Chapter III

THE CRUCIBLE & A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

"Self Awareness Vs Social Restraint"
THE CRUCIBLE (1953)

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

(Easter 1916 by W.B. Yeats)

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

When he is finally faced with the choice of death or confession, his guilt as an adulterer becomes confused with his innocence as a witch; one sin against society comes to look like another. The stage is set for yet another victim-hero; for a John Proctor who is willing to be what men say he is, but at the last minute, chooses to be his own man.
He cries out: "How may I live without my name?" (CR, P.328) and finding no answer, tears up the confession and goes to the gallows. A "man's name", becomes, for Miller, the symbol of ultimate dignity. Man's ultimate self resides in his uniqueness, his name.

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

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

THE CRUCIBLE exposes a shameful period in American history when fanaticism destroyed reason and witch hunts reduced man to a fearful animal. When THE CRUCIBLE opened on January 22, 1953, the term witch hunt was nearly synonymous in the public mind with the congressional
investigations then being conducted into allegedly subversive activities. "THE CRUCIBLE which pillories the ignorance that mass hysteria can forment was Miller's bold reply to the McCarthy 'investigation'.

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

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

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

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

in the breath and sweep which this concern newly acquires, with the kind of heightened consciousness which Miller brings to bear upon his analysis of human pretensions and awakenings in the wake of a major disaster in American civilization.
THE CRUCIBLE was Miller's first attempt at a historical document, with many characters. The story of THE CRUCIBLE involves the fate of a whole community caught in the tidal waves of some political paranoia.

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

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

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

By the autumn of 1952, these words had been given greater immediacy by the mounting fury of the latest species of Witch hunt being conducted by Senator Joseph Mccarthy. Here was an important subject ready to handle; for an able dramatist to exploit and Miller was the obvious man to tackle it.
His background of the Depression-endangered liberalism, his passionate belief in social responsibility, and his proven ability to handle themes of guilt, punishment, all qualified him for it.

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

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

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

Insecure authority violently enacting its neurosis against the man who says no to law and yes to his inner-directing conscience.
In Act I, we are presented with the personal feuds, economic rivalries and sexual motivations at work behind the Witch trials. Some of the interesting details dropped in the opening Act serve to illuminate the context of the irrational madness which suddenly erupted into the life of the Salem community; the quarrel between Putman and Proctor over Lumber, Reverend Parris's preoccupation with firewood and candle holders and Giles Corey's propensity for litigation. The acquisitive urge in the Puritan Community is shown to be as strong as the religious one and this, working in consideration with long standing personal hatreds, seems to have provided the force which propelled the orgy of hysteria. The real reason for John Proctor's resentment of Parris is the latter's grasping materialism, hiding behind the facade of his self-righteous piety. Some of the characters who stir up fears about the witchcraft are revealed from the beginning as suffering from deep-seated complexes. The Putnams, for instance. Putnam, who is not reconciled to the defeat of his religious faction in the tussle in the Church, and his wife who lost her seven babies during childbirth have reasons to be embittered.

Added to this is the lack of love and sexual repression which characterised the life of the Puritan Community in the seventeenth century. Dedicated to the life of self-restraint and self-denial, and chiefly preoccupied with the mystery of heavenly salvations, the Puritan Community followed a code of sexual ethics, which resulted in a great deal of hypocrisy. Thus, the girls who are reported to have performed naked witch dances in the forest in moonlight were indulging in the rebellious pleasure of breaking out of the restrictive forms of proper behaviour;
the erotic content of the dark rituals in the forest practised by Abigail and her young friends was lost upon the adult world which believed all their concocted lies. Abigail is motivated by sheer jealousy. Her desire to supplant Elizabeth as Proctor's wife proves to be her chief source of excitement in starting the "crying up" business.

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

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

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

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

We are presented with a bizarre sequence of events originating from a chance mischief played by a group of perverse children. Abigail's bullying tactics, her intimidation, forces her other friends and the Negro servant
Tituba to join her in her 'witch hunting game'. In a private conversation with John Proctor in Act One, Abigail admits that the whole business was a prank;

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

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

No where else in Miller's theatre is the grouping of characters into "good guys" and "bad guys" made so neatly possible as in THE CRUCIBLE. The spectators know that John Proctor, Giles Corey, Elizabeth Proctor and Rebecca Nurse stand for decency and commonsense, just as Parris, Hawthorne, Putman and Danforth represent the irrational beliefs of a bigoted theocracy. The Courts represent Evil which meets with the moral resistance of ordinary, innocent people who have only truth and honesty to aid them. These neat polarities emphasize the play's parable-like quality; a modern morality play where the characters are dramatized symbols of good and evil.
The action of the play spreads from spring to Autumn and needs the sense of accumulating time for its development. The theme of masculine honour is there at the outset in the Reverand Parris's fear for his good name and character in the community he needs to win; but his daughter appears to be under a witch's spell and the old man fears for his reputation and power if his house is claimed to be devil-haunted.

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

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

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

Proctor has 'sinned' with Abigail, to use the language of the play and it is an acknowledged sin of the flesh, punished by his wife's coldness. He is not a bad man but he "likes not the smell of authority" (C.R, P.246), and he has factual evidence that Abigail's accusations are fraudulent.
Proctor, with difficulty: I have no witness and cannot prove it except my word be taken. But I know the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft.

Hale, stopped, struck: Naught to do.....?
Proctor: Mr. Parris discovered them sporting in the wood. They were startled and took sick.
Hale: Who told you this?
Proctor, hesitates, then: Abigail Williams, Reverand.
(C.R, P.275).

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

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

Danforth to Proctor: What are you? You are combined with anti-Christ, are you not? I have seen your power; you will not deny it! What say you, Mister?......
Proctor, his mind wild, breathless: I say - I say, God is dead!.....A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face for them that quail to bring man out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your blackhearts that this be fraud- God dams our kind, especially, and we will burn, we will burn together.
(C.R, P.311)

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

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

Miller says:

I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter but one of state
administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so. (C.P, P.40).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As Miller himself says - "I had explored the subjective world in DEATH OF A SALESMAN and I wanted now to move closer to a conscious hero".(C.P,P.44). "No critic, as far as I know, has questioned John Proctor's status as a tragic hero!" wrote Edward Murray.
Proctor is Miller's first self-aware tragic protagonist in a play where Miller uses social forces to convey the sense of the tragic. At the beginning of the play, John Proctor is trying hard to overcome the guilt feelings he has on account of his marital infidelity to his wife Elizabeth. But unlike Joe Keller and Willy Loman who are constantly trying to evade the truth about themselves, Proctor comes to terms with his own character and chooses to die, consciously, with his self-respect and dignity restored. It is significant that Miller chose to dramatize the story of John Proctor, a plain farmer. Miller's invention of Proctor's earlier adultery with Abigail is not the outcome of a mercenary desire to add a spice of sensationalism to the play.

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

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

Proctor, trembling, his life collapsing about him: I have known her, Sir, I have known her.
Danforth: You..... you are a Lecher?
Francis, horrified: John, you cannot say such a
Proctor: Oh, Francis, I wish you had some evil in you that you might know me. A man will not cast away his good name, you surely know that.

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

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

(C.R, P.305).

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

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

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

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

Act III presents trials and denunciations in which, inspite of Proctor's clear proof of the girl's fraud, the Judges and accusers go too far and Hale awakens to his responsibility:
I have signed seventy two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not take a life without there be proof so immaculate nor slightest qualm of conscience may doubt. (C.R,P.297).

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

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

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

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

Proctor for a moment seems convinced of the efficacy of Hale's argument. He suddenly feels that he "cannot mount the gibbet like a saint" (C.R, P.322). He
signs a prepared confession in order to save his life. But as Danforth insists on making his confession in order to save his life, realizes that his own confession will be used as an instrument against others, he tears it up. Indignation compels him to salvage self-respect - "You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me" (C.R, P.327). Proctor, at this stage exhibits a compelling concern for his 'good name'- 'his identity' - which has been located by many critics as one of the running themes which underlie the fate of the protagonists in Miller's plays. Thus, in the end, Proctor makes a proclamation for total integrity;

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

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

THE CRUCIBLE's concern with the individual's identity 'his name' finds further emphasis in Miller's next play, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.
A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1957):

The wrong is mixed in tragic life, God wot no Villian need be ! passions spin the plot; we are betrayed by what is false within.
(Modern Love, Sonnet NO. 43 By G. Meriedith)

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

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

Therefore, many decisive alterations.....began to flow into the conception of the play. Perhaps the two most important were an altered attitude towards Eddie Carbone, the hero and towards the two women in his life. I had originally conceived Eddie as a phenomenon, a rather awesome fact of existence, and I had kept a certain distance from involvement in his self-justifications.
Consequently, he had appeared as kind of biological sport and to a degree, a repelling figure not quite admissible into the human family. In revising the play it became possible to accept, to make clear in the original version, which was that, however one might dislike this man who does all sorts of frightful things, he possesses or exemplifies the wonderous and human fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself, for his conception, however misguided of right, dignity and justice. (C.P, P.51).

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

The memory of McCarthyism must have been still fresh, and Miller may have in mind "the rat who broke the law of solidarity and conscience and betrayed their friends to the congressional committee. Eddie's death might be interpreted as the writer's verdict on those who testified."
Pursuing the line of social criticism in *A View from the Bridge*, we may arrive at the fact that the play deals, at least on the surface level, with the problem of illegal immigration into America. The Immigration Bureau is shown to be callously indifferent to the hopes and fears of the longshoremen; the cruelty of the immigration service is balanced against the simple trust and mutual bondage which permeate the life of the Brooklyn neighborhood. As in *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *The Crucible*, Miller has carefully presented a picture of 'society' which stands in the background, of the hero's trials and choices. It is this 'society' which finally ostracizes the informer who has violated an unwritten code of honor out of feelings of private jealousy. How strong the code of honor is in society is emphasized by Eddie's reference to Vinny.

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


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

Eddie: Tell her about Vinny.

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

Catherine: The kid snitched?

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

(*V.B, P.388-389)*.
Thus, the fatal violation of an ancient law is exemplified in the story of Vinnie. The connection between a \textit{VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE} and the earlier plays goes further. At the centre of this play is a character who shows a desperate concern for his personal identity, for his 'name'. The theme in \textit{A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE} certainly carries its echoes back into Miller's early dramas where the protagonists struggled for preserving their good name even at the cost of their lives. Eddie Carbone's cry during his climatic encounter with Marco reveals the insistent nature of one of the main moral concerns which inform almost all the social plays of Miller:

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

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

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

But the interesting thing about Eddie, is not the passion that pushes him but his refusal to recognize it for what it is. He has to get rid of Rudolpho because the
presence of the boy is forcing him to realize the truth of his self; his incestuous love for his niece and his homosexual attraction to Rudolpho himself. Thus, he dies crying for his 'name', but he is asking for a lie that will let him live, or failing that, for death. Eddie is like Joe Keller and Willy Loman in that he accepts the rules of his society but he dies because he violates them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

What adds to the intense emotionality of the sexual theme in the play is the fact that Eddie is the most inarticulate character among Miller's protagonists. He is an uneducated dock labourer who is unable to comprehend the nature of the unease he suffers from, who is simply awed by
the mystery of his unacknowledged incestuous passion for his niece. Miller's presentation of Eddie's inarticulate life is brilliantly written as his terrifying bewilderment increases. Alfieri tries to explain to him what is happening but Eddie is obsessed and has no notion of the complexity of love and social understanding. When Eddie gets drunk and kisses Catherine he responds to Rudolpho's challenge by pinning his arms and kissing him as well. The grossness of the act carries with it a suggestion of Eddie's obsession with Catherine and his homosexual attraction for Rudolpho. This is emphasised by the stage direction which follow the violent sequence - "They are like animals that have torn at one another and broken up without a decision". (V.B, P.423).

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

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

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

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

But it is too late for such rationality to change an uneducated, passionate man like Eddie. He betrays Marco and Rudolpho to the law's representatives, in order to be
rid of the threat to his masculinity; and immediately Sicilian law takes over, condemning his betrayal of honour. Eddie stands alone as a man who has lost his respect. In betraying the brothers, he betrays himself and his cry "I want my respect" is futile, as his appalled wife knows and accepts.

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

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

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

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

Unlike the ending of _ALL MY SONS_ with its moral tag that we are all one family and that selfishness which is prepared to destroy others leads to self-destruction, and unlike the ending of _DEATH OF A SALESMAN_ with Charley's concluding remarks blaming society (Nobody dost blame this man) the conclusion of _A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE_, spoken by Alfieri emphasizes the tragedy potent in man himself.
Most of the time now we settle for half and I like it better. But the truth is holy and even as I know how wrong he was and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory, not purely good, but himself purely, for he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than any of my sensible clients. And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be! And so I mourn him - I admit it with a certain alarm. (V.B, P. 439).

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

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

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

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

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2. Welland, P. 85.


5. Rajakrishnan, P. 114,115.

6. Ibid., P. 115.


8. Welland, P. 75.


12. Rajakrishnan, P. 119.


15. Rajakrishnan, P. 123.


17. Raymond Williams, "Realism and the Contemporary Novel" Partisan Review, XXUL (Spring, 1959), P. 206.


19. Ibid., P. 89.


25. Ibid., P. 145.


