres on the problem of relatedness, a problem examined in terms of individual-society relationship. Miller believes that a man is not a "partner" in society, but an "incorporated member". Joe Keller's trouble "is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any viable connection with his ... society." The dramatic power of the play derives from his final act of expiation and also from Chris' revolt at his discovery of his father's guilt. Its "socialness" lies in its ultimate revelation that we cannot walk away from certain of our deeds which affect our social existence directly or indirectly (Miller, Introduction 13, 15, 19).

All My Sons operates on three levels of significance : the cosmic, the psychological and the social (Carson 40). In its earlier versions Kate's astrological beliefs were given great importance, and the original title was The Sign of the Archer. In the final version Miller reduces this element : the mother develops towards a full realization of the reality and, therefore, finds her mystic belief to be no more than an illusion. As the play moves forward, the father-son conflict occupies the foreground, and the mysticism associated with astrology gradually gives way to psychology. The psychological truth, in turn, fuses with the social — a fusion that brings the play to its climax.

All My Sons begins in the middle of the action. A crime already committed is now followed by revelations and crucial reversals. The sight of Larry's tree lying toppled threatens the apparent normality of the Keller family by bringing in a thought of his death. The crisis is precipitated by the arrival of Ann, Larry's betrothed, and more by the sudden visit of George, her brother. Hints of Joe's crime, as they are dropped one by one, drive a genuine horror into the heart of the audience. As the author observes, it is a horror "born of the contrast between the placidity of the civilization on view and the threat to it that a rage of conscience could create" (Introduction 18).

The opening scene aptly builds up the central atmosphere of crime and punishment. The game of jail Joe plays with Bert, one of the neighbourhood boys, tells of his own life history. He escaped punishment by hiding his own guilt and framing his partner.

The criminal is now playing the role of the detective, the innocent. Kate's blatant reaction to the game indicates her moral agony : she is guilty of suppressing another man's guilt. The mother is in a pathetic psychological state. She cannot believe her son to be dead — an illusion fostered by her helpless loyalty to her husband. God does not allow a father to murder his own son, even unwittingly.

The focus is gradually shifted from Kate to Joe, the protagonist of the play. He still lives in bad faith. While describing to Ann and Chris his return from jail, he juggles with the facts to prove his innocence : "Picture it now; none of them believed I was innocent .... walkin' down the street that day I was guilty as hell. Except I wasn't, and there was a court paper in my pocket to prove I wasn't...." Joe does not yet feel the difference between "a court paper" and the court of conscience. He deludes himself as well as others into believing his lie. His words to Ann — "I never believed in crucifying people .... you gotta forgive" — betray his affectation, a superficial gesture of sympathy for Deever, his partner and the girl's father. Whenever he has his personal complacency at stake, he characteristically tries to isolate himself and his family from the world outside. He consoles himself with a vain hope that Larry never flew one of those ill-fated aircraft. It is a selfish attitude, a fragile defence against the consequences of his own dreadful action. Pleading for Deever outside the court and calling a "murder" a "mistake", he actually seeks self-exoneration. Naturally, he has to have recourse

to further lies : "If I could have gone in that day I'd a told him — junk 'em, Steve, we can afford it. But alone he was afraid" (Sons 80-82). Later on it is revealed that feigning sickness he deliberately did not go "that day" so that he could finally evade responsibility. Joe is, perhaps, not a guilt-free man : he has been fully aware of his crime since he committed it. Rather, the flaw in his character lies in his wilful ignorance.

Joe Keller's guilt is threefold. First, he shipped out the defective cylinder heads without considering its consequences, because to do so would be to endanger his booming business. Second, he still had had the chance to prevent the calamity by informing the authorities. Instead, he was waiting for a "kick-back", which means simply awaiting a chance of escape. Finally, when he found that it was "too late" and twenty-one Air Force Men had already gone down, he should have handed himself over to the authorities instead of pinning the blame down on his partner. But such an act would require a strong moral courage that Joe lacks (Sons 115). He acted within the confines of his family-based philosophy of life and his crime was quite in conformity with "his inauthentic and unexamined mode" of being "which is unsettled by a queer turn of events in the play" (Rajakrishnan, The Misty Tower 70).

Most ironically, Joe's guilt is revealed by his wife who has so long tried to suppress it at all costs. The truth just slips out in an unguarded moment :

GEORGE : Joe, you're amazingly the same ....

KELLER : Say, I ain't got time to get sick.

MOTHER : He hasn't been laid up in fifteen years.

KELLER : Except my flu during the war.

MOTHER : Huhh ?

KELLER : My flu ....

MOTHER : Well, sure ... To George : I mean except for that flu ....

However, the final revelation is held back until the dramatic moment is more ripe. Kate cannot restrain Chris from marrying "Larry's girl" unless she spells out the basis of her optimism : "Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead, your father killed him ..." (Song 111, 114). The wife does not really want to betray the husband, however guilty he is; but the mother cannot keep quiet any longer.

Joe's guilt established, the dramatic question shifts from "What does he have to hide?" to "Can he be excused on a familial ground?" Brutally charged by Chris, the younger son, he justifies his desperation as a family man : "I'm in business... you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business ....what could I do?" So, whatever he did was for his family, for a business for his sons. Joe's overriding concern for the family finds expression at various points. He is not ready to see his own little world disintegrate under any circumstances.

Any rift in family relationships, therefore, unsettles him: "I thought I had a family here. What happened to my family?" He finds nothing "bigger" than the simple equation "I'm his father and he's my son" (Sons 115, 119-20). He wants Chris to acknowledge the same and withdraw his charge against him. Otherwise, he will kill himself because he cannot live as a stranger to his own son. However, neither Chris nor Kate can forgive Joe on this plea that the family is an "autonomous entity" (Schlueter and Flanagan 52). More ironically, his private ways boomerang to destroy both his family and eventually himself.

A sociological study of Joe Keller's crime is possible, and critics have sought to trace its root in the dog-eat-dog ethic of American capitalism. As the protagonist defends himself, "Who worked for nothin' in that war? .... Then ... why am I bad?" (Sons 125). In a brilliant essay on the theme of work alienation in Miller, Blumberg observes that Joe's alienation from everyone outside his family is traceable in part to his relationship to his work. It encourages "a measuring of value in terms of personal profit and loss, rather than in terms of any wider or more general social values" (54). Similarly, Gascoigne has noted that though the ultimate responsibility is Keller's own, "the pressures of a materialist society loomed large behind his decision" (176). However, the rationalizations that Joe is a product of his social environment and his

alienated consciousness derives from the false values of his society do not absolve him. For Miller, the proof of being human lies in the power to choose and act, in man's will to transcend his limitations. In "On Social Plays" he writes :

> So long as modern man conceives of himself as valuable only because he fits into some niche in the machine-tending pattern, he will never know anything more than a pathetic doom (TE 60).

Joe fails to see the possibility of personal moral uniqueness. Even the critics who examine his crime in sociological terms cannot ignore this aspect. He was certainly under some kind of social pressure, but there was always a way out for him, a choice. Keeping in full view the impersonality of the System, Miller has presented the consequences of its operation as "intensely personal" (Porter, "The Mills of the Gods" 83).

The final revelation is brought in the form of a letter which Larry wrote to Ann before going out on his "mission". As Joe comes up with his last plea, "a man can't be a Jesus in this world ! ", Chris reads it out :

> I read about Dad and your father being convicted. I can't express myself .... Every day three or four men never come back and he sits back there doing business.... I'm going out on a mission in a few minutes. They'll probably report me missing (Sons 125-26).

Larry the idealist sacrificed himself, as if to expiate his father's sin. In other words, Joe is directly responsible for

the death of his own son. In viewing the consequences of the actions to be as real as the actions themselves, All My Sons relates to the Ibsen method. When the play opened on Broadway, it was found "Ibsenesque", Miller himself writes. The interplay of cause and effect, past and present is what produces "the shadow of Ibsen" in All My Sons. Miller believes that once the antecedent material is eliminated from a work, it becomes almost impossible to present the "New" as "a moment in a flow of time", and not as "a situation without roots" (Introduction 20-21). He always admired this wholeness in Ibsen and attempted to attain it in his own play. Yet it is more than a slavish imitation. While Ibsen is primarily concerned with the consequences of a past action, Carson observes, Miller is more interested in the reaction that follows understanding and awareness (40). Confronted with the reality of his situation, Joe realises that the dead flyers were all his sons. In Miller the moment of higher awareness is also the moment of choice and action. The father commits suicide.

A number of critics have complained about the abruptness of Joe's ethical conversion. Many think that the crisis of conscience, when the protagonist is really caught in that, is resolved too fast. Gens has criticised the final scene for its lack of psychological plausibility : a man devious enough to rationalise his first guilt could surely attend to the second one. For Miller, virtue, at least "the striving after it", is automatically attendant upon knowledge of the self" (Reading 131-32). Bigsby thinks that while Joe's legal guilt should be

subordinated to his moral awakening, the crises of the play are centred on his admission of this legal guilt and on the melodramatic discovery of a direct connection between his crime and Larry's death. His final statement, "they were all my sons", thus follows "proof of physical causality" rather than moral transformation (Confrontation 29). Of all such reactions, Gross's seems to be the most convincing : Joe's suicide is less a moral judgement than an act of love (12). Again, it is no universal love, but the blind love of a father for his own sons. He only knows that they consider him an animal with whom they cannot live. He cannot live either without their affection. In effect, he commits suicide — which is quite in accordance with his earlier promise that he would "put a bullet" in his head if there was "something bigger" than the father-son relationship (Song 120). Joe's end shows the tragic integrity of a private man who dies clinging to his old belief in the family as a terminal value. Like Willy Loman in Salesman, he goes to his death, self-deluded.

Owing to a lack of psychological complexity, if not also of spiritual nobility, in the character of Joe, All My Sons fails to pass beyond pathos. His death arouses pity, but perhaps no sense of waste. A greater degree of recognition would have assured him a higher tragic stature and made his death a true illumination of the ethical. Nevertheless, his final moments of

awareness bring forth a new self which now strives to work out its own truth. The truth still seems to have been rather imposed on him from outside, by his idealist son now dead : "I think to him they were all my sons". But finally, Joe comes to share the same humanistic principle. In the course of understanding, the half-vision matures into a fuller awareness of self and society : "I guess they were. I guess they were" (italics mine). The result is self-destruction which could not be delayed any further because of the intensity of the shock (one should mark his agonized repetition of "they were"). Joe's suicide is an act of atonement for his past crime; it is equally the act of a man who cannot accept the self-image he ends up with. It is an ultimate affirmation of the values ever insisted on by Chris and also endorsed by Larry's death : "You can be better ! Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it ..." (Gong 126).

Joe Keller's boundless individualism is counterbalanced by another set of values embodied in different ways in the younger generation of George and Ann, Chris and Larry. As Cameron points out, the first two "speak for a world of justice" while the Keller brothers "articulate a still higher ideal, a New Testament law of love and co-operation rather than the Mosaic 'eye for an eye'" (41). It is Chris, the living idealist in the play, who has brought out of the war a morality of brotherhood. It is based on his experience of mutual sacrifice among the men he commanded

: "Everything was being destroyed, see, but ... one new thing was made. A kind of — responsibility. Man for man" (Sons 85). The war did not leave him unwounded, his is "a psychological wound, a sense of inadequacy and guilt" (Wells 7). He dares not enjoy the fruits of a war economy because he is in constant fear of being condemned by his own idealism. He is against the success ideology if success means acquiring wealth at the cost of others. After the war he even felt it wrong to be alive.

This basic difference in moral outlook makes the father-son conflict inevitable in the play. Chris's prolonged innocence of Joe's guilt makes matters worse for him. He told Ann and Sue once : "Do you think I could forgive him if he'd done that?" He clashes with George as the latter directly accuses his father; he will not accept - without proofs - any account of Joe's culpability. His faith and confidence, once belied by the realities of circumstances, leave him in genuine crises. He does not find enough reason to crucify his father since it will not bring the dead back to life, nor can he excuse himself for being "practical now like everybody else." Painfully aware of the degeneration of values, Chris says : "This is the land of the great big dogs, you don't love a man here, you eat him !" (Sons 98, 123-24). This is no cynicism, but rather a growing insight into the dark forces of human nature. It is wisdom without which one cannot realise the true self. However, this realm of the self has received a full-length treatment only in the middle plays, especially in After the Fall (1964). With

a moral vision so profound as to redeem the remaining Kellers, Chris may be regarded as the true protagonist of All My Sons.

The character of Chris is no less subject to criticism. He knows things better than his father, yet he remains his "father's son" (Gross 12). He does not propose to "liquidate" the business built in part on soldiers' blood; he will run it himself, although "cleanly" (Miller, Introduction 37). In a rapture of love the highest he can think of is : "Oh, Annie, ... I'm going to make a fortune for you ! " (Sons 86). These are also compromises, and hence Chris has no right to criticise others. It may be an exaggeration to brand him a hypocrite, but his shame and guilt certainly do not lead him to any kind of action. Like Joe, he also lives in bad faith. He suspected his father, but could not bring himself to admit what he knew. Moreover, he is ready to overthrow the authority, but he does not know how to reconstitute it anew. Chris really develops only in the end when he learns the cause of his brother's death. The shock that drives Joe to commit suicide rather equips him better "to make the world begin (Gross 18).

What has further disturbed some critics is "the arrogant and inflexible side" of Chris' nature, "which lends an inhuman touch to his flaunted idealism" (Rajakrishnan, The Misty Tower, 78). Larry's letter has thrown Joe into the worst state

of his life, but Chris is still bent on dragging him to prison. If the father does not expiate in public, the son cannot have his own distinction restored. This is an overreaction which largely contributes to Joe's suicide.

Despite his deviousness, Chris embodies the author's liberal vision. As Wiegand observes, he is the "Man Who Knows" (299). Like Alfieri in A View from the Bridge (1955), though less objectively, he is the voice of reason and, therefore, a foil to his self-deluded father. His sense of responsibility, "Man for man"; his higher awareness, "you've got to be a little better because of that"; and his guilt feeling, "otherwise what you have is really loot, and there's blood on it" — all these suggest Miller's attempt to establish a social morality as the way out of "the impasse of ... individual disintegration" (Song 85; Hogan 33). It is through Chris that he wanted to make "the moral world as real and evident as the immoral one so splendidly is" (Introduction 19).

All My Sons is a play about idealism, about "a wilful blindness and a need to see" (Moftel 84). It is about commitment as against evasion. Man should preserve his self-integrity by standing out against the assumption that his "private little revolutions always die. The compromise is always made ..." (Song 118). The play is, in a sense, Miller's attempt to answer the question "How may a man make of the outside world a home?" The Arthur Miller who wrote "The Family in Modern

Drama" and eloquently admired Ibsen's Peer Gynt, believed that the dramatist must extend his issue "out of the family circle and into society" and thus lift it "out of the merely particular toward the fate of the generality of men" (221-23). Though the action of All My Sons takes place in the living room, the final scene amply suggests that men must recognise the relations and forces which exist beyond the private self. The family is a microcosm of society and, therefore, related to this larger context. Creating a conflict between the psychological and the social man, the play "lays siege to ... the fortress of unrelatedness". Moreover, it ends on a note of affirmation : life continues in the face of personal tragedy. Kate asks Chris to "forget now" and "live". Men must try to live meaningfully, and the meaning of life lies in the recognition of Responsibility. The play is "not merely a subjective attack upon the audience's nerves and feelings" because the ending truly creates "a higher consciousness" (Miller, Introduction 19, 21).

From yet another point of view, All My Sons has a density of texture greater than that of the typical social thesis play (Boggs, qtd. in Wells 6). The characters not only reflect the values and attitudes of a particular society but examine them in their attempt to realise themselves. There is also a balance between the subjective truth of the character and the objective truth of the dramatist. As Miller points out, both are necessary

for a comparative line of evaluation ("AM on Plays and Playwriting", Conversations 267-68). However, it was not until The Crucible (1953) that he could create a self-aware individual.

Death of a Salesman : Illusion and Reality

Death of a Salesman (1949) reworks All My Sons in many respects, but with some significant shifts in focus. It reenacts the disintegration of the middle-class family as well as the basic maladjustment between the individual and society. The father-son conflict recurs — a conflict between the former's wilful ignorance and the latter's need to know. The difference is in the treatment of social morality. As Scanlan observes, Willy Loman may be largely responsible for his own plight but cannot be accused of injuring the world outside his family (134). The play does not deal with social responsibility as such. The salesman also imbibes the wrong values of his society by accepting its false ethic of success, yet his error of judgement does not render him guilty. His lack of social awareness is of a different kind. Willy's is a story of personal failure in the land of success.

Salesman differs in form too. The Inside of His Head was the original title, and the image was in direct opposition to the method of All My Sons. As the author points out in his Introduction : "The Salesman image was from the beginning absorbed with the concept that nothing in life comes 'next' but that everything exists together and at the same time within us...." The form is that of "a confession" : the action suddenly

follows some connection to a remote past and then returns to the present and even projects the future. There is "no bringing together of hitherto unrelated things" because Willy Loman, in his desperation to justify his dreams, has destroyed the boundaries between "now" and "then" (23-24).

There has been a great deal of controversy over the play's theme. Some regarded it as a capitalist statement, others a Communist writing. Some admired the play for its attack on the contemporary system, others rejected it as a depressing spectacle. The most persistent debate is about its status as a tragedy. In fact, confusions are inevitable when a play is built up on a paradox. Death of a Salesman deals with the paradox of the American Dream. The success myth which destroyed Willy "cruelly held out a promise while denying the opportunity of fulfilment" (Koon, Introduction 9).

In Myth and Modern American Drama, Porter has neatly summed up the history the myth has in American culture (128-31). It came to the continent with the founding fathers in the seventeenth century and was popularized by Ben Franklin in the eighteenth century. He secularized the Protestant ethic which was designed for a middle-class people whose primary interest was in the economics of trade and production. The successful man became the idol of the public, and the virgin land offered immense possibilities of progress. The businessman living in

accordance with Franklin's worldly ethic continued to be a viable American hero until the collapse of 1929. From Franklin through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the myth -- with all the possible variations on it -- gained increasing popularity. Material success acquired the sanction of a religious creed and was taken to be the reward of virtue. Eisinger's account of the urban-business-success dream is no less instructive in this respect (165-66). The wheel came full circle with the novels of Horatio Alger who translated the myth into a popular literary formula, the rags-to-riches romance. In Alger the key to success is not genius but character : one who has the right personal qualities will have little difficulty in attaining one's goal.

Miller uses the model only to subvert it. Willy Loman's story begins at the nadir of his strength : he is past sixty years of age, and his exhaustion is apparent. The salesman returns from trips, often without making a single sale. When he hopes for a New York job and a salary raise, he is only fired by his boss. His whole life has been a lie, though he will hardly admit it. One who wanted to be the number-one-man in the business world ultimately rings up a zero. In the collapse of the salesman, Porter rightly observes, "Miller attempts to illustrate the collapse of the myth" (Myth 132).

There are many who make the most of the epitaph Charley spoke over Willy's grave : "Nobody dast blame this

man .... A salesman is got to dream .... It comes with the territory" (Salesman 221-22). This is the paradox of existence in modern times. The American Dream, "the largely unacknowledged screen ... of the perfectibility of man", is used by the modern American writers as "an ironical pole" of their stories (Miller, Conversations 361). People think that if they could live by it, there is a natural order in their favour. However, their stories are all about failure, of one kind or another.

From one point of view, Willy's society may be held responsible for the disintegration of him and his family. Most of the American critics think that he accepts an ideal shaped for him and pressed on him by the forces in his culture. Parker does not reduce the play to mere propaganda, but considers it an obvious "expression of left-wing attitudes to capitalism which have been common since the 1930's" (49). Willy had no chance against the brute economics of his time. He is a product-seller and a product-user, nothing more. The world where "the competition is maddening! " cannot tolerate the question "who am I?" (Salesman 135; Otten 98). The society in which he lives demands only efficiency. The inefficient have no right to exist. The play presents the basic problem of self-knowledge in a technological civilisation. It is difficult to name the product the man was selling. Miller says, Willy was selling "himself" (Introduction 28). Mander correctly views the salesman as a

social product, one whose personal values and family relationships have been conditioned by the social forces (145).

Unlike Joe, Willy sought love and safety not only within his own family but in the world outside. Ironically, nowhere could he find a satisfying role. It is as though he had

> an identity, a <u>being</u>, somewhere in the past which in the present has lost its completeness, its definitiveness, so that the central force making for pathos ... is the paradox which Time bequeaths to us all : we cannot go home again, and the world we live in is an alien place (Miller, "The Family in MD" 224).

The tape recorder scene in Act Two amply suggests that such an alienation is caused mainly by capitalism. Howard pays no heed to Willy's need and seems more interested in the machine than in the human being. The impersonal business world no longer has any room for personality.

Some critics have taken exception to this view. Nelson thinks that the scene is a blend of pathos and irony rather than indignation and indictment. Howard's values are seen to be almost similar to Willy's. Both have the same preoccupation with the family and the same worship of gadgetry. The beleaguered salesman "has not collided with a capitalistic despot, but, ironically, with a younger embodiment of his own traits" (<u>Arthur Miller</u> 117-18). Similarly, Welland maintains that the

wire recorder scene as an evidence for a Marxist interpretation of Salesman is not very impressive. By his obtuse mishandling of Howard Willy throws away all opportunities (Miller 40).

Neither view seems balanced."You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away — a man is not a piece of fruit ! " is the little man's helpless cry; he is trapped in the System which treats human beings as expendable commodities (Salesman 181). This does not imply that Miller proposed "a revolutionary change in American terminal society" (Mottram 32). Rather, his attitude towards the System is one of vague condemnation, Gens correctly observes ("The Silence of AM" 230).

Contrasted with the urban dream of business success is another dream scheme, the rural-agrarian dream of open space (Eisinger 166). One possible alternative to the degenerate success myth is this pastoral vision which seems to be the source of whatever is positive in Salesman. This dream has its root in the eighteenth century when the yeoman farmers got settled on their own land. According to A.E. Stone, Crèvecoeur's Letters and Sketches "present not simply the vision of an American Paradise but also the desperate struggle to hold on to that vision in the face of discord" (Introduction 18). Willy's dream of fulfilment simultaneously centres upon the countryside :

"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 this room ! " The same dream is suggested in terms of the stage direction : "A melody is heard, played upon a flute .... telling of grass and trees and the horizon" (Salesman 135, 130). It is a music which, by its own law of association, sends Willy back to the world of growing things outdoors. Conversely, man as a social being cannot resolve his dilemma by retreating from his real social situation. He has to fight to secure his own position in society, a struggle from which there seems no escape. "Fate" is thus supplanted by a monolithic society. One may view in this light Happy's last words : "He [Willy] fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him" (Salesman 222). He may be wrong in still valuing the illusive dream of success above everything else, but he sounds pragmatic in suggesting that "the battle must be fought on the enemy's grounds" (Lawrence 58).

From this premise Miller proceeds to defend his protagonist. Willy is "seeking for a kind of ecstasy in life which the machine civilization deprives people of". The Salesman is a victim who "didn't originate" things ("Morality and Modern Drama", 192). Moreover, he is not without values. Had he been unaware of his separation from values, he would have died contentedly while polishing his car on some Sunday afternoon.

Rather, he is often agonized by his awareness of being in a false position. And that precisely is the reason why he could stake "his very life on the ultimate assertion". That he has not Proctor's "intellectual fluency to verbalize his situation" is not the same thing as saying that he lacks awareness (Miller, Introduction 34-35). Furthermore, while Proctor's enemy is distinct, Willy's is both inside and surrounding him ("AM : Interview", Conversations 256)

Willy's is a world of the split personality. On Miller's own admission, the hero embodies in himself some of the most terrible conflicts of modern times. We are in "a transition stage between a mechanistic concept of man and an amalgam of both the rationalistic and ... the ... spiritualistic concept of him" (T E 196). Willy's creative instincts are at great odds with his measure of, or need for, material success. He would love to look up at the sky, build a porch with his own hands and plant seeds in the garden. He also looks for the human values of friendship and love. But the iron necessities of economics demand his complete dedication to the success ideology, which means — in other words — a sacrifice of individuality. In Willy's society, success determines how much a man is accepted by others.

Willy's schizophrenia and helplessness may be justified on such sociological grounds, yet his character is what finally

shapes his destiny. He appears "odd" in his pursuit, however "intense" it may be. Contrary to the views of the author, the protagonist fails to draw our admiration because of his miserable lack of awareness. As a matter of fact, Miller's own feelings towards the character are no less ambivalent than the critics'. While explaining the Salesman theme to Schumach, he said that the "motif" is the growth of "illusion" until it destroys the individual and leaves the children to whom he transmitted it incapable of dealing with "reality". In another interview, the author added that Willy lost Proctor's sense of "personal inviolability" and yielded "completely" to every pressure (Conversations 6, 21). He has neither any "grip" on the forces of his life nor any sense of "values" that will lead him to that kind of a grip (T. E. 209). These observations obviously run counter to Miller's defence of Willy Loman on other occasions. The protagonist is an other-directed man, one who wants to live up to the image expected of him by others.

With Charley living next door, the play strikes "a balance of the truth as it exists". The friends are of the same "class", the same "background" and the same "neighbourhood" (Miller, Introduction 37). Charley's aims, too, are not much different from Willy's. However, he can live without that frenzy which kills Willy in the end. Viewed in this perspective, the play passes from social causation to individual responsibility. Willy's failure as a man is "the

cause, rather than the effect, of his economic failure" (Kennedy 35). His delusions and other-directedness can be traced on various planes, but always in direct relation to his self-destructive drive for success.

As a salesman, he is totally unaware of the operations of the twentieth-century business ethic. His ideals are Ben and Singleman whose ways and means are of no more validity in the present generation. Ben, the shadowy figure who appears to the accompaniment of flute music, typifies the success possible in an "older, freer America" (Porter, Myth 134). He is the robber baron, the frontiersman, industrious but ruthless. He ripped a fortune from the wilderness. There are diamond mines in Africa, timberlands in Alaska, and mysterious appointments in Ketchikan — things which obsess him throughout. On his second visit to the Lomans, Ben urges Willy to leave the city and work for him in Alaska. The little man is tempted : "God, timberland ! Me and my boys in those grand outdoors ! " Ben is a projection of his wild, vaulting ambition. To him, he is success incarnate. Ben's secret is : "When I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. And by God I was rich." The secret is never explained; what impresses Willy is rather the mystery of success. Ben's way is : "Never fight fair with a stranger .... you'll never get out of the jungle that way". Even this ruthless method finds Willy's sanction. He is proud of having in his house "a couple of fearless characters." When

Charley retorts that the jail is full of such characters, Ben counters that the Stock Exchange is also (Salesman 157-58) The latter also epitomises, as Carson observes, one side of Willy's father — the inventive and the irresponsible side (51-52)

The pioneer virtues of courage and self-reliance are certainly admirable, but such attitudes may prove dangerous in modern society. The aggresiveness that is required for combating raw nature, Parker maintains, becomes immoral when turned against one's fellow beings (50). However, Willy does not finally accept Ben's method. As it proves ineffective with the closing down of the frontiers, the salesman decides to rely on "personality" :

> It's not what you do, Ben. It's who you know and the smile on your face ! It's contacts, men, contacts ! The whole wealth of Alaska passes over the lunch table at the Commodore Hotel, and that's the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being well-liked (Salesman 184).

It is the Dale Carnegie approach to success, a method which is equally on the wane in modern times. Hard labour is important, "Never leave a job till you'are finished", but personality is still more valuable. Paradoxically, the materialist places his absolute belief in that cult without testing it by any pragmatic standard. Willy cannot accept

Charley's interpretation of business realities, "The only thing you get in this world is what you can sell" (Salesman 141, 192). He would like to sell smiles and charms to win and influence people, but ironically ends up selling himself.

It is Dave Singleman who comes to Willy's mind as Ben's substitute, a salesman of the older generation who would "go up to his room ... put on his green velvet slippers... pick up his phone and call the buyers" and thus make his living even at the age of eighty-four (Salesman 186). In his early life the homebody was equally successful outdoors. His secret was his personality. Willy fails to understand that when product counts more than personality, the earlier mode naturally obsolesces. This is symbolically conveyed through his wearing slippers. He does not recognise that they look incongruous outdoors. Ironically enough, he gets fired by his boss as soon as he finishes the story of singleman. Left alone in the office, he perhaps dimly realises the ineffectuality of Singleman's ways to serve his own purpose. But his thoughts go back to Ben. Thus, in his dream of success, he constantly fluctuates between two sets of values which prove equally outmoded.

Willy's success ideology directed the education of his sons. They are bound to succeed because both of them are fearless and capable of creating personal interest. In the name of personality the father can ignore all the faults of his sons.

When Biff steals a football from the locker-room of his school, Willy feels rather proud : "Coach'll probably congratulate you on your initiative... that's because he likes you." He wants to imbue them with the spirit of Uncle Ben, the ruthless capitalist. At the same time, they should also possess Singleman's virtues. Willy confuses initiative with unscrupulousness, just as he mistakes personality for self-identity. As he thinks, Biff does not have to study hard like Bernard because he is loved by all. Charley's son may obtain higher marks at school, but his Biff is going to be "five times ahead" in the business world. Worth quoting is Willy's advice to his son who is about to see Oliver for a loan : "Don't look worried .... It's not what you say, it's how you say it — because personality always wins the day". Willy is left with forms emptied of contents; he is concerned with appearance rather than reality. Biff must not "undersell" himself, "No less than fifteen thousand dollars" (Salesman 144, 169). To Willy, personality is a means to an end, a commodity that can be exchanged for material gain. Hence the Loman boys may be said to have been destroyed by their father's perverse dream. Each turns out to be a failure in his chosen career.

On the psychological level, Willy's tragedy may be traced to further oddities in his own nature. Whenever he is confronted with his actual situation — for example, his inability to drive to Boston, the sons' obvious worthlessness,

his dwindling income — he escapes into a dreamworld. He either flees to a "glorious" past or conjures up a vision of wishfulfilment. The pattern recurs throughout the play. "Dad is never so happy as when he's looking forward to something" — Happy accurately describes Willy's mental make-up. Or, as Linda tells her husband, "you make mountains out of molehills". Nothing absolves Willy of his bad faith. He lies to his wife about the gross sale he has made. Once he admits to Ben, "Business is bad, it's murderous"; but this is immediately followed by a kind of defence mechanism, "But not for me, of course". He momentarily realizes that in the greatest country of this world Biff can get lost despite all his personal attractiveness. Instead of extending this moment of awareness he falls back upon "those days" when the boy used to simonize the red Chevy or when "three great universities" were "begging for him". Biff's present failure cannot erase the glory of his high-school days. Remarkably, Willy's reminiscences, too, sometimes bear the burden of painful experiences and overshadow his present. When the past is equally frustrating, he would take a flight into the imagined future and dream, for example, of owning a private business or having connections all over America : "I have friends. I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own". Significantly, he is often referred to as "kid", and with Charley the audience wonders, "when the hell

are you going to grow up?" (Salesman 197, 135, 159, 184, 145, 186). His friend has always tried to bring him out of the world of fantasy. But the salesman will die rather than give up his dreams.

Instead of accepting Charley's offer of a job, Willy looks forward to Biff's successful deal with Oliver. The meeting in the restaurant is another ironic reversal of his illusive hope. The appointment has proved an utter failure. Yet he is not ready to listen to "facts" and "aspects". He will not admit the inadequacy of his ways : "I am not a dime a dozen ! " — he will not accept his failure either. "I am Willy Loman!" — the concern for the name, which in Miller usually denotes a struggle for self-integrity, here lies divested of its inner significance (Salesman 199, 217). Willy's is a self-deluded cry for reputation in a false society. He has accepted a sordid dream which, to him, proves stronger than the reality.

As on the moral plane, he is again an active collaborator for his downfall. He takes "a short cut to success" by establishing an illicit relationship with a woman buyer in Boston (Martin 4). Biff's unhappy discovery of his father with the woman in a hotel causes a rift in their relationship. The affair may be a consequence of his economic failure or of his loneliness in an impersonal world. However, it shows Willy's

infidelity to his long-suffering wife and to his family as a whole. It perfectly coheres with "the false coinage embodied in his idea of success". It is "the wage of his sin" which ultimately "closes the circle for him and propels him to his death" (Miller, Introduction 34). There is no doubt about his love for his family. Hence it is his own betrayal of that love and loyalty that alienates him as much from the family as from the self. It is the one piece of his past that he least wishes to recall, "the one that he has most successfully repressed" (Welland, Miller 47). When he is forced to face it, he can no longer escape his own responsibility by blaming it on society. Almost like Eddie Carbone in A View from the Bridge (1955), he violates a code which he, after all, wanted to live by.

One may now proceed to examine whether Willy's death is preceded by an epiphany. Miller writes in his Introduction that the play grew from various images. One of them is

> The image of a suicide so mixed in motive as to be unfathomable and yet demanding statement. Revenge was in it and a power of love, a victory in that it would bequeath a fortune to the living and a flight from emptiness. With it an image of peace at the final curtain, the peace that is between wars, the peace leaving the issues above ground and visible yet (30).

His views are all open to criticism. "Revenge". Willy did not break the law of success, but rather died in total obedience to it. He dies happy in his illusion that he has found a solution

both for his son and for himself. "Power of love". Willy realizes that he has been loved and forgiven by his son : Biff sobs leaning on his shoulder. It is an affirmation of his fatherhood for which he was always prepared to die. Nevertheless, his perception of Biff's love ironically inflates his old belief in the myth of success : "That boy — that boy is going to be magnificent ! " For Willy, magnificence and success are convertible; one can be successful simply on the basis of being "well-liked." He, then, dies not merely for his son's financial security but for his dreams about his "magnificence". "Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I" — this shows him returning to the point where he began with all his wrong dreams (Salesman 218-19). Willy fails to interpret for himself the actual significance of Biff's emotional breakdown. His bad faith thus "seduces" him into his final deluded gesture that only "compounds the waste of his life (Schlueter and Flanagan 65).

From yet another point of view, Willy dies more for his own magnificence than for his son's. A total failure in life, he hoped to attain the height of admiration in death. He glorifies to himself the "proposition" of bequeathing his paid-up life insurance to posterity. Biff will "worship me for it", he tells Ben. At the same time, he imagines the prospect of a "massive" funeral : "that funeral will be

massive ! .... that boy will be thunder-struck ... because he never realized — I am known ! " (Salesman 219, 213). There is more self-pride in it than self-realization. He seems to have laid down his life largely for public esteem. Ironically, he failed to attain it even in death. Charley is the only person outside his family to attend the funeral. Self-immolation, which is made to affirm positive human values in The Crucible, here loses its point since it is motivated by an "emotional capital" tied up in the dreams of "magnificence" (Carson 56). Willy suffers most uncomprehendingly. That is his trouble, and the cause of his catastrophe.

"Victory". Willy is proud of his self-proposed transaction. Miller says that his final act shows that death, the ultimate negative, can be an assertion of "bravery" (Introduction 33). But Willy's last words and his confused movements before he speeds off — "Ben ! Ben ! where do I...? He makes a sudden movement of assault. Ben ! how do I ...?" — seem to confirm his final alienation rather than any victory in death (Salesman 219). "Peace". Whatever peace Willy attains by death is the peace of oblivion.

Matching the complexity and challenge of the question of Willy's ultimate insight and knowledge is the problem of his tragic stature" (Nelson, Arthur Miller 129). With the author some tender-minded critics think that Willy's moral

values may be deplorable but the integrity of his pursuit makes him heroic : "A man can't go out of the way he came in" (Salesman 212). However, such an integrity betrays a misconception of the self and the outside world. It is a spectacle of man's limitations rather than his possibilities. Willy's sense of self-dignity is equally questionable. His is the pathetic end of a man who, even at the crossroads of life and death, cannot decide for himself. He cannot even die until his decision of suicide is duly approved by Ben, one of his ideals. The sets of values he has always worshipped delude him till the end. He likens the twenty-thousand-dollar proposition to a diamond shining in the dark. This refers to the salesmen's futile effort to suit the robber baron's adventurous method to his twentieth-century purposes. He is a little man succumbing to environment and destroying his personal identity in the end.

Miller's pleadings, in his Introduction, for Willy's lack of awareness are, on the whole, unconvincing. There is some grain of truth in his argument that

> there is of necessity a severe limitation of self-awareness in any character, even the most knowing, which serves to define him as a character, and more, ...to complete the tragedy and, indeed, to make it at all possible.

Viewed in this light, Willy's unawareness may be taken as his tragic flaw. And the hero must have some flaw in his character.

On the other hand, tragedy is equally inconceivable without an epiphany or anagnorisis. The tragic hero must finally recognise the truth. Miller's protagonist could not even attain what he liberally calls "sufficient awareness" : "I think that the point is whether there is a sufficient awareness in the hero's career to make the audience supply the rest" (Introduction 35). Four years after the writing of Salesman the author perhaps realised his artistic fault : "My weakness

> is that I can create pathos at will. It is one of the easiest things to do. I feel that Willy Loman lacks sufficient insight into ... [his] situation, which would have made him a greater, more significant figure" ("AM Discusses The Crucible", Conversations 26).

It would have really made him a tragic hero despite his commonness. Willy's failure to evoke a true tragic response, however, should not diminish "his power as a dramatic character" (Schlueter and Flanagan 63).

At the Union Theological Seminary Reverend John Bachman said that Salesman is moral to the extent that it is "a negative witness" (qtd. in Gabb 190). To present definite positive answers is a difficult task for the twentieth-century writer. Modern man is uncertain of the right way of living. Yet a work of art must find space for the tentative values of life. Miller might not have attempted a social solution of Willy's problems, but his faith in some kind of order remains

untrammelled. He does not want us to share Willy's illusions.

There is even another positive gain in the play : Biff at least comes out with enhanced self-knowledge, "I know who I am" (Salesman 222). It is not pride, "rather an admission of limitation and weakness..." (Parker 55). And such an admission is the beginning of true wisdom. Fully aware of his Schizophrenia, he asks himself : "Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be?" (Salesman 217). Yet, what he will do with himself now is one of the questions left unanswered in the play. "The self-realization of the older son ... is not a weightier counterbalance of Willy's disaster", Miller also admits ("The Salesman Has a Birthday", TE 14).

Some critics have tried to reconcile the dramatic ambiguities of Salesman by classifying it as a "social tragedy". Nevertheless, the concept itself poses certain aesthetic problems. As Eric Bentley clarifies, a play cannot be both "tragic" and "social" because the two forms conflict in purpose (qtd. in Gordon 98). Social drama treats man as victim, while tragedy destroys the possibility of social drama by presenting him as hero. Yet, to consider whether Salesman is "solely" social or tragic is to split "a unified sensibility", Gordon correctly maintains (100). Miller strives to meet things in their head-on collision in order to create meaningful ambivalences in terms of character, idea and form. In the final analysis, Death of a

Salesman is a family drama with a strong social colouring. It also deals with the tragic problem of consciousness in modern times.

The Crucible : Private and Public Integrity

Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's An Enemy of the People (1950), which he did not include in his Collected Plays, is a departure from his dramatic canon. Neighbourliness has been a cardinal virtue in Miller, but in his Enemy the individual is under a moral compulsion to "resist the demands of society when these assault the integrity of the self" and its vision of the truth (Bigsby, Critical Introduction 189). In the paradox of this situation lay the dramatic potential of the next major play, The Crucible (1953), which similarly insists on the preservation of personal truth against mass hysteria. However, in Miller the affirmation of the self is always attended by a need for social commitment. His adaptation, therefore, transforms the original impulse, "the strongest man in the world is the man who stands alone," into "We're the strongest people in the world ... and the strongest must learn to be lonely" (qtd. in Bronson 66). His Stockman also becomes an enemy of the people for his personal concern for the objective truth. Yet he finally recognizes the need to transmute it into a social fact, a union of interests. This is how the author synthesizes individual and social consciousness, while Ibsen primarily stressed the former. Miller's

measure of private and public integrity, truth and lie, innocence and guilt undergoes severe revisions in the succeeding play. An Enemy of the People may be regarded as a prelude to The Crucible.

The Crucible is a new beginning, "the beginning of an attempt to embrace a wilder field of vision." Though not unrelated to the earlier plays, especially in distinguishing between "a man's raw deeds and his conception of himself", it seeks to create a higher degree of consciousness (Miller, "Brewed in The Crucible", TE 173-74). Fulfilling the conditions of the "self-aware drama", The Crucible moves "beyond the discovery and unveiling of the hero's guilt" to the affirmation of his individual potential. This is where Miller first realises that it is no more enough for him to present "a fate which exacts payment from the culpable man". Guilt now appears to him "as a betrayer, as possibly the most real of our illusions, but nevertheless a quality of mind capable of being overthrown" (Introduction 41). It may serve to paralyse all positive action, even urging a compliance with corruption. Hence is the need to discover one's complicity and then transform it into responsibility. While the earlier protagonists were all destroyed by their self-delusions, here the spectacle is that of a man struggling to put his self-knowledge into action. Society is still viewed to be hostile towards the individual (the heroic, in fact, done in by the system); but he now dies the death of a heroic liberator.

There has been much speculation as to what The Crucible is "about". Some regarded it as a political allegory, an anti-McCarthyite tract; others took it for a rendition of the cultural and historical backgrounds of American society. On his own admission, it was with "the contemporary situation at my back", particularly the mystery of the handing over of conscience, that Miller now looked into the Salem witch-hunt. He was deeply troubled by the fact that "a political, objective, knowledgeable campaign from the far Right was capable of creating not only a terror, but a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance" (Miller, Introduction 39-41). When the play opened in 1953, the term "witchhunt" became nearly synonymous in the public mind with the Congressional investigations which then claimed many innocent lives. The underlying reference is to the political paranoia which brought about both the Salem tragedy and the mass hysteria of McCarthyism. "The paranoid creates the reality which proves him right", Miller writes. He can rise to the leadership of a society "which is really insecure and at a loss to the causes of its spiritual debility" ("It Could Happen", TE 297). Paranoia is the sin of public terror, and nothing is as frightening as not knowing why one is frightened.

However clear the political trajectory seems, The Crucible should be examined for what it is in itself. As Miller says, before a play can be about something else, it has to be about itself. The

"inner theme" is "the realization that with conscience goes the person, the soul immortal, and the 'name'" (Introduction 47). The artist in Miller discovered a tragic process underlying such political manifestations. He attempts to make a universal statement by drawing on a historical event. Struck hard by "the breathing heroism" of certain of the Salem victims, he wants to celebrate "an almost frightening personal integrity" (Miller, "Broadway Postscript", Conversations 22)

Act I, often criticised for its slowness of exposition, is, for Miller, an "overture". Here he seeks to lay bare the motivation behind the witch-hunt in various terms — psychological, religious and socio-economic. The Salem tragedy develops from a "paradox", the author states. The people of the place found a theocracy, "a combine of state and religious power", to keep the community together. Unfortunately, there is no balance between the Puritan Code of repression and individual freedom. When the balance begins to turn towards greater freedom, the hunt breaks out as a perverse manifestation of the panic caused by "self-denial" and "hard-handed justice". The growing dissatisfaction experienced under the rigid codes of morality finds an outbreak in the sexual behaviour of the community, especially of the younger members of the sect. Part of the same fascination-revulsion syndrome, the dance (performed naked by some girls in the forest) marks a definite departure for the "crying up" business. In such a climate, sex, sin and the Devil are linked, and it is from "this unconscious conviction" that demonology

gains "both its attractive sensuality and its capacity to infuriate and frighten" (Crucible 228, 250-51).

The perverse sport of the girls would probably have ended without any fatal consequences if they had not suffered the shock of discovery. In a private meeting with Proctor, Abigail confesses that the incident in the woods was a prank. The scene, which leaves her alone with the other girls, attempts a contextual analysis of the hysteria. The maid's fancy to kill Proctor's wife by drinking a charm speaks of her erotic jealousy, while Mercy's dancing and Mary's watching indicate their sexual frustration and curiosity respectively. Betty has fallen sick because she was severely shocked to have been discovered by her father, although the exact nature of Ruth's malady is not made much clear. As Carson points out, "Miller is less interested in the ultimate cause of the girls' fits, however, than in the response those fits provoke among the townspeople" (68). Preoccupied with a suspicion of witchcraft, the adults of Salem probe into the situation. Desperate to ensure her self-security, Abigail attacks Tituba who feels impelled to "confess". Taking advantage of the bizarre situation, Putnam suggests the names of his enemies as the girls rise to a maniac chant that finally makes witch-hunting possible.

The witch-hunt, Miller states in the narrative part of the play, is also "a long overdue opportunity for everyone so

inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims." Conversely, in the name of accusation one could ventilate one's long--repressed desires and achieve a kind of psycho-sexual satisfaction.

On the sociological level, the acquisitive urge in the Puritan community is fanned by "long-held hatreds of neighbors" which can now be openly expressed and "Vengeance taken". Land-lust, so long confined to bickering over boundaries and deeds, can now be "elevated to the arena of morality". One cries witch against one's neighbour and feels "perfectly justified in the bargain".

Selfish motives of this sort are further fed by one's fear of losing power. The necessity of the Devil may be considered to be a "weapon" to effect men's surrender to a particular authority. The policy of the Church-state is equated with "moral right", and opposition to it with "diabolical malevolence" (Crucible 229,249). Quite naturally, the result is mass conformism. Miller echoes Sartre, the author of The Flies (1945), in treating the devil and witches as "a put-up job to safeguard the establishment..."(Heilman 144).

Against this background of guilt, sin and terror Miller builds up a drama of moral integrity. In The Crucible the characters are polarised as Good and Evil. On one side are Parris and Putnam, Danforth and Hawthorne -- people preoccupied either with the maintenance of authority or with the false

beliefs of a blind theocracy. At the other extreme, there is Rebecca Nurse who stands for all human decency and commonsense. Hale and Corey have their strengths as well as weaknesses, yet it is John Proctor who is the most deeply divided character in the play. This is how Miller introduces the protagonist : "He was the kind of man - powerful of body, even-tempered, and not easily led....But as we shall see, the steady manner he displays does not spring from an untroubled soul" (Crucible 239). Proctor, too, is a sinner : he has sinned as much against the moral code of the state as against his own vision of decency.

The radical side of the man is seen as early as in his conflicts with Parris and Putnam. The former is criticised for his arbitrary use of authority in sending for Reverend Hale, a specialist in demonology. Putnam is more severely attacked for his manipulation of the children's sickness to serve his selfish ends. Proctor's general concern for the name as private and public integrity is initially suggested by his repudiation of Putnam's supremacy : "We vote by name in this society, not by acreage". He has the guts to question the proceedings of the Salem court : "Is the accuser always holy now?" He ridicules the mission of the theocratic state, a bold attempt to save the community from an utter damnation (Crucible 245, 281).

However upright Proctor appears to be, his past bleak relationship with Abigail shows the fallible side of his nature.

She was a maid servant in his house and developed an illicit affair with him. Ultimately, Elizabeth, his wife, found them out and dismissed her. Proctor has recently come to regard himself as a kind of fraud, though his outward behaviour betrays no sense of guilt as yet. Unembarrassed by the girl's presence, he tells her that their relationship is over. He lives in bad faith by denying his own culpability and transferring all responsibility onto Abigail. It is she who is a "wicked whore".

The private scene between the man and his wife offers further proofs of his self-exculpating attitude. Elizabeth rightly senses that he would not have faltered to expose the accuser if it were not Abigail. As if to bypass his inner strife, Proctor charges his wife with lack of compassion and even tries to produce evidence of his marital integrity. To charge Abigail would be to stake his own name which, to him, does not yet mean much more than mere reputation. He is preoccupied only with the external conflicts of life. He cannot realise his authentic self until he tests his own innocence and faces the "magistrate" sitting in his own "heart" (Crucible 265).

His tendency to project his own faults on to others continues. After Elizabeth has been "mentioned somewhat" in the court, Proctor accuses Hale of "cowardice" ; the old man fears to look at Abigail's calculated sadism. Ironically, it

is Proctor's deliberate repression of his own sin which prolongs Hale's ignorance. In other words, it is his own paralysing fear of defamation which prompts him to hold back the secret that Abigail seeks to avenge his treachery to her. Almost like Joe Keller in All My Sons, Proctor, at this stage in his life, is fully aware of his guilt, but without knowing what to do about it. While chanting the Commandments before Hale, he forgets the one about adultery -- a significant mistake which betrays his guilt-ridden conscience.

With Elizabeth's arrest, Proctor starts moving towards a higher moral awareness : he cannot let his wife die for his own sin. With regard to Proctor's heroic defiance and his high idealism, one still cannot rule out the possibility that he might not have involved himself so acutelyin the Salem trials if his personal privacy were not threatened by his wife's arrest. Even after all these, he delays his confession, hoping that Mary's testimony will be sufficient to withdraw the case. She will testify that the girls fainted at will and that the "poppet" discovered in their house was actually made by her. Feeling the inadequacy of all external proofs, and as if walking through a great horror, Proctor at last gains the courage to acknowledge the truth : "we are only what we always were, but naked now" (Crucible 284). He also realises that only his expiation in public may save his wife, no matter whatever it may cost him.

The nature and intensity of Proctor's recognition foreshadows the "late" Miller. M.S.Pradhan observes that The Crucible is in a row with After the Fall (1964) and Incident at Vichy (1964) because in each of these plays the author turns from the exposition of guilt as largely "individual and psychological" to "the existence of universal evil and the need for instinctual and moral guilt in the face of the world's evil" (29). The searing search Proctor undertakes soon brings him to close terms with his sinning self : "Oh, Francis, I wish you had some evil in you that you might know me " Drowned in guilt and shame, he hides nothing from the court and seeks forgiveness : "God help me, I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweet". Miller's preoccupation with the name returns with all its force, but now it means much more than a crisis of identity : "I have made a bell of my honor ! I have rung the door of my good name — you will believe me, Mr. Danforth ! My wife is innocent ...." Proctor does not hesitate to annihilate his former self because he now feels the need to recreate it in the face of his new awareness.

Elizabeth is called in to testify. In a stunning reversal she lies to save her husband's name. The court accepts her "natural lie" as a proof of his deceit. Consequently, he is denounced as "the Devil's man". The hero responds, first with anger, but then with insight :

> I hear the boots of Lucifer, I see his filthy face ! And it is my face, and

> yours, Danforth ! .... God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together ! (Crucible 304-7, 310-11)

"This is the clearest evidence", as Carson observes, "that Proctor comes to see himself as partly responsible for the evil that he has tried to condemn"(72). We live in a world of guilt and sin, but the individual, with all his complicity with the Devil, must try to find some order. Otherwise, the human race will be doomed beyond recovery.

If the third act brings Proctor to a recognition of his culpability, the final act builds up a conflict between his sense of personal worthlessness and his need to preserve whatever integrity and goodness he still possesses. Insight into the dark forces of one's own nature may occasion despair and loss of self-respect. On the other hand, guilt when admitted may give rise to a redeeming action. These two opposite sides of human awareness which create the Leduc-Von conflict in Incident at Vichy (1964), meet in the character of John Proctor.

Agonized by his sin of adultery, the protagonist decides to make a false confession of witchery almost as a kind of penance. This obviously refers to his moral confusion. Proctor would be a "fraud" if he shared the martyrdom of the others because his soul is not as clean as theirs. But at the same time, it is hard for him "to give a lie to dogs". In a

tone of self-defeat he tells his wife : "My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing's spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before." Miller seems to be suggesting that the reason behind confessing to a crime one did not commit or even conceive, is the terror of another long-buried guilt. Proctor looks outside for confirmation : "What say you?", he asks his wife (Crucible 322-23). The tantalised search goes on, and he "confesses."

However, his guilt soon undergoes a transformation : he must not be used to incriminate others. Proctor signs, but retracts when he hears that his name will be nailed to the door of the Church. The lie, once authenticated by his signature, is enough to betray those who hang for their inviolable sense of self-integrity. The hero thus renews his quest on a higher level of social awareness. He cannot even condemn himself alone, his action inevitably affects the rest of his community. He recants by tearing the signed confession

> 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!
> (Crucible 327-28).

Proctor learns in the pressure of the crucible that ultimately there is no difference between private and public integrity. He joins Rebecca in martyrdom, but for a reason no longer false to his own "humanistic code of conduct" (Raphael 105).

At this point, The Crucible reminds one of the trial scene in Saint Joan. Yet Miller's play greatly differs from Shaw's in that while Joan's martyrdom follows from a complete submission to the Will of God, Proctor's issues more from a sense of injured pride, pride in his personal moral integrity. Though he mentions God at several stages of his ordeal ("God help me, I lusted...", "God in heaven... what is John Proctor?", "God knows how black my sins are !"), his final heroic defiance of a corrupt authority is more an act of the rebellious will. Rebecca may believe that "Another judgement waits us all ! ", but he feels neither troubled nor comforted at the prospect of divine justice (Crucible 305, 324, 327). He can easily be said to be the most religious, but religion to him, as it is to the author, is synonymous with humanism. Proctor is no saint, but rather an ordinary man who "stands at the end on the judgement of the only tribunal he acknowledges, his own conscience" (Carson 75-76). His action stems more from his self-choice and self-reliance. For him, God is absent from this world, if not dead. And hence every man has to be his own saviour.

Attention must be paid to the soul-name dichotomy as reflected in Proctor's agonised cry, "I have given you my soul; leave me my name ! " (Crucible 328). Etymologically, "soul" means an entity that is regarded as the immortal or spiritual part of the person and credited with the functions

of thinking and willing (Webster's New World Dictionary 1360). "Name", on the other hand, is generally an attribute of individuality, having more to do with a person's position. However, in The Crucible a man's "name" is his "soul immortal". Viewed in this light, there is little difference between "soul" and "name", though the speaker apparently distinguishes one from the other. Both refer to the same need for moral integrity. It would be wrong to presume that by "name" Proctor means his public self alone, his social reputation. For him, it goes far beyond; it is the sum of moral values embedded within an individual. Reputation thus becomes by extension "an image of human possibilities" (Curtis 257). He also finds it difficult to separate salvation from personal and social dignity. By his decisive act of defiance which costs him his life, Proctor both refines his name, which lies otherwise tainted by an earlier sin, and saves his soul that he temporarily surrendered to the will of the majority. His self-sacrifice mocks the theocrats' notion of salvation, which is : yield to the claims of (a fake) religion and get your soul "saved". Transcending all limitations by his power of will, he finally proves that a man's soul cannot be used as a negotiable instrument by the power-brokers.

In the shadow of the gallows the hero comes to realise that if he is not wholly good, neither is he entirely evil. "I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor", he triumphantly

declares. "Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it from such dogs" (Crucible 328). Proctor can discover his higher possibilities only after a close recognition of his imperfections. His sole virtue is his honesty with himself. His self-discovery helps him gain his death. If there is still some pride in him, that is what finally saves him. His conscious choice, which stems from the strengths of recognition, offers him "the peace of knowledge" as opposed to "the peace of oblivion" that the earlier protagonists sought by suicide. Joe or Willy could never confront their internal disorder, but Proctor examines the self with insight and thus achieves wisdom. If Willy's is a "pathetic tragedy", Proctor's is an "austere one" (Hogan 30). In this play, self-immolation is presented as an affirmation of individual morality.

The Crucible creates an oversimplified conflict between "the wholly guilty" and "the wholly innocent"; yet it is more than a "melodrama". The hero has not only "weaknesses", to counter Eric Bentley, but "faults" too. It is true that Proctor's innocence is "unreal" since the crime he has been accused of is not even a possibility (63-64). However, Miller could still make of it a point of guilt and responsibility. Proctor's adultery may not be regarded as his "flaw" in the classical sense of the term, but it is the consequences of this

sin which "eventually recoil on him and help propel his destruction." The position of the liberal martyr is thus complicated by a personal guilt. It is by self-analysis and the ensuing moral action that he ultimately retrieves his essential goodness. His final act of self-sacrifice cannot be called melodramatic because it results from a genuine spiritual illumination. If Proctor does not elicit our pity since he becomes his own critic, he certainly arouses a sense of exaltation; in other words, "our admiration, even our awe" (Nelson Arthur Miller 164, 173).

Nevertheless, the play relies on a simple view of human behaviour (Warshow, "Liberal Conscience" 114). Liberalism, which characterises Miller's theatre till the early Fifties, finds its deepest expression in The Crucible. He was, in fact, trying to "find a way, a form, a method of depicting people who do think" and who can win even in the face of a seeming defeat (Miller, "AM Discusses The Crucible", Conversations 28). If the play presents a steadfast refusal of complexity, it is a weakness the very "form" involves. Rajakrishnan thinks that Miller may stop short of crying for revolution while supporting the individual against the System, but the ultimate social implication of Proctor's heroic self-sacrifice is unambiguous (Ivory Tower 132). A society where the Proctors live shall be redeemed of all kinds of hysteria. Miller's radical belief in social and moral regeneration acquires an extra emphasis in

the Epilogue which tells us that after the episode the power of theocracy in Salem was broken. However, he has successfully combined polemics with aesthetics. Like Sartre's Flies, his play does not indulge in the extremities of melodrama. In the former, Orestes the protagonist gets rid of the Furies and undermines the theocracy. The Crucible strikes a nicer balance between the hero's physical defeat and his moral victory. And this tragic balance is what lends the play its artistic complexity.

Miller's reading of the Salem records develops his vision of evil. In Sons and Salesman evil was viewed as a "mistake"; in The Crucible it is "a fact in itself", a concomitant of human nature. On his own admission, he later perceives that "the problem of will" cannot be fruitfully dealt with unless "the existence of evil is taken into account" ("Morality and Modern Drama", 200). Some critics have taken exception to the unrelieved badness of the prosecution in the play. As, for example, Klem points out, The Crucible lacks the "terrifying impartiality" of greater drama. The author's leftist clichés are too apparent, although they have the "vehemence of good social protest" (125). Miller was charged, if not openly then by implication, with not giving the judge his due. But the playwright "pleads no mitigation" of the evil in Danforth or in the other judges he represents. Instead, he regrets that he did not make the judge evil enough. It may be noted that Danforth is shown to be perceptible as a human being at one point in the play : he is somewhat put off by Mary Warren's turnabout at the

height of the trials. Miller writes in his Introduction that he should have perfected his evil to its utmost, not only because there is "no such swerving" in the record but also because "there are people dedicated to evil in the world". His growing perception of the universal evil refers to a steady evolution of his life-vision. He becomes painfully aware that a love of evil, "not mistaking it for good", is possible in human beings who appear "agreeable and normal" (43-44). Welland rightly observes that as a general principle, this pronouncement could stimulate a very useful discussion, but in the content of the play it is much more open to question (Miller 60). For to make the judges more evil might be to make the play really melodramatic.

Miller raises The Crucible "in the melodramatic scale" and makes it more than "propaganda against socio-political wrongs". Though the human situation is viewed chiefly in terms of polarities, the play creates "something subtler than the black-and-white imagination..." (Heilman 147). It is a spectacle of man's free will rather than a morality play. Unawareness is no longer pleaded. The play seems to say : "one couldn't passively sit back and watch his world being destroyed under him, even if he did share the general guilt" (Miller, "The State of the Theatre", TE 229). This is no call to social action, but an insistence on self-choice and individual responsibility. The Crucible marks the beginning of Miller's struggle to prove the re-creating power of the self in the face of man's complicity with the Devil.

A Memory of Two Mondays : Fate and Free Will

A Memory of Two Mondays, a one-act play billed along with the original version of A View from the Bridge (1955), is often passed over as a minor work. Fully aware of its cold reception, the playwright wrote in his Introduction : "A Memory of Two Mondays was dismissed so thoroughly that in one of the reviews, and one of the most important, it was not even mentioned as having been played". However, Miller's own attitude towards the piece is entirely different : "Nothing in this book [Collected Plays] was written with greater love, and for myself I love nothing printed here better than this play".

It is a "pathetic comedy", playing the memory of the Great Depression. The play has a story but no plot —because the life it reflects appears "to strip people of alternatives and will beyond a close and tight periphery in which they may exercise a meagre choice". It is about an absence — the absence of freedom and choice. People are seen to be largely determined by the social atmosphere of the 1930's. The term "heroism" comes to be deconstructed and is made synonymous with "stoicism". On his own confession, Miller celebrates "the heroism of those who know, at least, how to endure" the absence of hope (Introduction 48-50). Memory is also about "mortality" in that Bert, the boy protagonist, cannot understand what point there can be, "beyond habit and necessity", for men to live an absolutely mechanical life. In other words, men live this way because "they must serve

an industrial apparatus which feeds them in body and leaves them to find sustenance for their souls as they may" (Miller, "On Social Plays", TR 64-65).

The world of Memory seems more deterministic than that of the earlier plays. People are condemned to spend their entire working lives in a dusty, shabby warehouse. Blumberg says, the play is Miller's "clearest dramatic statement" about work alienation as described by Marx, the alienation of the manual worker. It deals with "the necessity to thrust oneself constantly into a form of toil which is dull, routine, repetitive, uncreative and stultifying" (60, 63-64). "There's a good deal of monotony connected with the life, isn't it?" Kenneth despairs. (Memory 347). Larry, another worker who has been with the firm for years together, is struggling desperately for a $ 5 raise. Gus is very much a product of the warehouse atmosphere. Rajakrishnan rightly senses that his last long speech, which traces his twenty--two years with the firm in terms of the car models he has outlived, is a poignant comment on the daily drudgery of the warehouse life (Misty Tower 155). Tom is yet another figure who has ended up as an alcoholic after spending a long miserable life in there. The workers seek a momentary escape from the daily tedium through pointless conversations and drinks. Mixed with this is their fear of being fired by the boss —a fear that further alienates them as much from their work as from themselves.

When life offers no freedom of choice, self-knowledge

becomes an absurdity. Man's identity is defined by Necessity which paralyzes whatever potential the individual may have. Full of poetry and idealism in the beginning, Kenneth is left disillusioned in the end. His symbolic effort to bring a little light and beauty, "a bit of the sky", into the industrial scene finally proves absurd. The newly washed windows ironically serve to reveal more of the sordid human condition : a brothel opens up next door and the workers are delighted to his utmost disgust. Also significant is the boss's reaction : "Shouldn't have washed the windows, I guess" (Memory 369). It is Kenneth who is worst effected by the drabness of the warehouse. He is painfully aware of the threat it poses to self-fulfilment. Trapped in such an uncongenial situation, he fast loses his power to preserve both his individuality and his sensibility. As the play closes, he is seen drifting dangerously towards alcoholism.

That in such a world self-realisation is not possible is once again illustrated by Larry's career. His feeling of assurance, symbolically, reaches its height as he successfully encounters the challenge of finding an obsolete truck part. It seems to be a man's triumph over "the mechanised, deterministic jungle around him", which, as Nelson observes, is similar to Willy Farroughli's ecstatic victory over the pinball machine in Saroyan's The Time of Your Life ("Remembrance and Reflection" 155).

However, tracing the spare part becomes a mock-heroic quest, suggesting the impossibility of any inward search in such a work atmosphere.

Similarly, in the course of time Bert only learns how to adjust himself to the stark conditions of adulthood. The discovery of life's realities is a shock to the boy :

> Everyday I see the same people getting on
> And the same people getting off,
> And all that happens is that they get older.God !
> Sometimes it scares me; like all of us in the world
> Were riding back and forth across a great big room,
> From wall to wall and back again,
> And no end ever ! Just no end !
> (Memory 358).

It is this endlessness of the warehouse life — in other words, its senselessness — which, as he sees, exhausts the individual leaving him spiritually dead. According to Welland, Bert does nothing to further such action as there is; he is only exposed to experience in a way that is at once lifelike and artistically satisfying in a Chekovian manner (Miller 68). In the end, he has matured in his view of all his colleagues.

By virtue of being a Miller play, Memory does not altogether preclude human possibilities. As the author puts it in his Introduction, he now attempts to define for himself "the value of hope, why it must arise...." After all, "from this endless, timeless, will-less environment, a boy [Bert] emerges who will not accept its defeat or its mood as final, and literally takes

himself off on a quest for a higher gratification". This precisely is the reason why Miller cannot agree with those who see the play as "something utterly sad and hopeless as a comment on life" (Introduction 49).

He, therefore, no less wanted to create a protagonist who would be an embodiment of man's free will. Bert is working there to save money for his higher studies. He has just begun to find himself intellectually. Everyday he comes to work with a copy of The New York Times; he has also been reading War and Peace for an interminable duration.With his departure from the warehouse, the play ends on a note of hope : he may, after all, be able to keep up what the reformed Tommy repeatedly refers to as "will power"; he may succeed in realising his higher self.

The way Miller rounds off the character of Kenneth also strikes the same optimistic note. Though he has nearly turned into an alcoholic, the Irish young man still hopes to get back to the Civil Service. More significantly, the play ends with Kenneth marking a package and softly singing : "His father's sword he has girded on,/And his wild harp slung behind him" (Memory 376). The verse alludes as much to Bert's heroic march as to "the need for a little poetry in life" (Miller, Introduction 49).

The ending is still not without ambivalence. Critics argue that it is not so much the affirmation implied in Bert's escape which remains imprinted on the audience's memory, as it

is the deterministic environment and the despair of those souls who have to plod through it. Together, they are the protagonists of Memory, and through them the play speaks "sadly and humorously of change and inertia, hope and despair, life and death -- all the aspects of the supreme mystery that Bert is only beginning to comprehend" (Nelson, "Remembrance and Reflection" 152-53).

It is in this sense that Memory creates a tragicomic view of life. On the one hand, there seems no escape from the drudgery of the industrial world. On the other, we are made to feel that there is still "a lot ... to do with our fate..." (Miller, "Studs Terkel Talks with AM", (Conversations 309). It is a world which destroys personal identity : Bert knows that people will "forget my name, and mix me up/ With another boy who worked here once,/ And Went" (Memory 371). Yet he strives to find the meaning of life. At this point, Memory seems to be dealing with an existential ethic that is not to be found in the other plays of Miller's first period.

It presents no strong moral conflicts, something which has so far interested Miller. However, his longstanding concern with guilt and responsibility is not totally absent here, though expressed somewhat differently. Bert is no less in a dilemma, first between evasion and commitment and then between two kinds of moral commitment. He soliloquizes : "How is it me that gets out?/ I don't know half the poems Kenneth does,/Or a quarter of what

Larry knows about an engine" (Memory 370). This is the source of his guilt. He views his own chance of escape against the inescapable fate of his colleagues. Significantly, his moral dilemma is not as strong as his predecessors', because like them he has not violated any moral code as such.

On another level, Bert is in a conflict between two different sets of ideals — social and non-social. His departure, motivated by his passion for knowledge, lays bare a further region of his good self, the realization of which is recognised as a moral duty. On the other hand, the content of the ideal does not necessarily involve the good of others and may, therefore, refer to his self-regarding instinct. F.H. Bradley's exposition of this ethical dialectic is worth paraphrasing here. It is a moral duty for the artist or the inquirer to lead the life of one, and a moral offence when he fails to do so. Hence the perfecting of one's intellectual or artistic nature is an end in itself. Man is not man at all "unless social, but man is not much above the beasts unless more than social" (222-23). Viewed in this light, the ideal of the inquirer is moral past ordinary morality. In the final analysis, however, Miller's is a synthetic approach : the pursuit of the non-social ideal is not very far from the state of social virtue. Bert reaches a point where commitments collide. Although he finally decides in favour of self-gratification, he intensely feels for

A View from the Bridge : The Possessed

Like its predecessors, A View from the Bridge (1955) deals with personal identity against the backdrop of social relationships. Self-integrity is viewed as more important than mere survival : the hero lays down his life to secure his sense of self-dignity. The impingement of the private act upon the public life of the individual, the violation of social morality resulting in a personal catastrophe — the issues predominant in the earlier plays reappear in this drama. Moreover, Miller once again shows how informing and betrayal may cause the individual's isolation from his society. Despite its manifold affinities with his other social plays, A View from the Bridge is marked by a difference in treatment. While in the earlier plays man was viewed as struggling against a solid social or economic structure, the protagonist of View is more in conflict with himself. Now it is rather the self against the self. Scanlan correctly observes that in this play the social theme has been "drastically recast" (144). The world is a "home" here, but Eddie Carbone still does not belong. His society is not false; rather it is he who is not right. He is possessed by a primitive passion which he can neither understand nor control. In his Introduction to the revised version, Miller writes : "the basic feeling would be the desire to stop this man and tell him what he was really doing to his life" (TE 220). As Heilman points out, this describes a man endangered by "forces from

within rather than perils from without"(147). Evidently, the turn is from the societal to the private disaster.

As a matter of fact, Miller wanted A View from the Bridge to deal with the Greek concept of "the whole man, not either his subjective or his social life alone". Besides analysing the "social network of relationships", it attempts to delve into the very "nature of man" (Miller, "On Social Plays", TE 54, 61-62). In other words, society and passion go together to form the tragic motive. The play operates on these two levels of significance, although the psychological and social elements do not always coalesce well.

The psychological level of the play deals with the awesomeness of a passion which, "despite its contradicting the self-interest of the individual it inhabits, despite every kind of warning, despite even its destruction of the moral beliefs of the individual, proceeds to magnify its power over him until it destroys him" (Miller, Introduction 48). It is the nature of the obsession that it cannot be given up; it is like a force from another world. As Popkin perceives, at the centre of the play is a man who is "sick". Eddie resembles a Williamsian character in his morbid sexual jealousy, violent hostility to homosexuality, and possibly latent homosexuality (239). By making him an uneducated dock labourer, Miller strips his protagonist of psychological complexity. He took up this aspect when interviewed for The Observer :

> You can see how differently the play would have turned out if the central character had been, say, a professor instead of a dock laborer. The difference in psychology would be enormous .... His [Eddie's] life hems him in among his circumstances far more effectively than an educated man can be hemmed in (qtd. in Moftel 155-56).

Eddie is presented as an obsessed, impulsive man who acts without any moderation imposed by reason. Gerald Weales maintains that the interesting point about his psychology is not the passion that pushes him, but his refusal, or inability, to recognize it for what it is ("AM's Shifting Image" 135). Eddie is simply awed by its mystery.

Miller may not bother about Freud's influence on his work, but View is a treatment of the Unconscious. He examines the corrosive effect of sexual repression on his protagonist, suggesting that it gives rise to a psychic disorder in the person who refuses to acknowledge his dangerous urges and desires. Eddie's violent death relates to Freud's theory that, even with its restrictions upon sexual life, "civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration" (59). Centola has traced it well in his comparative study of A View from the Bridge and Inge's Come Back, Little Sheba. The critic further examines Eddie's "libido" in relation to his "bad faith" and thus blends Freud and Sartre ("Compromise as Bad Faith" 100-13). According to the French philosopher, one commits an act of bad

faith when one hides "a displeasing truth [from oneself] or presents "as truth a pleasing untruth" (Being and Nothingness 89). Eddie lives in bad faith by deluding himself into believing his lie that he is satisfied with his wife, Beatrice, and innocent of any illicit desire. He lacks the courage and the will to confront his internal disorder. It is because of his tendency to escape the dreadful reality that he cannot also acknowledge any responsibility for the conditions imprisoning him. Repression, together with self-deception, generates a mounting tension that erupts into betrayal and violence which, in turn, brings about his ruin.

At the very beginning Miller drops hints of Eddie's incestuous desire which is disrupting his family life. The longshoreman pretends that his love for his niece is merely the innocent affection of a guardian for his ward. But his passionate admiration of Catherine's physical beauty, his objection to her wearing high heels and walking "wavy", his disapproval of her behaviour with men in the neighbourhood — all these immediately indicate the strange nature of his love. His over-reaction to her prospective employment, consequent upon his fear that others might "chew her to pieces", does express his genuine concern about her welfare (View 367). But at the same time, it suggests a subterranean tension in his mind : he would project his own repressed desires onto every other male in his community. He is never aware of the malady he is suffering from.

The family crisis is precipitated by the arrival of Marco and Rodolpho, Beatrice's Italian cousins. Alfieri, the choric figure, rightly comments that Eddie was "as good a man as he had to be in a life that was hard and even", but one who "never expected to have a destiny" (View 390, 397). The host provides his guests with food and shelter, and promises every security. Tensions build up as Rodolpho and Catherine fall in love with each other. Blinded by his passion, Eddie comes to envy the fair-haired youth as his rival and soon develops an irrational hatred for him. He invents excuses for discrediting Rodolpho in front of Catherine. For example, the youth does not respect the girl and, moreover, wants to marry her simply for obtaining his American citizenship. Eddie has to lie against him because he is in constant fear of losing Catherine : "He's stealing [her] from me !" (View 410). He goes on weaving fantastic patterns which may temporarily sustain him but will ultimately betray him into death.

The antagonism between Eddie and Rodolpho reaches its height as Catherine decides to leave the house. Burning with desire, the uncle kisses her on the mouth and struggles to stop her from going away with her suitor. As Rodolpho flies at him, he pins his arms, laughing, and suddenly kisses him too. Weiland observes that the kiss signals his contempt for the stranger. It is a breaking-out, a point of no return. Here is a double view of the same sequence of events, reminiscent — as it were —

of the window-cleaning in A Memory of Two Mondays (Miller 79). Eddie's thirst for revenge is implicit in his warning against Rodolpho : "Watch your step, submarine. By rights they oughta throw you back in the water .... Just get outa here and don't lay another hand on her ..." (View 423). Evidently, his betrayal, though a breach of his own moral beliefs, does not come without some preparation.

There are some critics who view Eddie's suspicion of Rodolpho's homosexuality to be not as isolated, as bizarre and monstrous, as it seems. His suspicion is shared by the other longshoremen too. However, "under the written law" he has no remedy even if his accusation is true. More significantly, his desperation actually externalizes his intense passion for Catherine. He cannot stop her marriage to Rodolpho, unless the youth is denounced to the immigration authorities. The nature of Eddie's passion obviates "any necessity for self-examination which might expose" his underlying motive (Epstein 112).

As Miller observes, the autonomous viewpoints of the two women, Beatrice and Catherine, could be expressed more fully in the revised two-act version. From muted counterpoints to the march of Eddie's career they now developed into "involved forces pressing him forward or holding him back and eventually forming, in part, the nature of his disaster" (Introduction 51). The

implication is that Beatrice and Catherine are no less responsible for the tragedy that befalls him and his family. Miller drops hints early in the play that the man's psychological discomfiture is largely traceable to his sexual maladjustments with his wife. As Catherine says, Beatrice is far from being a kind woman. Her attitude towards her husband is more critical than sympathetic. However, this is a lopsided view pinning the blame down on Beatrice. On the contrary, there is every reason for her resentment towards Eddie. She, in fact, tries to bring him face to face with their actual problem. Her marital agony becomes too apparent in her cry "When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?" But the husband habitually evades the issue : he is not accountable to his wife for "What I feel like doin' in the bed and what I don't feel like doin'" (View 399, 426). Under the circumstances Beatrice has to accept compromise as the foundation of their marriage. Neither her active retaliation nor her passive acceptance is enough to absolve Eddie of his own psychological aberration.

Rather, it is Catherine who is more responsible for his catastrophe. Psychologically, it is highly improbable that the seventeen-year-old niece would not feel the unnatural love of her uncle. In fact, she appears both confused and confusing. On her own admission, she is afraid of him, but knows not why. She feels sad at his present discomfiture, but

does not acknowledge the need to probe into his malady. It seems that Catherine also lives in bad faith by ignoring what she knew and thus leads Eddie on. Again, while she demands to be knowing "a lot more than people think I know", she actually behaves like a baby before him. Beatrice justifiably chastizes her for not being prudent enough. Catherine should no longer walk around in her slip or sit on the edge of the bathtub watching him shave in his underwear. She senses "an imperious demand" in her aunt's voice. Even if she is totally unaware of Eddie's desire, her culpability lies in such unawareness itself. Towards the end of the play Beatrice wisely says : "Whatever happened we all done it, and don't you ever forget it, Catherine" (View 421, 406, 436). It is typical of Miller to define Responsibility in a broader communal perspective.

Nevertheless, Eddie's obsessed self needs no encouragement from outside. For good reasons he can be charged with wilful ignorance. Alfieri, the lawyer, anticipates his plan of betraying his rival and warns him accordingly. But Eddie strives to prove his innocence : "Oh, Jesus, no, I wouldn't do nothin' about that, I mean—" It not only reveals his interior dilemma but presents another instance of his self-deception. Confronted with the reality of his passion, he has recourse to self-exculpation. When Beatrice says that he does not want the girl to marry anybody, he is shocked : "I broke my back payin' her stenography lessons so she could

go out and meet a better class of people. Would I do that if I didn't want her to get married?" Here is yet another proof that he acts unaware of his real impulse. As she presses on him the truth that he can never have Catherine, the girl whom he has ever wanted, Eddie cries out in agony : "That's what you think of me —that I would have such a thought?" (View 409, 427, 438). He cannot bear the burden of truth and hence seeks escape in lies. His delusions continue and shape his destiny.

The theme of A View from the Bridge was an "unusual" one for Miller. Stung by Tynan's remark that his plays were growing colder and more intellectualised while Williams's blazed hotter and more sensuous, Miller had "deliberately challenged Williams on his own ground" by writing about psycho-sexual obsessions (Welland, Miller 73). In Salesman, and more prominently in The Crucible, certain sexuality is present among the protagonists' troubles. The difference is that while Willy's affair with the Woman is but a slice of his frustrating past and Proctor's infatuation with Abigail is over before the play begins, Eddie's problems are all too pervasive and very much alive throughout. His is a semiconscious and unconsummated desire that gives rise to violence. However, this atmosphere of morbid sexuality is counterbalanced by a social theme that is markedly un-Williams-like. Nelson maintains that Eddie's inner crisis does not exist in "a psychological vacuum but is irrevocably welded to his communal being" (Arthur

Miller 214). It is at this point that View shows certain affinities with the other plays of Miller's early period.

The social level of the play deals with a strict code of the Sicilian-American community in which Eddie lives and with his fatal violation of that code. The code, which is one of mutual loyalty, is somewhat akin to what Miller once described as the "Grand Design". He spells out the differences first between secular law and retributive justice, and then between two kinds of social morality. Law, as Alfieri explains, is a codification of what is "natural" and "has a right to happen" (View 424). But what Eddie demands of the law is simply a gratification of his personal vengeance. On the other hand, the social code — which proves him morally wrong for denouncing the immigrants — is viewed as more important than legal morality. Even this legal morality, in the present context, loses its inner significance because he informs not to fulfil the demands of the law as such, but again to serve his selfish end. In so doing, he infracts the social code against informers and suffers alienation. The situation in An Enemy of the People (Miller's adaptation) has been inverted here : while Stockmen regards social well-being as more important than personal interest, Eddie places the affirmation of self-hood before the community. Bigsby has argued it well in the second volume of his Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama (201).

What kills Eddie is "nothing visible or heard, but the built-in conscience of the community whose existence he has menaced by betraying it" (Miller, qtd. in Corrigan, Theatre 327). His death, despite all its pointlessness, thus tells of his final struggle to be at one with his society.

With his single act of betrayal the play acquires a new dimension. As the Immigration Officers arrive, the protagonist feels — perhaps for the first time — a real pang of conscience. His frantic attempt to save Marco and Rodolpho suggests his tragic effort to annul his past deed; the crime he has committed is alien to his own nature. The scene brings a shift in perspective, from his psychosexual obsession to his "adament loyalty to the communal code" (Nelson, Arthur Miller 218). Eddie's subsequent address to his neighbourhood best exemplifies it. Miller deals with this aspect in his Preface :

> The mind of Eddie Carbone is not comprehensible apart from its relation to his neighborhood, his fellow workers, his social situation. His self-esteem depends upon their estimate of him, and his value is created largely by his fidelity to the code of his culture.

What seemed to be "a mere aberration" now rises to "a fatal violation of an ancient law". By the presence of his neighbours alone the play and Eddie are made "more humanly understandable and moving" (TE 221).

Yet the man never seems to have comprehended the driving impulse behind his act of betrayal. Instead, he becomes obtusely obsessed with the question of personal honour : "I want my name ! " This is but another form of evasion. He is never willing to know why Marco is "wipin' the neighborhood with my name like a dirty rag" (View 437-38). He only knows that he must have "it" back as it ever was. Hence his is an integrity "sustained to his own destruction against ... the code of his society" (Welland, Miller 78). He could never locate the forces of disintegration which obviously lie in himself. The tension culminates in a deadly confrontation between Eddie and Marco, in which the former gets killed.

The social implications of his final desperation cannot be studied in isolation — that is to say, without a further reference to his psychic disorder. By Freudian standards as interpreted by Harold Bloom, Eddie's "wounded narcissism" becomes "physical aggression" because the loss of "self-esteem" is also a loss in the language of "Eros". His sado-masochism, that directly refers to his "failures in Eros", overliteralises his revenge and yields him to the "death-drive" (139-40). The public gesture he demands from Marco is little more than a mad rationalisation. Moreover, his death in the arms of his wife may suggest a personal reconciliation, but it does not eradicate his problem of social estrangement. Miller's

contention that his desire for Catherine finally becomes secondary to his social concern is logically incompatible with the nature and course of the action.

To Eddie, as to John Proctor in The Crucible, the name has a dual significance. It is the symbol of private and public integrity. And in the absence of the latter, Nelson rightly observes, the self becomes a "vacuum" (Arthur Miller 217). However, Eddie's last tragic cry for his "name" is markedly different from Proctor's in that the former lacks the latter's higher consciousness. A number of critics have drawn attention to the limitations of his personality. Gerald Weales, for example, writes : he "dies crying out for his name, but he is asking for a lie that will let him live or, failing that, for death" ("AM's shifting Image" 135). As Carson points out, while Proctor comes to see that his name is something only he can evaluate justly, Eddie believes that his name is "in the custody of his accusers" (88). Obviously, the longshoreman's concepts of personal and social dignity are equally wrong. His frenzied cry for his reputation reminds us of the following remark, made by a character in Incident at Vichy (1964) : "the less you exist the more important it is to make a clear impression" (181). As if to prove his social virtue and thereby to retrieve his social position, he gives a sentimental account of his kindness to and love for Marco and Rodolpho : "To do like that ? To a man ? Which I

put my roof over their head and my food in their mouth? Like in the Bible?" (View 438). Such an unqualified self-glorification blinds him to his moral lapses which ultimately loom larger than his essential humanity. Raymond Williams would find in Eddie the image of isolated contemporary man who, "wanting no more than to be himself, fails even in this ..." (Modern Tragedy 105).

Eddie's final gesture, which was intended to affirm his heroism, bespeaks a pattern of virtue more specious than genuine. It is his limited comprehension of the real situation rather than his spiritual illumination that drives the dying man to exclaim : "Then why — oh, B ! " The reaction is one of bewilderment and wonder, and mixed with it is the pain of mortal wounds. Here is a man awfully misled by his conscience and committed to a "perversely pure" concept of self (View 439).

Alfieri's final comment on the protagonist also creates such a dual impression. Eddie was "not purely good", but remained "himself purely". He finally "allowed himself to be wholly known" (View 439). The revision, Miller thinks, is an immense advance over the original in that one who earlier appeared to be "a rather awesome fact of existence", now seems to possess "the wondrous and humane 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" (Introduction 51). This precisely explains why Eddie could not "settle for half". However, it does not necessarily mean that he came to know himself "wholly". To realise the self one must ultimately acknowledge one's real nature and admit all earlier misconceptions. This is what he could never do. The tragic hero must possess the spirit of defiance. But defiance is tragic only when followed by a true recognition. Eddie's self-assertion, quite unlike Proctor's, shows a terrible desperation that brings about his pathetic end. His sense of guilt never comes up to the level of the conscious self. In his case, integrity — that tragic fidelity to the self — degenerates into a kind of blind obstinacy. Finally, he prefers death as an escape from the dreadful realities of his life.

Eddie's death reveals no "holy truth" (the phrase is again Alfieri's). He exhibits few of the qualities of the tragic protagonist as Miller himself had defined them in his essays (Carson 84). In what way do his actions examine "the scheme of things" which most of us accept "out of fear or insensitivity or ignorance"? In what way can they be regarded as a challenge of "the seemingly stable cosmos"? Or, how do they lead to the discovery of a "moral law"? (Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man", TE 4-5). Hence the "truth" may be "holy" only in the sense that the spectacle of Eddie's ruin suggests 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" (Corrigan, Theatre 327). Gascoigne might have gone too far in calling Eddie's magnificence "an animal magnificence", but Miller obviously made the mistake of rationalising his (Eddie's) action through Alfieri(181). As Charley sentimentalises Willy's failure in the "Requiem" of Salesman, the narrator in View assigns a heroic dignity to the protagonist's action which would otherwise appear still more futile and ignoble.

In A View from the Bridge Miller chose to turn from contemporary social problems to the wonder world of Greek drama. In his Introduction to the original version, he draws attention to the classical outlines of the story : "when I heard this tale first it seemed to me that .... it must be some re-enactment of a Greek myth which was ringing a long-buried bell in my own subconscious mind" (TE 67). The play was intended to dramatise a life cut off from the freedom of choice, the kind of determinism that moves through classical tragedies. Alfieri, the Choric figure, is introduced not only to admonish the protagonist but to spell out the tragic inevitability of his situation. He is the voice of reason and common sense, yet he feels helpless in the face of the impending disaster : "I knew where he was heading for .... And I ... was so powerless to stop it" (View 410). The feeling is that of the ultimate powerlessness of man against the inscrutable force called fate.

Interestingly, Miller has redefined the concept in psychological terms. In Eddie's tragic fall he sees for the first time "the presence of a quite different force" (Trowbridge 129). Fate is now identified with our primitive nature over which we have no control. View thus marks a turning point in his concept of tragedy.

Nevertheless, it is at odds with Miller's own moral vision. He has ever believed that man's will is as much a fact as his defeat, and the ideal drama must strike a balance between determinism and freedom. In other words, man is more than "a passive creation of environment and family-created psychological drives" (Introduction 53-55).

Viewed in this light, Eddie's absolute unwillingness to know what he is up to brings the play closer to the world of melodrama. As Heilman points out, his obtuseness, which is solely responsible for his self-ignorance, "begins to stir impatience rather than sympathy" (150). He cannot be exonerated on the ground that his action was not willed. For he becomes culpable by giving a forbidden passion the sanction of a moral imperative. The ultimate humanistic potential, which Miller has always looked for in man, here seems to have been subordinated to his atavistic nature. The play does not pass beyond pathos because the "pathetic", on his own admission, is man's refusal, or inability, to confront the truth (TE 188). Had Eddie

acknowledged the dark side of his nature before his death, that is, even after all errors, he might have attained a higher tragic stature.

This accounts for Miller's own ambivalence towards the character and "his failure to clarify what emotions the audience will feel" in the end (Epstein 116). In his Introduction to the Collected Plays, he observes that the revision was done to make it "finally possible to mourn this man" (52). But in another introduction to the same two-act version he writes : "Eddie is still not a man to weep over" (TE 222). His intention of combining pity with reverence does not find an adequate dramatic realization. Later aware of his aesthetic contradictions, he tactfully says that he wanted to leave the "action" intact so that the onlooker could interpret it "entirely for himself" and "accept or reject my reading of its significance" (Introduction 48). One wishes that the author had really done so instead of defending his protagonist both within and without the play.

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