ABSTRACT

The dramatic world of Arthur Miller is rooted in the contemporary American cultural milieu and simultaneously emerges from this subsoil to assert its enduring and abiding individuality. The present study is an exploratory probe. The empathy generated by Miller's protagonists inspire a variety of interpretations. Critics have successfully explored psychological, sociological, biographical and mythical overtones in his plays. Special attention has been paid to the technical aspect of some of the major plays like Death of a Salesman and After the Fall. However, like Shaw, Miller substantiated his works with interviews, prefaces and introductions. Consequently, analysis of his plays should not ignore the playwright's own explanations. The purpose of the present study extends beyond what has been already stated about Miller, primarily concentrating upon his delineation of a tangible human image, establishing the humanness of his creations.

Miller's protagonists like their counterparts from the world of writers like O'Neill, Crane, and O'Casey, launch themselves on the quest for identity, awareness and self knowledge. Condemned to a preordained predeterministic existence, surrounded by unsympathetic unyielding currents.
of materialistic, success-oriented, society the individual experiences a feeling of being 'hedged' and 'caged'. It is enhanced when there is a corresponding reciprocation from the dark forces within his person. The confrontation attains tragic dimensions, when it is transformed from the puny struggle of an individual, into mortal combat between destiny, and the forces of affirmation that are a necessary adjunct to the experience of tragedy and suffering. Mistakenly, the individual takes refuge in a 'choice' which becomes his death knell. Principles, integrity, self respect, liberty have to be compromised. However, the resultant perception becomes his reward. He may have lived a life condemned to ignorance, dilemmas and biological trapping but he is ultimately redeemed. Suffering and death are his manner and means of expiation. After having gone through chastening by external and internal forces the final image grows in proportions to archetypal heights. The analysis of the plays traces Miller's concept of that human image of positivity and affirmation which emerges from the individual's battle for existence.

The plays selected for analysis and their thematic relevance provide a concentration of experiences in which the protagonist is viewed interacting in a singularly human fashion within the family. Three of them deal with the father, mother and sons syndrome. The family thus becomes an
extended metaphor, an arena for the individual to discover himself. The limited, miniscule canvas concentrates responses, intensifies emotions, highlighting each aspect of the character's being and psyche. It supplies the background, the prop, and anchor to support him. The most prominent among those excluded from this study are *After the Fall*, *Incident at Vichy* and *The Misfits* primarily because of their deeply psychological, autobiographical, and technical nature. The last mentioned was written as a script for a film. The selection of the plays for analysis has been guided by the express purpose of examining and exploring the human image.

The study comprises eight chapters. Chapter I introduces the reader to the existing available scholarship on Miller. It includes the formative influences on the playwright, and the significant biographical details which served as recurrent and abiding corpus of his plays. The introduction also summarises some of the basic tenets of Miller's own theory of playwriting. His concept of tragedy and common-man hero, are deliberate efforts to break away from the established norms of the genre of tragedy. The correspondence between man and society, individual and family, are some of his basic preoccupations. The six chapters that
follow contain detailed analysis of some of Miller's major plays. Chapter II consisting of *All My Sons* deals with the subject of guilt, choice, and personal responsibility. Employing war as a metaphor, the playwright adopts the Ibsenesque technique to explore the inner recesses of an individual's mind. It is rooted in the ethos of American milieu. The canvas is small. For the first time Miller formally introduces his dramatic family of Father, Mother, and Sons to the audience. The members of this family appear in succeeding plays under different names. The struggle of the individual attains archetypal dimensions, because of its intensity, and universality, where a higher perception purges the human psyche.

Chapter III probes into the psyche of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*. In this play Miller lifts the success cult and the salesman myth, from the contemporary cultural milieu using them as external embellishments. He continues with the family syndrome of the previous play. Yet again, the protagonist is depicted as bearing the brunt of the consequences, of a past act. The technique, which is a combination of realism, symbolism and expressionism enhances, the impact of the total image of the human being. The disintegration of the human personality, its decision to resort to extreme measures, and the resultant reward by way of affirmation, hope and joy, reinforce the impression
created by the previous play.

The Crucible which forms the body of the next chapter, again takes recourse to the volatile contemporary issue of McCarthy hysteria, which had rocked America. It was substantiated with information from the Salem Trials. Placing his protagonist amidst these turbulent issues, the playwright sought to gauge his degree of humanness dealing with the significance of integrity, self-respect and identity, in an individual's life. He is confronted with moral dilemmas, and compelled into situations demanding choice. Chapter V deals with the relatively unnoticd play, A Memory of Two Mondays. By this time Miller had started to feel the need for experimentation. Hence he dispenses with the single protagonist. Instead he presents a group of people involved in a similar routine existence. They are a tired, defeated lot and have stopped hoping for a better Monday. However, the playwright does not lose his hold on the central thematic fabric of individual aspirations, and the resultant perception after a lifetime of hopeless struggle. A Memory reinforces the human image of positivity. A View from the Bridge repeats the subject of the tortured, tormented human psyche and the need for personal dignity, respect and identity. All My Sons had exposed guilt, and culpability, Death of a Salesman and The Crucible employed
Adultery and A View from the Bridge depicts betrayal and its consequences. In each instance, Miller highlights some weakness in his protagonist. This enables him to successfully measure all of them against his standards. Chapter VII analyses The Price in which Miller reverts to his favourite subject of crisis within the family. The sons of his two earliest plays grow up to become the main characters of The Price. Both are searching for their moorings. The auction of the old furniture serves as the medium through which the playwright allows his characters to interact and discover their selves.

Essentially all of Miller's characters are human. Therein lies their appeal and the key to Miller's universality. Characters from Joe Keller to Quentin and even lesser mortals like Tom Kelly and Marco have their own circle of correspondence and invite audience empathy. The final chapter sums up the cross currents of ideas of the preceding chapters, and coalesces them into the single emergent archetypal image resembling any Sophoclean hero. The study finally asserts that though Miller, on the surface, seems topical and temporal, his concern throughout his career has been essentially human. The image of man that emerges from his plays is tragic but profoundly affirmative.