CHAPTER V

A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS

Miller’s three major plays, *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible* explored the possibilities, psychic and external realities which contributed to the depiction of a credible human image by the dramatist. Each play commenced from where the preceding effort had concluded. Commitment, responsibility, choice, awareness, compromise, search for identity in a soulless universe and the worth of the individual’s name, stemming from the central *leitmotif* of the individual’s guilt, provided to Miller ample opportunity to make an in-depth study of man. The emergent human image which already consisted of follies, weaknesses, strengths, aspirations, through exposure to emotional and psychological traumas, attained multi-faceted, multi-dimensional proportions. The final assertion, however, was through affirmation. The three plays form a sort of trilogy in which Miller maintained the same tension expanding his canvas, experimenting with new techniques, coalescing them with the sole objective of lending maturity and plausibility to his vision of man. All the three plays followed the Greek pattern of nemesis in which an action of the past becomes the cause for subsequent soul searching in the individual.

Miller’s fourth play *A Memory of Two Mondays* appeared in 1955 as a companion piece to *A View from the
Bridge. It is a deviation from the guilt syndrome previously explored, and ventures to present a view of the human image from a novel and original angle. Written as a one-act play, A Memory, despite Miller's assertion that it was his favourite effort, has not elicited much critical or theatrical enthusiasm. Miller's own observation in this regard is apt to recall:

Memory is a plotless and leisurely play, an exploration of a mood, the mood of the thirties and the pathos of people forever locked into the working day...in fact, it was a reaching toward some kind of bedrock reality at a time, in 1954, when it seemed to me that the very notion of human relatedness had come apart.

The McCarthian doctrine of equivocation and its attack on the fortress of brotherhood, sympathy, fellow-feeling and humanity had shaken human kind to the very core of their beings. Trust as an essential ingredient in human relationship had become subtly replaced by doubt, suspicion and mistrust. The Crucible is a vivid depiction of this onslaught on relatedness. But just as the conclusion of all Miller's plays uptill now has asserted and reaffirmed faith in the indestructible spirit of the human being, the format of equivocation of The Crucible is subtly followed by a

smaller more compact and urgent declaration of human solidarity, and a sharing on common fate in *A Memory of Two Mondays*. Miller's assertion is relevant to quote:

> It was McCarthy's time, when even the most remote conception of human solidarity was either under terrific attack or forgotten altogether. *A Memory of Two Mondays*, however lyrical and even nostalgic, was the evocation of a countervailing idea, the idea, quite simply of "other people," of sympathy for others, and finally of what I believed must come again lest we lose our humanity - a sense of sharing a common fate even as one escaped from it.  

With this overt purpose of reassembling the disoriented strands of human brotherhood, Miller begins with the choice of a class or a group of people, whom he closely knits together in one professional family, bestowing on them a group identity, and later, diffusing the group into separate individual and identifiable human entities. In both *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* Miller has displayed a predilection towards the world of business and commerce. This protracted preoccupation supplied to him the group he desired to depict in the play under consideration.

The soulless commercial world Miller introduced to his readers in his two major plays becomes fully realised in *A Memory* in the form of moving pictures or stills. Business

and commerce are two significant motifs serving to depict the external reality, which is in no degree partial to the plight of the individual. However, this cold, unemotional world only submits to the superior intelligence of the successful, destroying, in its unyielding, unrelenting march, those who lack the strength to resist and triumph over it, Joe Keller lucidly describes it in *All My Sons*:

> I'm in business, a man is in business,...you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell's it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes.

The anthropomorphic undefined 'they' stand for the forces of the trade world against which the individual fights, and the twentieth century with its industrial progress and materialism, has made it imperative for the human being to be in some way connected to this automatic soulless force. A Willy Loman has to submit to its inordinate demands.

The play begins in an auto-parts warehouse situated at the back of a large loft in the industrial section of New York. The front is stuffed with office papers and gadgetry- telephone, switchboards, counters and records. The two basic structures to which the playwright draws our

attention are the long packing table to which nearly all the
workers turn, and the tall factory type hard dust-encrusted
windows that reach from floor to ceiling. There is a general
air of unkempt untidiness as if the place is rarely cleaned,
thus becoming unmanageably chaotic. The exact nature of the
jobs in progress is purely mechanical and people walk in and
out of doors with monotonous precision, taking orders,
packing, affixing postage stamps, addressing them while
leaning on the desk thus using it generally as a prop, a
support to recline, eat and hide things. Miller has
thoughtfully explained the real significance of this corner,
which despite the automatic machine-like regularity of its
use, also serves as a home base. It is a romantic little
world for the workers and becomes a substitute home for
them, as they gather around it in preparation to tackle
their daily routine chores.

The people frequenting the warehouse are thus
imparted a rounded profoundness, of being at the same time
cogs in the impervious environment and also a collective
identity of brotherhood and solidarity, The vision from the
former angle is of a monotonous, will-less, helpless
existence, where each individual is too tired and exhausted
to put up any resistance to breach of dignity and self-
respect. It conforms to the commercialised routine pattern
in which emotional involvement is the minimum. The epitome
of this cult is Eagle whose appearance every Monday is much awaited, but his activity is restricted to trips to the toilet. From the latter angle, the vision broadens to embrace feelings, empathy, sharing of burdens and tensions, jokes, erecting of a solid unshakeable exterior to protect a helpless colleague from dismissal-all of which can be summed up under the home, hearth and family concept to which they return every day and week. The warehouse becomes a symbol of two contrary attitudes for its workers.

The action is initiated on a hot Monday morning with a group of workers, the majority of whom are either forty years or above. Only Jerry, Willy and Patricia can be termed young. The others, namely, Gus, Jim, Tom, Raymond, Larry and Agnes are way past youth, ambitions and aspirations. They are a fatigued, jaded, drained lot who have spent a lifetime combating meaningless, repetitious chores. So involved are they in their daily pursuance that their very identities have become merely extensions of the schedules followed. Once in a while this cult of consistent behaviour is broken either by the admission of a foreigner in terms of attitude to life, or by their own rebellion against the humdrum existence, in asserting their rights to be human. Hence the opening sentence is an inquiry echoed a number of times by various people: "Tom Kelly get in yet."^4

For a long time the identity of Tom Kelly remains a mystery, leading to doubts regarding his very being. However, through relentless, remorseless queries he is revealed as a fellow colleague whose absence was a source of consternation to the entire clique. The Tom Kelly and Gus episodes are some of the most revealing scenes that diffuse their group identity into separate, independent, individualistic people and also provide an insight into the humanness of this assembly. In their midst enters a very young boy, fresh, hopeful, desirous of attaining something, aspiring for more, pursuing knowledge with an objective to achieve higher things in life. Bert is as different from them as chalk from cheese. He has joined the warehouse with the sole aim of saving money to go to university, and is successful in putting aside the bulk of his earnings because his mother is supporting him with help and encouragement. His interest in knowledge prompts him to read War and Peace because it is literature. As he does not get sufficient time, Bert has fallen into the habit of reading it on the subway to and from work. Raymond Ryan who apparently has no appreciation for this bit of information can merely follow it with a diktat to work:

Be sure to open those three crates of axles that came in Saturday, will you?
and,
Well, sweep up around the elevator, will you?  

5. Ibid., p. 334.
But not all of them are unappreciative and lacking understanding. For instance, Agnes is heard advising thus:

Agnes: You ought to meet my nephew sometime, Bert...Really, you’d like him. He’s very serious.

Bert: How old is he now?

Agnes: He’s only thirteen, but he reads the New York Times too.

Bert: Yeah?

Agnes: You still reading that book?

Bert: Well I only get time on the subway, Agnes_

Agnes: Don’t let any of them kid you, Bert. You go ahead. You read the New York Times and all that...⁶

Bert’s role and appearances are rather limited because he acts as a touchstone to the others. The action of the play is further punctuated by the entry of Frank the truck driver and Eagle who is viewed with awe on account of his status in the warehouse. He belongs to the higher echelons. Frank is typically a representative character, belonging to the class of daily wagers who live life by the day, letting the future take care of itself. His sole preoccupation is to know his destination in advance so that he adjusts his schedule to suit his convenience. This entails being entertained by a lady at every stop.

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6. Ibid., p.335.
Slowly and methodically Tom Kelly’s image loses some of its attendant mystery, and he is revealed as a drink sodden alcoholic, who has been often caught in a sorry plight by his superiors, and is living under constant threat of dismissal. The persistent inquiry of his whereabouts stems from the worry and desire to protect him from any dire eventuality. The other members of the group slowly move in the kaleidoscope, and the effect created is a montage with stills from the life patterns of each member of the cluster.

When Tom Kelly finally appears, work comes to a halt. Gus rises, Bert enters the room and stands still, Ray and Larry watch and Kenneth stops wrapping. The total movement becomes one of suspended animation, imparting an immobility of arrested attention and a rigidity of a photograph to the scene pronouncing and enhancing the only other movement in the room. This happens to be Tom Kelly’s stiff and laboured progress in a dream like stance to the chair. All of a sudden the trance is broken and in contrast to the previous lack of movement, there is an abundance of activity with all of them sharing concern for Tom, and Gus even going to the extent of threatening to beat Jerry and Willy with an axle, because they were making Tom a subject of ribald mockery:

Jerry: What’d we do? What’d I say?
Gus: Watch out! Just watch out you make fun of this man! I break your head, both of you!

In that one moment they are dramatically re-aligned into a corporate group, joining hands to protect a helpless colleague against the ire of the employer:

Gus: Bert! (He reaches in his pocket) Here, go downstairs bring a shot. Tell him for Tommy (He sees what is in his hand) I only got ten cents.

Raymond: Here (He reaches into his pocket as Jim, Kenneth and Larry all reach into their own pockets)

Bert: (taking a coin from Raymond) Okay I’ll be right up.

and later,

Kenneth: (to Larry) Ah! you can’t blame the poor feller, sixteen years of his life in this place.

Larry: You said it.

Kenneth: There’s a good deal of monotony connected with the life, isn’t it?

Larry: You ain’t kiddin’. 

Kenneth: Oh, There must be a terrible lot of Monday mornings in sixteen years.

They despair of waking Tom to reality, and try everything in their means to wake him from the stupor of

7. Ibid., p.346.
8. Ibid., p.347.
9. Ibid.
apathy and lethargy of drink. Each member strives his best
to help, if not through actions, then through prayers,
pleadings, and apologies. Even Agnes’s scant pleading is
significant:

Agnes: Look at that- he doesn’t even move. And he’s been trying so hard! Nobody gives him credit, but he
does try hard. See how nice and clean he comes in now?10

After their desperate attempt to revive him in the Indian
way by blowing into his ears Agnes again says,

Oh, he’s awake. Somewhere inside, y’ know. He
just can’t show it, somehow. It’s not really
like being drunk, even.11

Gus and Larry ruminate sadly,

Gus: (of Tommy) What am I gonna do with
him, Larry? The old man’s comin’.

Larry: Tell you the truth, Gus, I’m sick
and tired of worrying about him, y’know. Let him take care of
himself.12

After regaining sobriety Tom is totally disoriented. His
search for suitable anchor relieves his companions:

Tom: (Agnes is heard weeping. They turn)
Agnes? (He goes to her) What’s the
matter, Ag.

.....

Agnes: Oh, Tommy! (Weeping, She hurries
out)

Tom: What happened? What is she cryin’
for?

10. Ibid., p.348.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p.349.
Gus: (Indicating the desk) Why don’t you go to work, Tommy? You got lotta parcel post this morning.

Tom’s meeting with Eagle becomes something of an anticlimax. When all his companions were expecting the worst he escapes with a warning and a chance to improve:

Gus: He fire you, Tommy?

Tom: (holding back tears) No, Gus, I’m all right.

Gus: (going up next to him) Give you another chance?

Tom: (speaking with his head lowered) Yeah. It’s all right, Gus, I’m goin’ to be all right from now on.


In this play Miller employs to maximum effect his clique of characters to reveal the infinite variety in human kind in a collage like form. Jerry and Willy, the younger members of the set, are both slick operators, smooth, over confident, brash. They are close to Bert in age but have nothing in common with him. Though members of a group, they stand apart by virtue of their earthiness and sensuous inclinations. Nearly all of them have their travails and

13. Ibid., p.354.
problems, but that does not prevent them from bothering about each other and presenting a united front when confronted with calamities. Each is a character study. They are not flat but rounded human figures with eccentricities, follies and flashes of intelligent radiance that remain dormant if left untapped from lack of opportunity. They are profound examples of the limitations experienced by the common ordinary men, whose average mediocre existence and status, is no indication of and pronouncement over their excellence and capability as human beings. However, very few of them aspire to break free of this prison of second rate, routine being. They lead monotonous lives and die like Gus in the end, succumbing to the pressures of their trapped existence.

Their lack of aspiration becomes a hamartia, attaining dimensional reality, and from force of habit compliance becomes second nature to them. Each one keeps flowing with the powerful tide of their monstrously tedious destiny submitting to its demands, daily registering nevertheless, the outsider among them in the guise of Bert, who wishes to loosen the shackles and change. However, the momentum of their own static lives is so strong that they merely notice these occurrences in passing, themselves powerless to achieve or accomplish anything.

Larry is one such troubled, phlegmatic soul, nearing forty, overburdened by family responsibilities. He
strives his utmost to cater to the demands of his large family:

Larry: Ray, I'd like you to ask Eagle something for me.

Ray: What?

Larry: I've got to have more money.

Ray: You and me both, boy.

Larry: No, I can't make it any more, Ray, I mean it. The car put me a hundred and thirty bucks in the hole. If one of the kids gets sick I'll be strapped.

Ray: Well, what'd you buy the car for?

Larry: I'm almost forty, Ray. What am I going to be careful for?...I hate to make it tough for you, but my wife is driving me nuts.

He appears suffocated by his humdrum entity, registering petty rebellions and protests in the form of a casual fling with Patricia, or buying the car he desired and coveted. These efforts which require some brand of courage do not spare him embarrassment:

Gus: You Crazy? Buy Auburn?

......

Larry: Didn't you ever get to where you don't care about that? I always liked those valves, and I decided, that's all.

Gus: Yeah, but when you gonna go sell it

15. Ibid., p.345.
Larry:  I don't care.
Gus:  You don't care!
Larry:  I'm sick of dreaming about things. They've got the most beautifully laid-out valves in the country on that car, and I want it, that’s all.¹⁶

Suffocated by the constant claims and levies he cannot breathe or live life at will:

Gus:  What’s the matter with you these days?
Larry:  Two years I'm asking for a lousy five-dollar raise. Meantime my brother’s into me for fifty bucks, for his wife’s special shoes; my sister’s got me for sixty-five to have her kid’s teeth fixed. So I buy a car and they’re all on my back- how’d I dare buy a car! Whose money is it? Y’ know Gus? I mean.¹⁷

Life’s banality, however, does offer Larry a couple of challenges to rise above this tedium and display some spark of excellence, generally not associated with individuals of his kind. The mechanic episode is one such opportunity to counter the drabness, lending some flavour to an otherwise insipid life. Larry’s initial reaction to the mechanic’s query for an obsolete part is boredom, apathy and a total lack of interest. However, his own friends and the

¹⁶.  Ibid., p.342.
¹⁷.  Ibid., p.349.
insistent mechanic impel them to pick up the cudgels and accept the challenge. Larry’s fellow workers are not surprised at his expertise, memory and awareness because it was one of the many such incidents, that tested Larry’s knowledge which was never found wanting. But the audience becomes breathless with amazement at Larry’s know-how. His own reaction at the repeated persistence is to blame the system and its thanklessness at not appreciating the sincere and genuine effort of which many people like him are capable:

Ray: Don’t you have any idea, Larry?
Larry: I might, Ray, but I’m not getting paid for being an encyclopedia. There’s ten thousand obsolete parts upstairs, it was never my job to keep all that in my head. If the old man wants that service, let him pay somebody to do it. ¹⁸

The search for the autopart is too irresistible a proposition, and Larry cannot resist accepting the acid test of giving Bert directions regarding it’s whereabouts:

Larry: Bert get the key to the third floor from Miss Molloy. Go up there, and when you open the door you’ll see Model- T mufflers stacked up...go past the mufflers and you’ll see a lot of bins going up to the ceiling. They’re full of Marmon valves and ignition stuff...At the end of the corridor is a pile of

¹⁸. Ibid., p.350.
crates— I think there’s some Maxwell differentials in there.... Climb over the crates, but don’t keep goin’, see. Stand on top of the crates and turn right. Then bend down, and there’s a bin— No, I tell you, get off the crates, and you can reach behind them, but to the right and reach into that bin. There’s a lot of Locomobile headnuts in there, but way back— you gotta stick your hand way in, see, and you’ll find one of these.

Though the instructions are circumlocutory and involved, there is no hint of hesitation and each time Larry gives himself a pause or temporary respite, it is felt that the narrative has come to an end. However, the tempo remains unceasing and draws a deserved note of applause from the audience. It is these inspired moments of perceptive discernment that provide evidence of the hidden talents and nascent genius of men like Larry, whose otherwise undistinguished careers are like the layers of grime and dust covering the windows of the warehouse. With the explosion of time, the chronology of the many Mondays becomes meaningless, as the people have stoically and heroically braved through countless such Mondays, but each has been subtly different from the preceding one. Despite the schedule and routine of their unimaginative lives they do attach some hope, some positivity that would temporarily

19. Ibid., p.351.
suspend the unending list of machine like operations. Hence a Tom Kelly episode or Larry's Auburn or Gus's moral dilemma provides instances when they come together in human solidarity and appear human.

The guilt motif in *A Memory* is not as pronounced as in the earlier plays. The emotional element in the three major plays of Miller's early period was more pronounced and obsessive and swayed the total being of the major characters. In order to emerge from its deadly morass, the people involved had to wage emotional battles against this guilt phobia. In *A Memory* Miller deals with small feelings of compunction, remorse, nostalgias, and regrets like Larry's purchase of the Auburn or Gus's lapse at having abandoned his sick wife. These are transitory emotions of having belittled oneself in one's own self esteem. Gus's advice to Tom "to be a man" is equally applicable to his own self and Agnes, a close friend, can see through the facade, weeping for Gus's vulnerability. The palpable tension of the scene is countered by Raymond's call back to practical reality. "What do you say, fellas, let's get going, heh?" Prosaic actuality has its merits, the chief and most significant being that it saves the individual from excessive sentimentality.
Bert and Kenneth in the meanwhile devote time to cleaning the windows, and the quick passage of time is indicated by the gradual withdrawal of summer to allow the advent of winter. With the walls permitting the entry of winter cold, a chill alienation is felt by everyone and Bert and Kenneth are compelled to converse about the harsh, tough days ahead, imminent hunger and joblessness. Though the place looks clean and all of them have a "sky to look at," the dust shroud had insulated them from external reality preventing any kind of infringement. In a nostalgic mood of regret, Bert sums up the passage of time, the aging of his companions, their abject helplessness against the unrelenting march of time and destiny, which propels them into a never-ending abyss, a quagmire of futility. Bert wonders over their ability for constant submission without protest:

Bert: Didn’t you ever want to be anything, Kenneth?

Kenneth: I’ve never been able to keep my mind on it, Bert....I shouldn’t ’ve cut a hole in my shoe. Now the snow’s slushin in and me feet’s all wet.

Bert: If you studied, Kenneth, if you put your mind to something great, I know you’d be able to learn anything, because you’re clever, you’re smarter than I am.

Kenneth: You’ve got something steady in your mind, Bert; something far and
Lack of determination, feeble attempts, want of purpose, a habituated torpidity keeps sucking these people back into the mire of anonymity, depression and protracted stagnation, though Kenneth a self confessed defeatist also reacts against his average, second rate life. Their unimaginative lives are summed up by Bert in his poem:

There's something so terrible here!
There always was, and I don't know what.
Gus, and Agnes, and Tommy and Larry, Jim and Patricia-
Why does it make me so sad to see them every morning?
It's like the subway;
Every day 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.21

With the approach of winter and another Monday, even Kenneth succumbs to frustration and starts drinking:

Good God, Bert, you can't always be doin' what you're better off to do! There's all kinds of unexpected turns, y'know, and things not workin' out the way they ought!22

20. Ibid., p.358.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p.359.
Kenneth aspires for a job in the Civil Service. But the only vacancy available is of a guard in the lunatic asylum. "They tell me it's only the more intelligent people goes mad, y' know," because they cannot compromise with ordinariness and thwarted aspirations.

Miller has defined A Memory as a pathetic comedy and in his "Introduction" he observes:

I wrote it...out of a desire to relive a sort of reality where necessity was open and bare. I hoped to define for myself the value of hope, why it must arise, as well as the heroism of those who know, at least, how to endure its absence.  

The commercial ethos of the warehouse, its activities and dealings connect A Memory to his two earlier plays, All My Sons and Death of a Salesman in which commercialization and business form the backbone of a consumer-dominated society. The difference between the present and the other two plays is that the playwright in the latter case, is preoccupied with a single individual's struggle for livelihood and existence against the anthropomorphic indeterminate forces of society. In A Memory Miller has chosen an undefined amoebic unit from this society itself and made it his primary concern. The struggle thus transforms itself into an archetypal battle blended with human frustrations, fulfilments on a wider cosmic level. From the single

individual's effort it graduates to a full scale endeavour of a corporate group. The conclusion of all such contentions is, however, predestined because the vast majority of able-bodied individuals have made abject self-abasement a habituated exercise. The colossal forces of society appear immense, powerful and dominating because of lack of hope of redemption in most people.

Gus's death is symbolic of non-fulfilment in the commercial sense. At sixty-eight Gus is already reaching superannuation. Tired, exhausted with the demands of the job and a sick wife, Gus has taken to liquor. His manner on first entrance appears blase and callous. Despite this, he remains an essentially human person by virtue of his heroic efforts to save Tom Kelly, and the stunned reaction on receiving the news of his wife's death. The announcement that follows is stark and simple "My Lilly die," and the bleakness is echoed in the message of his own demise. Gus like Loman before him was in constant search of his roots but is a failure in locating them. His history in quintessence is:

When Mr Eagle was in high school I was already here. When there was Winton Six I was here...I was here all them times. I was here first day Raymond came; he was young boy; work hard be manager. When Agnes still think she was gonna get married I was here. When was Locomobile, and Model K Ford and Model N
Ford—all them different Fords, and Franklin was a good car...All them times I was here. 24

The narrative lends a timelessness to Gus's image, and significantly he is not shown dying but only reported dead, the image and illusion of permanence continues. The tragedy of this innately mortal being is reflected in his behaviour after his wife's death. Slightly demented by the shock, coupled with the compunction and remorse of not being at her bedside, he gets inordinately drunk, withdraws all his insurance money, buys a new suit to go to the cemetery and spends the whole weekend carrying carfenders with which he wants to replace the old ones. His friends and colleagues protect him from Eagle but cannot prevent his overexcesses. The report of his death is absolutely deadpan and unemotional:

Ray: Where's Gus, Jim?
Jim: He died, Ray.
Larry: He what?
Agnes: What'd you say?
Jim: Gus died.
Kenneth: Gus died.
Bert: Gus? 25

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25. Ibid., p.372.
Tom and Gus are studies in opposites. When one surrenders to weakness and even wallows in it, the other triumphs over it to improve and even rise in his own self esteem. The reformed Tom Kelly becomes slightly insufferable, because of his platitudes and over confident stance. But he achieves something which the others are not capable of. His remarkable feat is that he managed to conquer his weakness for liquor through sheer will power. He, therefore, feels experienced and wise enough to impart advice to people, like Kenneth and Gus, who are slowly and steadily sinking into the pit of oblivion:

Kenneth: How'd you do it, Tom?

Tom: Will power, Kenny. Just made up my mind, that's all.

Kenneth: Y'know the whole world is talking about you, Tom- the way you mixed all the drinks at the Christmas party and never weakened? Y'know, when I heard it was you going to mix the drinks I was prepared to light a candle for you.

Tom: I just wanted to see if I could do it. *26*

And later on while dealing with Gus, Tom's opinion is:

I tried talking to him a couple of times, Ray but he's got no will power! There's nothing you can do if there's no will power y'know? *27*


This is what lends to Tom his superior, self-righteous posture. However, Tom Kelly is the single emergent human figure who rises from this soulless, industrialised, insensible, impassive universe with some modicum of respectability, transforming himself from a drunken sod pitied by his mates to a figure of affirmation and hope, confirming the fact with certainty that all is still not lost.

As the time for Bert’s departure approaches a feeling of instinctive antagonism and resentment is in evidence at the warehouse. Ray cloaks it with surprise and sarcasm:

Bert: Mr Ryan? Can I see you a minute? I wondered if you hired anybody yet, to take my place.

Ray: (pleasantly surprised) Why? Don’t you have enough money to go?

Bert: No, I’m going. I just thought maybe I could help you break in the new boy. I won’t be leaving till after lunch tomorrow.

Ray: We’ll break him in all right. Why don’t you just get on to your work? There’s a lot of excelsior laying around the freight elevator.28

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28. Ibid., p.360.
To Bert's puzzled question "Is he sore at me?" even Kenneth avoids meeting the eye evading his query and merely answering with,

**Why, Bert, you’ve got the heartfelt good wishes of everybody in the place for your goin’- away!**

Larry treats the entire issue with disbelief and embarrassed envy:

**Larry:** You actually leaving tomorrow?

**Bert:** *eagerly* I guess so, yeah.

**Larry:** Got all the dough, heh?

**Bert:** Well, for the first year anyway. You mind if I thank you?

**Larry:** What for?

**Bert:** I don’t know- just for teaching me everything. I’d have been fired the first month without you, Larry.

**Larry:** *with some wonder and respect* Got all your dough, heh?

There is a third variety of reaction to Bert's departure. Tom the reformed gentleman in his typically self opinionated style observes:

**Tom:** College guy’s are sellin’ ties all over Mary’s Accountancy Bert, that’s my advice to you. You don’t even have to go to college for it either.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p.361.
Bert: Yeah, but I don’t want to be an accountant.

Tom: (with a superior grin) You don’t want to be an accountant?

Larry: What’s so hot about an accountant?

Tom: Well! try runnin’ a business without one. That’s what you should’ve done Larry. If you’d a took accountancy you’d a-

Larry: You know, Tommy, I’m beginning to like you better drunk? I mean it. Before, we only had to pick you up all the time; now you’ve got opinions about everything.31

The inmates of the warehouse who are accustomed to an unchanging daily pattern of machine-like operations find Bert’s proposed exit an uncommon, extraordinary occurrence to which they cannot easily correlate their own concerns and attitudes. Miller has observed that:

...from this endless, timeless, will-less environment, a boy emerges who will not accept its defeat, or its mood as final, and literally takes himself off on a quest for a higher gratification.32

Bert’s role in A Memory of Two Mondays becomes symbolic of those positive forces of assertion and promise that do not compromise with the age old, servile, tired, fatigued mentality of this amorphous crowd and purposefully

31. Ibid., p.362.

with the greatest of deliberation strikes a note of discord with the environment. Miller empowers Bert with the responsibility of an engaged narrator performing the dual task of being an active participant as well as a detached commentator, providing a double perspective to the drama. Bert’s education involves coming to terms with the forces around him. These external pressures find representation in the guise of the characters who interact with him during the course of his stay at the warehouse. The end of the play delineates Bert craving to share some tangible contact and relationship with those people with whom he spent nearly a year. The evanescent glow of human brotherhood, its caring sympathy which surrounded him seems to be fading and waning, and Bert leaves the stage hankering for a touch, a look, a word to indicate some link that would probably redeem his erstwhile friends, transporting them on waves of hope to a better future, of which Bert is till now the sole representative. Significantly Bert does not accept defeat and the play concludes on his promise to Kenneth to return again.

Thus the play continues essentially the same image of man which emerged in the earlier plays. Man’s intrinsic humanity comes under heavy strain because the weight of materialistic commercialism, and the strife and competition for livelihood, survival or success has threatened the
distinctness of his identity and individualism. But Miller in this play, as in his other pieces, has successfully tried to retrieve man's essential humanity from the quagmire of commercialism and materialistic selfishness.