PREFACE
Of all the modern American playwrights, Arthur Miller may be said to be the most articulate defender of the social play. His plays dealing with the family theme offer an exploration of the struggle between "family relations" and "social relations" with a force, realism and emotional depth. Miller is a major playwright who is prepared to confront seriously aspects of the human situation ignored by a theatre obsessed with psychology and sociology. Although his opinions on the nature of drama are scattered through interviews, introductions, and occasional articles for the New York Times (including 'Tragedy and the Common Man'), the bulk of his theoretical writing is contained in essays such as 'On Social Plays,' printed as an introduction to A View from the Bridge, 'The Family in Modern Drama,' originally a lecture delivered at Harvard and 'The Shadows of the Gods' (Harper's, August 1958). These essays reveal how the social drama, as Miller believes in it, is not an arraignment of society's evils, but the "Whole Drama" which recognizes that man has both a subjective and an objective existence and that he belongs not only to
himself but to his family and the world beyond. The
generalizations which Miller makes in his essays are
useful approaches to his own work. Family-centred as
some of the important plays of Miller are, they deal
with interior psychological questions in terms of existing
objective facts in their dramatic delineation of a quest
for community. In giving a dramatic embodiment to this
aspect of social realism, Miller demonstrates that his
achievement lies not merely in his sensitive response to
contemporary sociological issues but in his ability to
penetrate to the metaphysical implications of those issues.
His importance in the American theatre lies in his deflecting
American drama away from its role as a "dramatised case-book."
Man is the centre of his work and his primary concern is
with "affirmation built on confrontation." The present study
tends to be selective and focuses on the family-centred plays
of Miller, especially *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *After
the Fall* and *The Price*, and further on *The Crucible* which,
by means of an evocation of an atmosphere of mass hysteria,
exemplifies the theme of conscience and identity and comments
on the structure of the society. But wherever possible
references to the other plays of Miller too have been made
in the context of tracing how the thematic patterns have been illustrated or dramatic design executed in play after play.

There is such a rich body of criticism on Miller's work that it is almost impossible to cope with it, let alone adequately acknowledge it. The footnotes and the bibliography though they are highly selective, indicate the variety of approaches to the study of Miller. Working on Miller has been a stimulating task and I thank the American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, for providing me with most of the reading material necessary for my purposes.

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