CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

i) Incident at Vichy

ii) After the Fall

iii) The Price
"Incident at Vichy" was Miller's second and final offering to the Lincoln Center Repertory Theater, which was opened on the third of December, 1964 and subsequently alternated with 'After the Fall'. The play garnered glaringly mixed notices at its opening. It was called Miller's most "moving, searching play" which returned "the theater to greatness." It was called a "thundering cry of anguish and warning that might issue from the heart of a prophet." It was seen as a mark of Miller's ethical advance: "Incident at Vichy" concerns the irrationality of men and their cruel subterfuges, even toward those they love.... The play is relevant to mass cruelty of Vietnam, the Congo and Mississippi, and marks an ethical advance for Miller in that it does not end in the martyrdom of an innocent victim but in Leduc's decision to save himself, thereby acknowledging both his guilt and his responsibility to act in a manner beneficial to the world." While Douglas Watt finds the play as "outdated, despite its theme that all mankind bears guilt for the persécution of the Jews by the Nazi's and "a philosophical claptrap." Watts judgement appears less critical than that of Robert Brustien who degradingly pronounced that "Incident at Vichy had sharply by passed greatness and plunged into a sargasso sea of World War II Holywood hokum." To a number of critics who

2. Ibid.
5. Brustien, Robert. "Incident at Vichy", Tulane Drama Review, 9 (Summer), 77.
viewed 'After the Fall' as Miller's catastrophe, 'Incident at Vichy' seemed to be a step in the direction of creative recuperation on the other hand, a few critics who greatly admired 'After the Fall' were disappointed with the new effort, which they interpreted as a dramatically inferior post-script to the preceding play. It seems unfair to compare 'Incident at Vichy' with 'After the Fall', since the two plays are radically different in form, characterization and action. It is true, 'Incident at Vichy' lacks the fascination of 'After the Fall'. Its setting and dramatic time quite literal, its characters stripped of any existence beyond the situation which unwillingly relates them, and 'its action compressed and linear, the drama does not approach the virtuosity and intricacy of the previous play. Instead it aims a blunt and unavoidable blow directly at its audience.'

The play 'Incident at Vichy', which explores man's relationship to justice and injustice, guilt and responsibility, separatedness and commitment, refers extensively, to an actual happening. About the time Miller was writing 'A View from the Bridge', he heard a story from a friend that his imagination and held it over the years with a tenacity that amazed and perplexed him.

In an essay entitled "Our Guilt for the World's Evil", Miller attributes the factual basis of 'Incident at Vichy' to the story. In 1942, Miller's friend who were

picked up one day on a street in Vichy, France which though still unoccupied was subject to Nazi racial politics, taken to a police station, and without any clarification, ordered to wait further developments. As he waited to be interrogated, together with others suspected of being Jewish, he realized that a death sentence was inevitable. Before his turn arrived to enter the police office, however, a Gentile Suspect (Prince Von Berg in the play) who had just been freed enabled the Jewish prisoner to escape at the cost of his own life. The story came to signify to Miller not the heroism of the Gentile nor the suffering of the Jew but the inhumanity and "common want of solidarity" of both: "what is dark if not unknown is the relationship between those who side with justice and their implication in the evils they oppose". Yet he (like Leduc) shortly discovers "his own complicity with the forces he despises." Miller's "lesson" is that "it is immensely difficult to be human precisely because we cannot detect our own hostility in our own actions. It is tragic, total blindness." Miller fully elaborates his view like this:

That faceless, unknown man would pop up in my mind when I read about the people in Queens refusing to call the police while a woman was being stabbed to death outside their windows. He would form himself in the air when I listened to delinquent boys whose many different distortions of character seemed to spring from a common want of human solidarity. Friends troubled by having to do things they disapproved of brought him to mind, people for whom the very concept of choosing their actions was a long forgotten thing. Wherever I felt the seemingly implacable tide of human drift and the withering of will, in myself and in others, this faceless person came to mind. And he appears most clearly and imperatively amid the jumble of emotions surrounding the Negro in this country, and the whole unsettled moral problem of the destruction of the Jews in Europe.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 9, 10.
'Incident at Vichy' dramatizes approximately ninety minutes in the lives of a few men in a detention room in Vichy in the autumn of 1942. As they sit on a long bench in front of an inner office, waiting for a mysterious interrogation, they can hear a concertive playing "Lilli Martene" from a cafe across the street. Hearing this perplexing reminder of the outside world, they grow increasingly anxious, but they remain silent, afraid to substantiate their apprehension by giving words to it.

Finally, a young painter, Lebean, breaks the silence and begins to know the real cause of their detention. He is suspicious that there might be a "racial implication to the roundup." Despite their uneasiness at his enquiries, the other man gradually and reluctantly begin to talk.

Marchand, a businessman who seems confident, hopefully assures them that they are undergoing nothing more than a routine document check, and an electrician named Bayard, an actor, Moncean, a waiter from the cafe, and fifteen-year-old boy try to bask in the warmth of his apparent sureness. Only a gypsy seated at the far end of the bench is facetly but clearly excluded from their tenuous fellowship.

Lebean's fears do not mitigate by the explanation given by them, and he continues his annoying interrogations. He is afraid of spelling out the correct word for this turned up, he esphemistically sidles up to the truth when he questions Bayard.

"Does he know he asks, referring to the German major who is one of their captors, "that you're a ....... peruvian?"
The electricians reply ironically heitens the consideration it is intended to obliterate -

"Don't discuss that here, for God's sake!" he snaps. "what's the matter with you".

The apprehensions and hopes of the men then rapidly fluctuate. The presence of the old Jew terrifies the others, but their discovery that the nobleman, Prince Von Berg, is a Catholic, stokes the embers of their waver- ing hope. However, the optimistic theory, advanced by Monceau and seconded by Marchand, that the gypsy is being detained because he is probably suspected of stealing a large pot he carries with him, is countered by Bayard's reminder that gypsies have the same rating as Jews in the Nazi Racial Laws. Next, Lebeau's attempt to soften the implication of a roundup of Jews, by suggesting that it may only be part of a forced labor program, is grimly canceled by the electrician's recollection of a freight train, crammed with people and bound for Poland, which only the day before had pulled into the railroad yard in which he worked.

'Concentration camp?' asks Leduc, the psychiatrist, as he catches Bayard's meaning.

'Why?' replies Monceau. 'A lot of people have been volunteering for work in Germany.'

Bayard extinguishes this possibility immediately.

'The cars are locked on the outside,' he says quietly. 'And they stink. You can smell the stench a hundred yards away. Babies are crying inside. You can hear them. And women. They don't lock volunteers in that way. I never heard of it.'

But although their fears grow stronger, their hope is suddenly fanned. Marchand, the first to be summoned into the inner office, is released, much to the wonderment of the others. Daring to hope again that they are only being subjected to a passport check, they start to put their papers in order. However, their tentative optimism is quickly aborted: the waiter's employer, who has been in the office to serve coffee, has overheard the conversations within. He informs his employee of the actual reason for their detainment: Jews are being collected for shipment to concentration camps, and in the inner office a 'racial anthropologist,' with the reluctant aid of the German major (a line soldier recuperating from battle wounds), is checking each suspect for circumcision.

Their last glimmer of hope snuffed out, each man then tries as best he can to prepare himself for his ordeal.

Bayard has already begun his attempt. A Communist, he bolsters his courage with an objective vision of the historical process, which he equates with progress and enlightenment.

'It is faith in the future; and the future is Socialist. And that is what I take in there with me,' he exclaims.

And when Leduc replies, 'You mean it's important not to feel alone....?' Bayard amplifies his credo: None of us is alone. We're members of history. Some of us don't know it, but you'd better learn it for your own preservation.'

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.31.
Although Bayard's belief is noble and comforting, to Leduc it is curious because it transforms the individual into a symbol.

'Yes. Why not?' counters Bayard. 'Symbols, yes... What am I to them personally? Do they know me? You react personally to this, they'll turn you into an idiot. You can't make sense of this on a personal basis.'

However, for Leduc, as for Quentin and Proctor and the majority of Miller heroes back to Lawrence Newman of Focus, there is no basis save a personal one: 'But the difficulty is - what can one be if not oneself?'

Admitting that Bayard's belief in the subordination of the individual to the collective WE might be 'the best way to hold on to oneself' in a time of crisis, Leduc is nonetheless unready and unwilling to apply this tenet to himself.

'It's only that ordinarily one tries to experience life, to be in spirit where one's body is', he concludes. 'For some of us it's difficult to shift gears and go into reverse.'

If Leduc has delineated the weakness of Bayard's vision, the electrician's rejoinder illuminates the agonizing paradox of the psychiatrist's will to believe.

'You think a man can be himself in this society?' he replies 'When millions go hungry and a few live like kings, and whole races are slaves to the stock market - how

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1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.31.
2. Ibid., p.32.
can you be yourself in such a world? I put in ten hours a day for a few francs, I see people who never bend their backs and they own the planet... How can my spirit be where my body is? I'd have to be an ape.'

Consequently, his spirit is 'in the future. In the day when the working class is master of the world.' Adamantly clutching his 'fact' that 'class interest makes history, not individuals', Bayard takes refuge from the arrows of outrageous fortune behind the shield of historical process.

However, his defense is suddenly challenged by Von Berg.

'But the facts.....' the gentle nobleman reminds him, 'Dear sir, what if the facts are dreadful? And will always be dreadful?'

'So is childbirth', replies Bayard, 'so is....' But Von Berg does not wait for him to complete his analogy.

'But a child comes of it,' he exclaims. 'What if nothing comes of the facts but endless disaster?'

And then in sorrow and respect for the man whose reluctant opponent he has become, the Austrian prince administers the coup de grace to Bayard's faith in the common people.

'Ninety-nine per cent of the Nazis are ordinary working people, he sadly reminds his companion. Only a very few individuals cannot be propagandized.

'You mean this whole world is going to hang on that thread? Bayard replies incredulously. 'If I thought
that, I wouldn't have the strength to walk through that door, I wouldn't know how to put one foot in front of the other.'

Bayard's belief emanates from what Quentin terms 'that duty in the sky.... the sense of some absolute necessity .... that lie of Eden.' The electrician may be able to die for a cause, but he needs a guarantee, a certification of validity, without which, like the soldier Watson of Situation Normal, he cannot 'go through hell completely on his own steam, alone.'

Although Bayard clings to his own faith in the collective potential of mankind, and walks courageously into the interrogation room to put his conviction to the test, the psychiatrist and the nobleman have already demonstrated its inadequacy.

With Bayard gone and their fate apparently sealed, Leduc proposes that the remaining able-bodied men overpower the guard at the outer door and make a run for freedom. But his desperate plan is blocked by the actor Monceau, who refuses to aid him because he cannot accept the monstrous intentions of his captors. His bland passivity rests on a dual faith: his abstract belief in reason and logic, and his specific reliance on his own personality, which he equates with his creativity as an artist.

To the waiter's revelation that Jews are being sent to concentration camp furnaces in Poland, Monceau replies that 'that is the most fantastic idiocy I ever heard in my life,' and justifies his exclamation by the observation that the wholesale slaughter of a people is absurd.

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.32.
'What good are dead Jews to them? They want free labor. It's senseless. You can say whatever you like, but the Germans are not illogical.'

Neither is Monceau, and his logic leads him to yet another deceptive conclusion.

'I played in Germany', he affirms. 'That audience could not burn up actors in a furnace.'

And turning to Von Berg, he demands confirmation of his statement. However, neither the prince nor Leduc can grant it. Both men realize that Monceau's logical approach to his plight is leading him away from its reality. Both are aware of the truth of Leduc's comment that 'you cannot wager your life on a purely rational analysis of this situation.'

As he feels his faith in logic eroding before their scrutiny, the actor falls back on his reliance on his personal skills. He replies to Leduc's amazement at his confidence by telling the psychiatrist that he simply refuses to play a part that is not applicable to him.

'Everyone is playing the victim these days; hopeless, hysterical, they always assume the worst,' he whistles in the ominous gloom. 'You accuse us of acting the part the Germans created for us; I think you're the one who's doing that by acting so desperate.'

But Leduc stalks him. 'In other words,' he answers, 'you will create yourself.'

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1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.34.
2. Ibid., p.52.
'Every actor creates himself,' Monceau replies haughtily.

'But when they tell you to open your fly.'

Monceau is mutely furious at the doctor's sardonic challenge, which has swiftly and deftly sliced through the rationalization in which he had wrapped himself. However this does not shake the actor out of his willed passivity. Still refusing to help the psychiatrist make a break for the street, he again reverts to reason.

'The fact is there are laws and every government enforces its laws; and I want it understood that I have nothing to do with any of this talk,' Monceau declares.

I go on the assumption that if I obey the law with dignity I will live in peace. I may not like the law, but evidently the majority does, or they would overthrow it. And I'm speaking now of the French majority, who outnumber the Germans in this town fifty to one. And if by some miracle you did knock out that guard you would find yourself in a city where not one person in a thousand would help you. And it's got nothing to do with being Jewish or not Jewish. It is what the world is, so why don't you stop insulting others with romantic challenges'.

Monceau's argument is the antithesis of Bayard's. Unlike the idealistic worker, the actor is quite realistic about people and their motivations, and finds no comfort in contemplating the humanitarian potential of the collective majority. He swings like an erratic aerialist between the self-esteem embodied in a desperate belief in his personality, and the self-deprecation inherent in his conviction that the individual's subordination to corporate authority will assure him - if not freedom - at least survival. Like Mickey of 'After the Fall,' Monceau seeks

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p. 52.
accommodation as the crucial prerequisite for preservation.

'In short,' Leduc replies sarcastically, 'because the world is indifferent you will wait calmly and with great dignity - to open your fly.'

Monceau's final words to the psychiatrist further delineate the man behind the actor's mask and the personal truth behind the general outlook.

'I'll tell you what I think,' he declares in anger and in fright. 'I think it's people like you who have brought this on us. People who give Jews a reputation for subversion, and this Talmudic analysis, and this everlasting, niggling discontent.'

'Your heart is conquered territory, mister,' snaps Leduc. The debate is over.

When Leduc attempts to escape without Monceau's help, he is stopped by the German officer who informs him that flight would be impossible: sentries are posted on both sides of the street. As the two men eye each other warily, the major drunkenly confesses his revulsion with his task.

'Can you believe that?' he asks, grasping for an affirmative answer from the man he grudgingly respects.

'I'd believe it if you shot yourself,' Leduc replies flatly. 'And better yet, if you took a few of them with you.'

With a 'manic amusement, yet deeply questioning,' the major urges the psychiatrists on, asking him what would be gained if he let Leduc go free.

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1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.54.
'I will love you as long as I live,' Leduc answers. 'Will anyone do that now?'

The reply is so bizarre and anachronistic that it staggered the officer for a moment. An appeal to something so alien to the situation and climate, it seems to glow a moment like some incongruous candle at the bottom of a deep, murky abyss.

Then the German blows it out. Wiping the thought from his mind, as if it were a Judas kiss, he cries out to Leduc in fury and pain: 'There are no persons anymore, don't you see that? There will never be persons again. What do I care if you love me? Are you out of your mind? What am I, a dog that I must be loved?'

The gospel of love has become as invalid as all the preceding beliefs in mankind, community, and individual personality.

Intrigued and angered by Leduc's assertion that he deserves to live more than his captor because he is incapable of acting like him and is thus 'better for the world,' the officer backs the doctor into a moral corner by asking him if he would refuse a pass to safety if the others were denied theirs. Leduc tries to evade an answer, but the major forces it out of him.

'Would you refuse?' he repeats sharply.

'No'.

'And walk out of that door with a light heart?'

'I don't know'.

But Leduc does know and the German drives the

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1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', pp. 56-57.
"I am trying to understand why you are better for the world than me", he exclaims, sarcastically……
Would you go out of that door with a light heart, run to your woman, drink a toast to your skin?…… Why are you better than anybody else?"

"I have no duty to make a gift of myself to your sadism," the doctor replies haltingly, enmeshing himself in his own argument. The major quickly draws the net tight.

"But I do?" he interjects, 'to others' sadism? Of myself? I have that duty and you do not? To make a gift of myself?"

"I have nothing to say."

The man who demonstrated the ineptitude of Bayard's and Monceau's faiths now finds his own beliefs choked off by his enemy. The individual integrity, which Leduc contrasted to Bayard's adherence to the Marxian dialectic and to Monceau's dependence on logic and his obedience to the majority will, suddenly reels under the baleful truth that the major forces him to admit and share: that self-preservation subordinates even honor and dignity. And although Leduc has nothing to say, Quentin's words seem to echo in the dark void.

"And no man lives who would not rather be the sole survivor of this place than all its finest victims!"

This is Leduc's ultimate knowledge and it renders him more isolated and disillusioned than anyone else in the play.

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', pp. 61-62.
2. Ibid., p. 65
The tempo of the drama accelerates as the suspects are hurried along. Galvanized by the metallic 'Next!' of the captain of police, Lebeau, Monoeau, and the young boy are taken individually into the inner office, until only Leduc, Von Berg, and the old Jew remain. Confronted with the wordless old man whose doom is sealed, and with the Gentile who will momentarily be free, Leduc allows his bitterness and helplessness to spill over into acrid despair.

'This is why one gets so furious,' he confides to the prince, 'because all this suffering is so pointless - it can never be a lesson, it can never have a meaning. And that is why it will be repeated again and again forever.'

'Because it cannot be shared? Von Berg asks.

'Yes. Because it cannot be shared. It is total absolute, waste.'

Then the aged Jew is taken, and as his bundle is wrested away from him it bursts apart in a storm of feathers. While they gently settle in the darkening room, like a dying and wistful embodiment of softness and gentility. Von Berg, with obvious difficulty in facing the man he will survive, asks Leduc if he can at least depart with his friendship. The psychiatrist replies that he bears the aristocrat no particular malice:

Prince, in my profession one gets the habit of looking at oneself quite impersonally. It is not you I am angry with. In one part of my mind it is not even this Nazi. I am only angry that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is not reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience. I am only angry that, knowing this, I still deluded myself. That there was not time to truly make part of myself what

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', pp.61-62.
I know, and to teach others truth.¹

In his retort, Von Berg reaches for an antidote to counteract the lethal nihilism of Leduc's proposition.

'There are ideals, Doctor, of another kind,' he exclaims. 'There are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder. They exist. I swear it to you. People for whom everything is not permitted, foolish people and ineffectual, but they do exist and will not dishonor their tradition.'²

And he concludes with his initial request:

'I ask for your friendship.'

The disillusioned man and the idealist confront each other in the drama's crucial balance of beliefs, each challenging the other with his truth, and for a moment the equilibrium is maintained. Then, as the coarse laughter of the men humiliating the old Jew in the inner office breaks around them, Leduc drops another weight onto his scale.

'I owe you the truth, Prince,' he says quietly. 'You won't believe it now, but I wish you would think about it and what it means. I have never analyzed a Gentile who did not have, somewhere hidden in his mind, a dislike if not hatred for the Jews.'

And in reply to Von Berg's alarmed denial, the psychiatrist continues:

Until you know it is true of you you will destroy whatever truth can come of this atrocity. Part of knowing who we are is knowing we are not someone else. And Jew is only the name we give to that

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p. 65.
2. Ibid., p. 66.
stranger, that agony we cannot feel, that death we look at like a cold abstraction. Each man has his Jew; it is the other. And the Jews have their Jews. And now, above all, you must see that you have yours — the man whose death leaves you relieved that you are not him, despite your decency. And that is why there is nothing — until you face your own complicity with this... your own humanity.

In the beginning of the play the Austrian prince has attempted to understand the Nazi phenomenon and his relationship to it by viewing it as something abominably uncultivated, an 'outburst of vulgarity' wholly alien to his sensibilities. But when he is reminded that Nazism is hardly restricted to the lower classes he can only admit that he does not 'know what to say.' For the bulk of the ensuing hour his voice is muffled as he listens with growing mortification to the exchanges among the other men, and as he hears hopes, ideals, and rationalizations exploding like balloons in a shooting gallery, he tries desperately to cling to some belief that will leave him a shred of integrity.

'I deny that!' he cries angrily at Leduc's charge that he too, for all his decency, is not above the inhumanity he truly abhors. 'I deny that absolutely. I have never in my life said a word against your people. Is that your implication? That I have something to do with this monstrousness! I have put a pistol to my head! To my head!'

But the protestation that Von Berg once contemplated suicide rather than yield to Nazism fails to impress

2. Ibid., p.66.
the psychiatrist. Shifting from the abstract to the particular, he reminds the prince of his cousin Baron Kessler, a Nazi who persecuted Jewish doctors at a medical school which Leduc had attended, and forces him to admit that he was aware of what was happening.

Stunned and 'inward seeing,' Von Berg stammers his reply: 'Yes, I heard it. I....had forgotten it. You see, he was.....' Leduc picks up the unfinished statement:

.....Your cousin. I understand. And in any case, it is only a small part of Baron Kessler to you. I do understand it. But it is all of Baron Kessler to me. When you said his name, it was with love; and I am sure he must be a man of some kindness, with whom you can see eye to eye in many things. But when I hear that name I see a knife. You see now why I say there is nothing, and will be nothing, when even you cannot really put yourself in my place? Even you! And that is why your thoughts of suicide do not move me. It's not your guilt I want, it's your responsibility - that might have helped. Yes, if you had understood that Baron Kessler was in part, in some part, in some small and frightful part - doing your will. You might have done something then, with your standing, and your name and your decency, aside from shooting yourself!'

Staring in full horror at the image of himself in the dark mirror Leduc holds up. Von Berg's final assurance crumbles.

'What can ever save us?' he shudders, covering his face with his hands. And as he is taken into the office, the doctor sits motionless in the empty room, waiting fearfully and resignedly for inevitable destruction.

His sudden deliverance stuns him. Von Berg returns and hands Leduc his own pass; and after hesitating and protesting that the prince does not owe him any sacrifice, Leduc takes the piece of paper and escapes.

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', pp. 67-68.
The dramatic core of the play is the moral debate between the psychiatrist Leduc, the German Major and Von Berg. Their arguments revolve around Miller's central question: What is the nature and possibility of responsibility in a world acknowledged to be absurd? The German Major, according to his statement to Leduc, is a decent man who despises Nazi brutality and madness, but in order for him to protest against this evil he would have to sacrifice his life. Furthermore, his sacrifice would change absolutely nothing because, as he tells Leduc, "We would all be replaced by tomorrow morning, wouldn't we?" All that he would gain from helping Leduc escape would be Leduc's love and respect, but the Major cannot accept this reward as adequate compensation because, "Nothing of that kind is left, don't you understand that yet?"

The Major is similar to Monceau. Both men relinquish their freedom by submitting to what they insist is an overwhelming determinism. "There are no persons anymore, don't you see that? There will never be persons again," the Major shouts. Responsibility and ethics in a fallen world become meaningless words to the Major, but his plea of helplessness is merely an evasion of his own tormenting moral impulses.

The Major skillfully challenges Leduc's assumption of moral superiority. By forcing Leduc to admit that his innocence is coincident with his present role of victim, the Major makes clear the circumstantial nature of morality. When asked by the Major if he would refuse to be released while his fellow Jews were kept prisoners, Leduc is forced

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.85.
2. Ibid., p.86.
3. Ibid., p.87.
to answer "no". It becomes clear that the foundation for moral stability is precarious, and even decent men like Leduc would rather survive in disgrace than die with honor. Under these circumstances, the efficacy of individual moral action becomes buried in an infinite chain of destructive power: an executioner like the Major is himself a victim, acting in response to a gun pointing at his head. In a crisis situation, when individual moral action can only be equated with self-destruction and when evil is seen as a constant in human relations, all rational motives for decency decay and the world collapses into moral anarchy.

Up to this point, Miller seems to have presented a nihilistic vision. Von Berg, however, is Miller's answer to despair. Like Sartre's Orestes in The Flies, he is the existential hero who wrenches himself from passivity to engagement by freely committing a sacrificial act. Von Berg's act is absurd in that it has no rational basis, but it elevates him to moral authenticity. His rebellion annihilates the nausea brought on by his understanding of the Nazi plague and his realization of his personal complicity in the holocaust, a realization unknown to him until his conversation with Leduc toward the end of the play. Leduc convinces the apparently innocent Von Berg that he harbors in his heart, unknown to himself, "a dislike, if not hatred of Jews," not like an ordinary anti-Semite, but simply as a human being who must somehow objectify his need to despise "that stranger, that agony we cannot feel, that death we look at like a cold abstraction." ¹ For Von Berg, the Jew

¹ Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p. 105.
fulfills Heidegger's concept of "the one" upon whom we thrust off the threat of death: "one dies," we say, never imagining the statement to apply to ourselves. "Each man has his Jew, it is the other," Leduc says. "And the Jews have their Jews".¹ The hunger for survival makes accomplices of us all.

Von Berg's sacrifice, however, eradicates his guilt as victimizer and confirms his previously untested assertion that "there are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder".² Von Berg's present action throws Leduc's accusation of complicity into the irrelevant past. Von Berg, in effect, becomes what he does: by dying in Leduc's place he translates his guilt into active responsibility and becomes Leduc's "Jew".

Leduc is now stained by Von Berg's gift of life and must carry on the existential cycle of transmuting his guilt into redemptive action. He is free, like all men, to transcend his present action by choosing a new and redeeming project. If Leduc fights in the Resistance, he will modify the guilt brought on by Von Berg's sacrifice: the death of the weak aristocrat will then be justified by the services of the strong combat officer. Until he performs that action, however, Leduc will feel as morally debased as the Major who also saves his life at the expense of the Other.

Von Berg is the only triumphant character in the play since death will cut him off at his highest point and

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1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p.105.
2. Ibid., p.104.
permanently fix his essence as martyr. His act frees him from alienation and imposes a moral coherence upon his previously contingent world.

The varied threads of the intellectual and emotional debate finally crystallize around the concrete act of Von Berg. A moral norm is unequivocally established: One's life must submit to one's conscience, despite the absence of any external moral criteria. All the characters in the play, particularly the Major, are judged by Von Berg's "Look," and since Von Berg will die, his look becomes uneradicable. Of course the possibility of the Major's moral transcendence in the eyes of others continues to exist, but under the implacable gaze of Von Berg the Major can never alter his constitution as a degraded object.

In 'Incident at Vichy, Miller is much less concerned with defining the Nazi mentality than with dramatizing the reasoning of its uncomprehending accomplices. In fact, to the extent that he does attempt to analyze Nazism he becomes woefully confused. Philip Rahv was undeniably right when he suggested that the playwright was unnecessarily mystifying the Nazi mind by allowing Von Berg to define the Germans' actions as a compensation for their essential vacuity.

'They do these things not because they are German but because they are nothing,' the prince exclaims. 'It is the hallmark of the age - the less you exist the more important it is to make a clear impression.'

As in 'The Misfits' and 'After the Fall', one movement of 'Incident at Vichy' is toward despair, toward

the loss of hopes, illusions, and rationalizations, toward
the inadequacy of reason and logic as well as faith, toward
the erosion of any value that might possibly endow the
word humanity with some positive meaning.

Incident at Vichy presents no solution to the
problem of man's complicity with evil. It recognizes that
the acknowledgement of this complicity elicits guilt which
rushes into the vacuum left by the shattered illusion of
innocence. And perceiving this, the play suggests that the
way out of the resultant dilemma does not lie in the genera-
lization of guilt, which is ultimately self-frustrating and
self-defeating, as the plight of Leduc illustrates. Steeped
in mortification, he generalizes his shame into a universal
condition - 'what scum we are' - and takes refuge from respon-
sibility by losing himself in an abstraction.

Balancing Von Berg against Leduc, the drama
implies that if guilt can be particularized and clarified,
it can perhaps be transformed from masochistic despair into
responsibility. This is what the prince does, and so doing
sets a similar alternative before the man he saves. Symbo-
lized by the wedding ring that has been given to Von Berg
by the boy to return to his mother, and which the nobleman
gives to Leduc along with his pass, guilt and responsibility
are transmitted from one man to the other - the guilt of
being the survivor, and the responsibility of transorming
that guilt into something stronger and more positive than
self-pity.

Understandable, Incident at Vichy has been
attacked by left wing critics. Eric Mottram has accused
Miller of expounding nihilistic despair: "Miller can only see the present repeated endlessly as the future....Miller can suggest no argument for the future based on social change, through economic legislation, education and sexual understanding." ¹ Miller would answer that he is still a liberal, but his faith in the efficacy of social reform has diminished since man's evil, he now feels, is directly related to his fear of existence, an unalterable condition even in the Marxist "utopia."

Tom F. Driver, writing from a theological perspective, criticizes Miller's loss of faith in a "universal moral sanction" and his subsequent failure to discover a conceivable basis for a new one. ² Miller does offer a "lesson" in Incident at Vichy however; if man can awaken to his complicity in evil, he can exchange his guilt for responsibility, as does Von Berg. But Miller admits that "it is immensely difficult to be human precisely because we cannot detect our own hostility in our own actions. It is tragic, fatal blindness...." ³ Driver describes the existential nature of Miller's conclusions:

There being no objective good and evil, and no imperative other than conscience, man himself must be made to bear the full burden of creating his values and living up to them. The immensity of this task is beyond human capacity.... to insist upon a without reference to ultimate truth is to create a situation productive of despair. ⁴

⁴ Driver, Tom F., p.66.
Obviously, however, this moral task is not "beyond human capacity" since Von Berg succeeds in fulfilling it. It is well to remember that Miller based his play on a true story.

Undeniably, Miller's moral imperative is difficult. His attack on Jewish victims like Lebeau and Monceau, who willingly submit to their destructions, may seem callous, especially since Miller concedes the terrible plight of the escaped Jew in occupied Europe. But in the claustrophobic intensity of the drama, Miller succeeds in turning us against these inauthentic characters. He strips away all extenuating circumstances and brings each man into an irredeemable conflict with his fate. There is no mitigation of the harsh necessity to choose ourselves, especially since Miller seems to agree with the Sartrean ethic that what one chooses for oneself, one chooses for all men. Miller is, in essence, dramatizing Sartre's famous account of the freedom one felt in France during the Occupation, "When the choice each of us made of our life was an authentic choice because it was made face to face with death."¹ Man is always capable of saying "no," even to his torturer.

Von Berg chooses to say "no" to the men and circumstances that threaten to degrade him, and he therefore fits Miller's definition of the tragic hero in his early essay, "Tragedy and the Common Man". Although the play is grim, it is not "productive of despair" since the heroic action of a frightened and delicate man sets the norm for all the

characters. If Miller now seems pessimistic about Mankind, he is still optimistic about individual man. Solidarity between two individuals is achieved; a gentile has broken through the ontological barrier that makes an enemy or an object of the Jew; and guilt has been eradicated through heroic action. If it is clear at the end that Evil is unredeemable and that the horror just witnessed will be repeated after the arrival of new prisoners, the cycle of complicity has been momentarily broken and the human reaffirmed.

Miller's analysis of the human hate-mechanism follows closely that in Focus, in 'The Crucible', and in 'After the Fall', but in 'Incident at Vichy' it proceeds almost entirely along discursive lines. Leduc (a psychiatrist) explains, "Jew is only the name we give to that stranger" within everyone. Recognition of this "stranger" would threaten one's sense of purity and power, so each individual finds it necessary to blame someone else for his own inadequacies: "each man has his Jew, it is the other." The "other" - a visible embodiment of death and degradation - can be purged from the social body; indeed it is a positive if not holy deed to do so. Lebeau, a Jewish artist, shows the effect of this attitude upon the scapegoat: "they keep saying such terrible things about us, and you can't answer. And after years and years of it, you.... I wouldn't say you believe it, but.... you do, a little.... You get tired of believing in the truth." Leduc adds, more pointedly, "we have

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p. 57
2. Ibid., p. 57
been trained to die." 1 As long as man chooses not to tolerate his fallibility, sacrificial murder "will be repeated again and again forever." 2 But murder is negation, "and that is why there is nothing and will be nothing," Leduc states. To quote words spoken by a German major, "there will never be persons again. What do I care if you love me?" 3 By refusing to countenance his destructiveness, man becomes infinitely destructive. "I am only angry," Leduc laments, sounding the key idea postulated also by Quentin in 'After the Fall', "that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is not reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience." 4

"What can ever save us?" Von Berg despairs, as the discussion moves from diagnosis to prognosis. Leduc tells the nobleman that there "will be nothing - until you face your own complicity." To affirm their "humanity," men must charitably accept their common failings and selfishness. The humiliation resulting from this acceptance can be meliorated by exchanging "guilt" for "responsibility." Salvation for Miller's characters lies in self-knowledge. 5

The playwright does not penetrate below argumentative surface. None of the speakers supports his position with the

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Incident at Vichy', p. 73
2. Ibid., p.73
3. Ibid., p.74
4. Miller, Arthur. 'After the Fall', p. 45
psychological data that give substance to other works by Miller or to a play like Jean-Paul Sartre's The Victors (Mort sans sepulture, 1946). The Victors involves a similar situation - civilians await interrogation and probably execution in Nazi-dominated France - but intimacies brought up during a frantic self-evaluation supply an experiential basis for Sartre's philosophical stand. In Incident at Vichy, Miller does not specify, except for a few incidental details, the personal impetus behind the claims and counterclaims. His characters, whether blind or visionary, are merely vehicles for theoretical assertion.

Miller has certainly verified his ability to portray mental complexities attendant upon "the fear of being torn away from our chosen image." In this instance he chose to illustrate the universality of his theory on evil and responsibility with a symposium conducted by simple personality types.¹ And he succeeds in stating his argument cogently - although his article "Our Guilt for the World's Evil," does so equally well. What he does not do in Incident at Vichy is lend an emotional shape to the "hatred" he finds resident in all men.

AFTER THE FALL

'After the Fall' is Miller's "most experimental, subtle and profound work. It is a culmination of his many earlier attempts to combine detailed psychological portraiture with a criticism of society and a search for ultimate meaning."¹ In this "most intellectually probing play", Miller has dramatized "what happens to a man after the loss of intellectual innocence."² "In his determination to get as close to 'reality' as possible, Miller has gone inside the head of his protagonist to dramatize Quentin's subjective life. In the process, the objective world virtually disappears to be replaced by a fluid timeless consciousness into which memories come and go at the prompting of will or passion."³ The story of the play, therefore, is not concerned with Quentin's actions in the world, but with his inner search for some pattern in his existence, some 'law' that would explain the disaster of his life.

Therefore, the problem in Arthur Miller's 'After the Fall', as in 'A View from the Bridge', is not only psychological, it has a social aspect, too. In terms of the former, Quentin's traumatic childhood experiences and the relationship between his parents -"a financial arrangement", play a crucial part and give him early lessons in human

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betrayal and selfishness. Later its impact is reflected in Quentin's own relationships with his two wives. Viewed from the social aspect, the theme of innocence has much wider implications than the purely biblical ones. It suggests not only the innocence that belonged to man in his prelapsarian state but also its political counterpart which the political moralists try to exploit by forming House-committees and hurling suspicions on the innocent, independent-minded thinkers and intellectuals. This aspect of the problem Miller had dramatized earlier in 'The Crucible' through the allegorical framework of witch-hunting. All this leads to loss of innocence and violence resulting ultimately in man's atrocities on man. Unfortunately, both these important aspects of the play have been ignored in a bid to discover the autobiographical parallels—a pursuit which somehow can never be recommended as far as dramatic writing is concerned.

When the play first opened at the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre, New York city on January 23, 1964 it instantly gave rise to a fierce and bitter controversy regarding its autobiographical meaning. Isolating the Quentin-Maggie episode and equating the same with the Miller-Marilyn relationship, many a spectator began to question the propriety of washing one's dirty linen in public. One woman called Miller "nauseating as a lover" while some others derided his un gallant attitude towards the female
sex in general. Their consensus was that the work "is not art but a self-indulgent foray into personal catharsis."¹ The professional critics felt equally exasperated. Leslie Hanscom remarked that Miller had "written what is undoubtedly the most nakedly autobiographical drama ever put on public view."² The Time review were refused to accept it as anything but autobiographical and referred to its protagonist as "Quentin-Miller". "Underlying the play is Miller's tormented, intellectualized quest, self justification with the audience enjoined to share his guilt and pronounce his absolution." The play's ultimate message, according to the reviewer, was nothing more than a piece of plain advice that "when life becomes unbearable find a new woman and start a new life."³ Robert Brustein dubbed it as "A three-and-one-half hour breach of taste, a confessional autobiography of embarrassing explicitness..... a piece of tabloid gossip, an act of exhibitionism, which makes us voyeurs." He added that the play was "wretched.... shapeless, tedious, overwritten, and confused, composed of endless palaver with shallow characterization."⁴ A more damaging criticism came from Richard Gilman who observed "Miller has simply laid out the raw materials and done nothing to transform or transfigure it. And what is worse, he has engaged in a

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³ Times, 83 (Feb.21, 1964), p.54.
process of self-justification which at any time is repellant but which becomes truly monstrous in the absence of any intelligence, craft or art." He further added; "there is almost no drama at all, no true confrontation, no movement from confrontation to understanding; there are only wind, shadows and purple smoke." The critic, once again, complained of autobiography being the cause of the play's ruin. It has been rightly observed by Robert Martin that "if the shadow of McCarthyism had fallen over The Crucible the ghost of Marilyn Monroe descended even more heavily on 'After the Fall'. "Miller's self-consciousness is a form of dishonesty that conceals a misogynistre strain and self-justification on the apparent remorse." It ruined the play's true dramatic meaning. It may, however, be pointed out here that, according to Miller, the two-thirds of the play had already been written before Marilyn Monroe's death in 1962 and hence the autobiographical parallel seems overstressed to the exclusion of the real merit of the play. The defense of 'After the Fall' was led by the New York Times, critic, Howard Taubman, who concluded a highly favourable review, in which he adamantly refused to become embroiled in the drama's autobiographical over-tones, by urging his readers to "rejoice that Arthur Miller is back

with a play worthy of his mettle." Norman Nadel of the New York World-Telegram and sun was equally impressed by the drama's 'fine structure' and 'searing power'. "It will be a long time, he wrote, 'before another playwright will reveal more about the form and content of man's self-examination." Miller defended himself by repudiating all autobiographical allusions and intentions whatsoever. "That man up there isn't me," he said by referring to Quentin, and added "a playwright doesn't put himself on the stage, he only dramatizes certain forces within himself." Insisting that "the character of Maggie, which is great part seems to underlie the fuss, is not in fact, Marilyn Monroe." He further said:

Maggie is a character in a play about the human animal's unwillingness or inability to discover in himself the seeds of his own destruction. Maggie is in this play because she most perfectly exemplifies the self-destructiveness which finally comes when one views oneself as pure victim. Miller felt rightly disgusted with this sort of literary "game of Find the Author" which, though sometimes interesting as pure gossip, "has nothing at all to do with the value of the work which depends or ought to on its general application to other men besides himself." In other words, it makes no difference whether the playwright is in the work or not so long as its theme has a universal bearing.

What is important is "the synthesis made of the material" rather than whether this or that actually is or note a fact in the person’s life, the critics have generally ignored the truth about the human situation represented in this play. They have overlooked the forest for the trees.

When looked more closely, we find two threads running side by side in this play. One is that of Quentin's relationships with his former two wives, which is very much in the forefront, particularly in Act Two; the other thread, and no less important from the viewpoint of the social background of the play, is that of vital social relationships between other characters, such as Lou and Mickey, Lou and Quentin and others. The House Committee on Un-American Activities is yet another powerful image of man's suspicion and cruelty toward man. It is a richly suggestive device to demonstrate more dramatically how human relationships fumble and fail and breakdown under social pressures. Lou, for example, who is a "saintly professor of law" and a suspected communist sees this happening in his own relationship with his wife. He tells Quentin: "It's Shaken her terribly my being subpoenaed and all those damned headlines. Despite everything, it does affect one's whole relationship."^2

In Lou there might be a shadow of Miller's own, especially his well-known communistic associations in the past; in fact, Quentin tells Lou, "a radical past is not a leprosy—we only turned left because it seemed the truth was there."^3

What is more significant in the play is not whether Miller

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Introduction', p.34.
3. Ibid., p.41.
was once a communist or not but the tragic repercussions of social forces on individual lives and social relationship. Mickey, for instance, who too had been subpoenaed for uncertainly more honest of the two, says, "if you do it, Mickey, You are selling me for your own prosperity. If you use my name I will be dismissed. You will ruin me. You will destroy my career."¹ "After such friendship; such love between them; And for so many years'.", Lou and Mickey break apart. Therein lies the quintessence of tragedy - a tragedy of human relationships.

Quentin's mother becomes "a separate person."

This phrase rings like a refrain in the play throughout, and it means a lot in the context of its theme. It is a play about separateness and togetherness. Separateness in the sense that commitments to others are broken, forgotten or set aside. Quentin, who could not bear to be a separate person, keeps fluctuating in his commitments to Lou. Max, his boss and Louise, his first wife, both tell him not to "endanger his whole firm to defend a Communist". Louise even says, "you tend to make relative out of people."² But Quentin says, "I am defending Lou because I love him, yet the society transforms that love into a kind of treason, what they call an issue and I end up suspect and hated."³ He does not want to be a separate person and he does not want to consign that "decent broken man who never wanted anything but the good of the world" to hell. But, then, he

2. Ibid., p. 34.
3. Ibid., p. 62.
also says, "I really don't want to be known as a Red Lawyer; and I really don't want the newspapers to eat me alive; and if it come down to it Lou could defend himself."\(^1\) In other words, Quentin's loyalty and integrity are constantly changed and affected by external social pressures. The first Act of the play is really concerned with Quentin's commitment to Lou. His commitment to others has to be determined in the light of this fact. In Louise's words, he has to decide what he feels about "a certain human being" and "then may be he'll decide what he feels about other human beings, clearly and decisively."\(^2\) Fortunately for Quentin, Lou is killed by a subway train. Quentin heaves a genuine sigh of relief and feels a secret sense of joy, "the joy I felt now that my danger had spilled out on the subway track."\(^3\) He feels a sense of "that joy, that joy when a burden dies.... and leaves you safe."\(^4\) Quentin cannot absolve himself of having been an accomplice in the entire game of being a separate person. He, ultimately, confesses it to Maggie:

"Yes, I lied, Every day. We are all separate people. I tried not to be, but finally one is a separate person. I have to survive too, honey." 5

Quentin's guilt can be seen in terms of the guilt of the survivor. Holga's remark, "no one they did not kill can be innocent again,"\(^6\) haunts him. At times, he seems to indulge in rationalization and self-justification, but, then, he

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2. Ibid., p. 61.
3. Ibid., p. 65
4. Ibid., p. 66
5. Ibid., pp. 110-111.
is seldom blind to his own selfishness and innate violence. He openly admits: "I declare, I am not innocent: nor good."¹

The play opens with Quentin facing the terrifying fact of choice. He has to make a decision whether he should or should not marry for the third time. The decision is terrifying because, as he says, "I have two divorces in my safe deposit box." Turning to Holga, his prospective wife, he adds, "I tell you frankly, I'm a little afraid."² This provides him an opportunity to indulge in serious introspection, to review his past life and career and relationships with other men and women, particularly with his friend Lou and his two former wives, Louise and Maggie. He finally arrives at an understanding of the truth and "the need to concede the inconstancy and violence of man and yet to renew love in the face of this knowledge. He learns, in the course of the play, to accept that the world which he inhabits is a world seen after the Fall."³ But he arrives at this truth the harder way by breaking down the barriers of self-defence in a terrifying moment of self-examination. In this deeply analytical and self-critical mood, Quentin has to break through the private recesses and hidden motives of his mind in an honest manner, which reveal to us the tragedy of his soul.

2. Ibid., p. 13.
Quentin arrives on the scene "weighed down with a sense of his own pointlessness and the world's. His success as an attorney has crumbled in his hands as he sees only his own egotism in it and no wider goal beyond himself."¹ He quite the firm because he says, "I felt I was merely in the service of my own success."² The pursuit of success, Quentin realizes, is merely one aspect of man's egotism, which leads to cruelty or violence and, finally, to his separation from his fellow human beings. It is a source of guilt and evil in society. Herein Quentin anticipates the conflicts of Walter in Miller's next play, 'The Price'. Looking back over his life, Quentin reads objectively and realizes "that for many years I looked at life like a case at law, a series of proofs. When you are young you prove how brave you are, or smart; then, what a good lover; then a good father; finally how wise, or powerful or what-the-hell-ever."³ But disillusioned with everything, Quentin can now see that underlying it all is a presumption "that I was moving on an upward path towards some elevation...... I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that remained was the endless argument with oneself-this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench."⁴ The metaphor employed in this speech is that of trial. This is so not only because Quentin is a lawyer and can talk in legal terminology but also because he

3. Ibid., p. 13.
is actually put on trial by his own awakened conscience. In his case, paradoxically enough, Quentin himself is both the judge and the defaulter, the prosecutor and the prosecuted. However, his being a lawyer by profession and the legal metaphor of trial being at the centre of the play are crucial motives for an understanding of his quest for meaning in life and society. The judge does not sit somewhere up there in the sky but in one’s own heart. Quentin has simply to turn his gaze inwards to realize that. The whole drama of the plaguing conscience is thus beautifully enacted before us. Talking about it in an interview with Ronald Hayman, Miller points out that "it is the play most related to 'Death of a Salesman'. In one the event is inside 'the brain and in the other the brain is inside event.'\(^1\)

Quentin is suddenly appalled by the discovery of his own potential for violence in personal and social relationships. He is amazed at his ability to hurt others and to be hurt by others. On the verge of remarrying for the third time, he becomes aware of his own responsibilities for the world's evil and the reality of the human situation. The playwright has adopted Quentin's point of view to reflect the witchery and treachery of relations with his former two wives and his friends, Lou and Mickey, and also the bond between his own parents are sensitively portrayed.

An obvious advantage of a memory play is that it allows a greater freedom to its author in terms of the time span to be covered. Quentin's mind goes way back into his own childhood and he recollects how he was introduced to the mechanics of treachery at an early age. Recalling an occasion when he was tricked into staying at home when the

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rest of the family went to sea, he says, "They sent me out for a walk with the maid. When I came back the house was empty. God why is betrayal the only truth that sticks". Several other similar incidents revealing the breakdown of deeply personal and intimate bonds of human love and relationship flash across his mind. The breaking apart of Lou and Mickey, his great friends, is still alive in his imagination. He also recalls how Lou had been degraded and humiliated by his nagging wife, Elsie, when the former wanted to publish a book he had written about the nefarious activities of the House-Committee. Elsie unsympathetically ridiculed him by saying that he would be "incapable of defending himself." This easy recourse to treachery and violence between those who ought to be united by love makes Quentin think of Lou's remark, "if everyone broke faith there would be no civilization."  

Quentin's own relations with his former two wives are also reviewed in this process of self-scrutiny. His coldness rebuffed both Louise and Maggie. It drove Louise to psychotherapy, and Maggie to suicide. Louise felt ignored and out to the quick by his cold heartedness as revealed in the following conversation between them:

Louise: We don’t seem.... married.
Quentin: We?
Louise: You don’t pay any attention to me....

2. Ibid.
Quentin: But I do pay attention just last night I read you my whole brief.

Louise: Quentin, you think reading a brief to a woman is talking to her?

Quentin: But that's what's on my mind.

Louise: But if that's all on your mind, what do you need a wife for?

Miller seems to be looking at the whole problem from a social perspective. Quentin's preoccupation with his success as an attorney tells upon his marital relationships. Human relationships fail to flourish in a society where the drive for success seems to smother the feelings of love. What Louise insists upon and does not get from Quentin is love. What Quentin wants, in Louise's words, is to "fly around in a constant bath of praise." She frankly tells him, "Quentin, I am not a praise machine." She dismisses him with the same contemptuous exclamation which, ironically enough, his mother had used for his father, and Elsie for Lou: "Good God! what an idiot."

Quentin, by now, has witnessed "the death of love." He saw it in the case of his own parents, in the case of his own relationship with Louise. He admits, "I am bewildered by the death of love. And my responsibility for it." At this juncture he meets Maggie and enquiries, "you're all love, aren't you?" "That's all I am," she responds. Maggie herself

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4. Ibid., p.72.
in fact, is love torn and seeks an emotional dependence on Quentin. She tries to establish her own identity by reminding herself, "I know who I am. I am Quentin's friend." She needs more love than Quentin himself. He lamely admits it to her: "You need more love than I thought." Quentin is slowly disillusioned. Their relationship completes yet another cycle "in which love, at first freely proposed, was then selfishly withdrawn, a cycle in which fidelity, hopefully sought, was soon bitterly lost."  

Quentin's quest for love is finally tempered by the knowledge that man would even "kill those he holds dear to ensure his own survival. Love and survival are the two chief motives in the play, and they go hand in hand. Love is frequently set aside when it is a question of survival. Love is even replaced by violence for the sake of survival. Quentin asks: "Is love enough? What love? What wave of pity will ever reach this knowledge— I know how to kill?" He generalizes this truth and says, "I am not alone, and no man lives who would not rather be the sole survivor of this place than all its finest victims! "What's the cure?" he asks. And replies, "No, not love, I loved them all, And gave them willing to failure and to death that I might live..." Incidentally, 'The Survivor' was the former title of this play, which clearly suggests the theme of survival. The broken

1. Miller, Arthur. 'After the Fall', p.72.
2. Welland, Dennis. 'Arthur Miller', p.68.
3. Miller, Arthur. 'After the Fall', p.119.
tower of the German Concentration Camp is a cruel reminder of the same instinct in man—the instinct to victimize others for his own survival. Le Duc, a psychiatrist in 'Incident at Vichy', a play written soon after 'After the Fall', accepts this as true. Like Quentin before him, he recognizes the instinct of violence in man and says:

"I am only angry that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is not reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience." 1

Le Duc also recognizes that it is a fact of man's nature to require a victim. "Each man," he says "has his Jew; it is the other. And the Jews have their Jews." 2 Quentin, like Le Duc, recognizes his own guilt and responsibility toward the larger social evil when he admits to Maggie, "I'm all the evil in the world, aren't I? All the betrayal, the broken hopes, the murderous revenge." 3

Thematicallly, 'After the Fall' and 'Incident at Vichy' are "two variations on the same theme", 4 the theme of guilt of the survivor and the need to recognize one's complicity in the larger social evil. Instead of blaming others, Quentin learns to implicate himself with that cruelty which he discovers in others. Even the desire to turn his back on dying Maggie no longer absolves him from back and answers:

"In Quentin's name. Always in your own blood-covered name. You turn your back." Cruelty and violence, when defined in terms of the self, imply "concentration on self to the exclusion and eventually to the extinction of others." It breeds

2. Arthur, Miller, 'After the Fall', p. 111.
4. Ibid., p. 120.
social fission and fractures the bond of human relationship.

An important turning point in Miller's concept of tragedy as evinced in this play is, however, that the knowledge of man's complicity with social evil does not propel the protagonist to seek recourse in death or suicide with a bullet in his head. On the contrary he decides to live; in Quentin's own words, "to stop impersonating, that's all! To, live-to live in good faith if only with my guts! Yes! To be no more, Disgusted no more ! Afraid no more to show what Quentin, Quentin is:"

Quentin's survival is important from the viewpoint of theme as well as the structure of the play. Thematically, the play is about survival; structurally, Quentin is the hero who would nullify his role as a narrator. There is, in fact, a kind of symbolic death and resurrection. Quentin says at one place: "I am a stranger to my life." In his own words, "the past is holy and its horrors are holiest of all." He has passed through those horrors; he has passed through the flame and has achieved a sort of baptism of fire. His death would have been such an escape compared with his confrontation of reality. It may be important to recall Holga's horrible nightmare. She tells Quentin:

I dreamed I had a child, and even in the dream I saw it was my life, and it was an idiot, and I ran away. But it always crept on to my lap again, clutched at my clothes. Unit I thought, if I could kiss it, what-ever in it was my own, perhaps I could sleep. And I bent to its broken face, and it was horrible,... but I kissed it. I think one must finally take one's life in one's arms, Quentin.

2. Ibid., p. 93.
3. Ibid., p. 31.
Quentin carries home the truth of Holga's dream and justifies it by living. He does not seek an escape from life, however idiotic life might be. He rather chooses to live. He puts into practice what he advises Maggie: "Do the hardest thing of all - see your own hatred and live." Quentin not only learns to face the truth against himself but, what is still more difficult, to live the truth.

'After the Fall' is a social drama but of a new kind. In it impersonal social themes are projected through the dilemmas of the individual. Social issues are turned into personal issues, which, in turn, makes it more effective as a tragedy. It seeks to raise "the truth-consciousness of mankind." It is not man as an isolated individual, that Miller is concerned with but man in relation to others in a given social order; tortured, disillusioned, thwarted and driven to disaster by the forces of that world of which he is a member. Quentin moves across the stage not as a free and detached individual, not even as an individual in relation to his wives, but as a member of that society in which those personal relationships flourish and fail. His marital relationships form a part of the larger, waster network of social relationships. To study this play merely in autobiographical terms or in terms of the theme of marital maladjustment would be to limit the scope of the drama. Before the beginning of Quentin's story and beyond its ending lies

1. Miller, Arthur. 'After the Fall', p.119.
a definite social world that is as important to an appreciation of the play as the immediate action which takes place on the stage before us. The skill with which Miller makes us aware of the larger significance of his theme, imparts depth to the play. The whole concept of life, man's relation to his world, his place and responsibility in it are ultimately involved. Even its, title 'After the Fall', in this context acquires more secular under-tones than the purely ecclesiastical ones. It suggests a fall from an ideal social world which Quentin seems to have in mind when he says: "Remember—when there were good people and bad people? And how easy it was to tell: The worse son of a bitch, if he loved Jews and hated Hitler, he was a buddy. Like some kind of a paradise compared to this."¹

The world depicted in the play and the world Quentin has in mind are two different worlds. The hiatus between these two worlds contains the essence of tragedy. The real world, which is full of betrayal and breach of faith, selfishness and hypocrisie, violence and the loss of innocence, suggests a fall from that ideal society Quentin refers to as "some kind of a paradise." Quentin's search for knowledge represents man's archetypal search for truth enacted long ago by Job and Oedipus; and his ultimate salvation as a tragic hero lies in that. In Quentin's search for knowledge Miller discovers a subject and a theme of genuinely tragic proportions. Quentine is a "portrait of the thinking man in our society."²

And his tragic flaw is that he cannot lie unto himself. "What's moral?" asks Maggie of him at one point in the play, and he replies: "To tell the truth even against yourself."

The truth that he discovers is that he too has been an accomplice in the larger evil. He feels tortured and agonized by this discovery and does not know what his future course of action should be - to marry or not to marry for the third time? He is afraid that his third marriage, like the former, two, might also end in fiasco. While the play puts forth Quentin's profound suffering and agony through the deep split in his mind about his future course of action, it also brings to light the colossal sense of waste that his life has been so far. The overwhelming feeling, as in all tragedies, is certainly one of loss and suffering.

The form of the memory play and the confessional monologue help enhance its tragic effect. The real action of the play is composed of dramatized memories. In fact, the most crucial and significant moments of Quentin's life are presented to us through association of ideas in his mind rather than in a chronological order. It is more like an impressionistic painting. It seems very difficult to sift out what is truly important from a heap of broken details dovetailing into Quentin's memory. It is one of the finest introspective plays ever written; it assumes "the form of the interior dialogue, a progress in self-discovery accomplished without a psychiatrist." Miller called the play "a trial, the trial of a man by his own conscience, his

1. Leonard Mos, p. 79.
own values, his own deeds." 1 The listener, " he said, "who to some will be a psychoanalyst, to others God, is Quentin turned at the edge of the abyss to look at his experience, his nature and his time." 2 But this highly introspective and subjective looking play assumes broader proportions of a social tragedy because its real subject is not an individual, that is Quentin, but Quentin's relations with others. It is not a specialised case study of one man's mind and career but a study of the mystery of human nature in all its complexity. Quentin ceases to be just an isolated individual. He represents Man whose nature is "the only source of violence which has come closer and closer to destroying the race." 3 The play dramatizes this instinct for violence in man which he uses for his own survival. The image of the broken tower of the German concentration camp in the background of the action is a highly suggestive symbol of the same instinct for violence. From the point of view of tragedy it is equally important. In the first place it represents Quentin's own wrecked condition; secondly, it is also suggestive of the breakdown of human relationships. Every time Quentin thinks of the breakdown of vital human relationships, the tower gradually begins to light. That is the place where Holga took him once and introduced him to the gruesome spectacle of man's atrocities on man. "The

1. "Foreword to After the Fall", p. 32.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
door to the left," she said, "leads into the chamber where their teeth were extracted for gold; the drain in the floor carried off the blood. At times, instead, of shooting they were individually strangled to death."\(^1\) The same instinct for violence is reflected through the private lives of individuals, particularly that of Quentin himself. He says, "why do I feel an understanding with this slaughter house?"\(^2\) Again, while thinking of his personal relationships he reiterates: "even this slaughter-house! Why does something in me bow its head like an accomplice in this place!"\(^3\) He has seen and known identical atrocities in his own family between his parents, his friends, himself and his two wives. He vividly recalls the day when his father broke down during the Depression and his mother instead of showing sympathy and understanding rebuked him. Quentin saw the bond of love and matrimony break for the bond of money.

In some of these scenes from the past Quentin gets emotionally involved; in others, particularly those from his childhood, he is seen observing painfully the fact about this own past. "This pulling of Quenting in and out of his own past, as it were, is itself intensely dramatic. Time, space, and action, are as freely used in the play as they are compressed in the framing action, the very counterpoint between the apparent disorder and complexity of the one and the order and simplicity of the other adding still more to the dramatic intensity of the play." - This gives

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2. Ibid., p. 25.
3. Ibid., p. 39.
to Miller's play the richness of the novel form usually associated with the works of Joyce and Proust. The form provides extra ordinary intensity to the tragedy of Quentin, which is essential to the realization of its ultimate power as a social tragedy. Through the pool of individual consciousness, a vital human experience in terms of its larger social implications has been dramatized, imparting universality to a private-looking drama of the soul.
THE PRICE

"The Price", premiered at the Morosco Theater on February 7, 1968, was greeted by cordial reviews and the dramatic critics found it "engrossing, entertaining superbly theatrical"¹ and "unquestionable, one of Miller's two or three best plays."² Inspite of the little "action" in the play, it proved to be "spellbinding in its intensity."³ Downer considers it "a revival in which Miller returns to and revitalizes that quintessential American family, the Lomans. Written with economy but not miserliness, it is concerned with ultimate things...."⁴ "Like most of Miller's plays, 'The Price' is about an individual's confrontation with his past. It shows the gradual stripping away of habitual excuses and illusions until the protagonist comes face to face with truths he has been reluctant to admit."⁵ The play has been called as "Miller's most Ibsenite piece to date in the sense of past influencing the present."⁶ The device linking past and present, subjective and objective, in this play is the scale of contents of a New York brown-stone mansion scheduled for demolition.⁷

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Superficially, "The Price" is a conversational piece like 'Incident at Vichy' which preceded it because there is little physical action in it. The entire action takes place in an attic of an ancestral house of the Franz family, and the dialogue takes precedence over action. Moreover, the play, at first sight, appears to be a conglomeration of Miller's earlier plays, particularly 'All My Sons' and 'After the Fall'. In fact, the same themes of love and betrayal, success and survival, have been dealt with in this play as in those ones. "In some ways 'The Price' is a continuation of the line Miller started in 'All My Sons' and 'Death of a Salesman'. Victor is the same sort of humane idealist as Chris, and the conflict between the two brothers in 'The Price', like the conflict between father and son in 'All My Sons', is basically a conflict between two social attitudes."¹ A critic, on this basis, has even pointed out that "in form and structure it harkens back to 'All My Sons' in its theme, it is similar to 'After the Fall'.² "The play is a "continuation of the debate begun in earlier works such as 'After the Fall' about the ethics of survival."³ This actually shows that Miller is consistently concerned with the treatment of human values like love and loyalty and the corresponding socio-economic pressures which compel a man to pursue success at the cost of these values in a bid to survive in the rat-race.

"The Price" is not concerned with these issues in a superficial way, nor in the intellectual manner of a play of ideas. It deals with these and other fundamental human problems through the perspective of a tragedy. Arthur Miller, once again in this play, uses realism as the foothold of tragedy by using a family structure, yet he transcends all parochial concerns and addresses himself to certain questions which lurk at the bottom of the present day social dilemma. Its plot is not straight and flat and "the conversation is geared not so much to the pursuit of idea as to the exploration of characters and the kind of lives they have lived." The conflict between the two brothers, lying at the heart of the play, is the soul of the tragedy. Family is the locus of action. But "The Price" is not "merely a domestic play, since the main force of the tragedy springs from the underlying tension between individual freedom and socio-economic pressures." Miller also displays a rare economy of characters and the play, as a whole, has a very neat and tight structure.

"The Price" dramatizes the ambivalent relationship of Victor and Walter Franz, the two brothers who form the dramatic nucleus of the play. In a soon-to-be demolished family house, two brothers meet again after the lapse of many years to dispose of their parents' property. Their confrontation leads them to examine the events and the

qualities of their very different lives - and the price that each of them has had to pay. Miller, in fact, returns in this play, "to his perpetual gladiatorial arena the family, in a renewed exploration of the relationship between actions and consequences, guilt and responsibility and self-preservation and commitment to others."

The play takes place in the attic room to which Victor and his father had retired after the crash of 1929 had reduced the Franz family from prosperity to relative poverty. Presumably, the management of the family affairs had been put into the hands of a number of uncles who took over the ten-room brownstone mansion and arranged for the renting out of rooms. At an undetermined time not long after the loss of the family wealth, Mrs Franz also died and Walter left home to attend medical school. This left the younger brother, Victor (who would have been about twelve in 1929), and his father alone in a two-room apartment on the upper floor of the house. Here they lived together with all of the family furniture which they had unaccountable crowded into the attic with them. About 1934, Victor went to university and shortly thereafter met Esther, his future wife. In 1936, at about nineteen, Victor felt that he could no longer finance his own education and support his father, and he went to his brother Walter, then in medical practice, and asked for a loan of $500. The loan was refused. Not

feeling that he could abandon his responsibilities. Victor gave up his plan to become a doctor, joined the New York police force, and continued to support his father until the old man died in about 1959. Because of the resentment he felt towards his brother, Victor had never been able to communicate with him easily and the two drifted apart. Since it appeared that the proceeds from the sale of the family furniture should be divided, Walter put off disposing of it for sixteen years until the building was about to be torn down. Finally he tries unsuccessfully to reach his brother, then goes ahead and contacts a used-furniture dealer to come to the apartment to negotiate the sale of the estate.

As the men confront each other in the cluttered attic of their parent's home, their latent antagonism quickly flares into overt hostility, and some initial comments about the prices of furniture explode into a blistering quarrel over the less tangible but more pervasive prices each has paid for the life he has fashioned. When Victor's loyal but weary wife Esther, and an elderly Jewish furniture dealer named Gregory Solomon looking on like embarrassed and helpless referees, the two brothers begin to slash at each other through the accumulated layers of 'protective armour' each has developed over the years.

"Illusions and rationalizations are punctured by the verbal rapiers the two men wield against each other until at the end of the duel each has been laid bare to the bone of reality and forced to see some of the truths he has attempted to conceal. And each then departs, having gained some new awareness but still essentially powerless to alter the role he has played for more than half his life." 1

The plot, at first sight, looks simple. In a given situation two individuals acted differently. The question involved is who acted wisely and whose decision was the right decision. The answer to this question is, however, not as simple as it appears. It involves an examination of their entire background and circumstances. Not only that, it also involves a research of their hearts. This whole process, consisting of their viewpoints, constitutes the backbone of the play. The main action consists of an open confrontation between the two brothers, Victor Franz and Walter Franz, who have been estranged for sixteen years. The basic question involved is one of choices. In its essence, thus, 'The Price' has the making of an existential tragedy. Existentialists claim that man is surrounded by objective uncertainties and that in a world full of possibilities man has to make a choice. Both the brothers in this play were called upon to make their choices at a crucial stage when their father went bankrupt. One of them decided to stay with the father and support him; the other decided to walk away in order to brighten his own prospects of success. Now when they have lived according to their choices, they are made to examine the quality of life each has lived and the Price each has had to pay for it. This whole process reveals the anguish of their hearts. The tragic feeling is evoked through the enactment of the whole process and the accompanying irony that it cannot be reversed. Man, caught in this kind of social dilemma, as
if in a pit, struggles to escape, but having gone too far in life, no escape is possible. However, in this battle he achieves a measure of greatness and his fate touches us all.

When the play opens we find Victor tormented and growing increasingly in easy by the prospect of his impending retirement. He is not only afraid of the emptiness that lies ahead but also frustrated and amazed at the bleakness of the kind of life he has lived so far:

I look at my life and the whole thing is incomprehensible to me. I know all the reasons and all the reasons, and it ends up nothing. 1

He is quite perplexed. He knows everything, but he can do nothing about it. He is evidently disillusioned with his life—a life sacrificed to unrewarding moral scruples about love and fidelity. Twenty-eight years of his service in the Police department, which made for one half of his life, seem to have been a pure waste. The irony is that "he could never stand the sight of blood. He was shy, he was sensitive......" yet he marched straight into the most violent profession there is". 2 Victor admits:

I'm not even sure any more what I was trying to accomplish. I look back now, and all I can see is a long brainless walk in the street. 3

Thus, the tragic awareness, is already with him when the play opens. He knows he has not been able to accomplish anything in life, yet he tries to justify the choices made by him because, from his viewpoint, that was the right decision at the moment. His wife, Esther, who too is

3. Ibid., p. 43.
deeply frustrated and becomes alcoholic as a result, refers to the agony of their lives: "I don't know where in hell I am, Victor! .... all these years we've been saying, once we get the pension we're going to start to live..... It's like pushing against a door for twenty five years and suddenly it opens..... and we stand there." They never were anything, they were always about to be.

Her frustration is clearly exhibited in her dualistic attitude toward her brother-in-law. On the one hand she resents the aloof individual whose success has been a corollary of his abandonment of his father and brother, and she proudly contrasts Victor's fidelity to his father with Walter's calculated neglect. On the other hand she is herself enmeshed in the success idea that Victor has long abandoned, and even though she resents Walter's attitude toward her husband, she respects and even begrudgingly admires her brother-in-law's apparent purpose, confidence, and affluence.

Consequently when Walter proffers his help by offering his brother his share of the sale, Esther quickly urges Victor to take it, accepting Walter's kindness at face value. And in her demand she berates her husband for his hesitancy.

"You throw this away," she threatens, "you've got to explain it to me. You can't go on blaming him or the system or God knows what else! You're free and you can't make a move, Victor, and that's what's driving me crazy."  

Walter, the other brother who has apparently been a success in the rat race, has also paid a heavy price for his success by way of a divorce and a nervous breakdown. He seems to have realized how fruitless and meaningless his whole material success has been. When Esther says, "you seem altogether different!", Walter replies, "I think I am, Esther, I live differently, I think differently". He owned three nursing homes but he has "pulled out of the market" and fifty percent of his time is now spent in City hospitals. He now feels alive for the first time after having given up the chase for material success and money-making. But it has all been at the cost of his own health and domestic happiness.

Having peered into the abyss and survived, he now has a deeper comprehension of the motivations that spurred him.

You start out wanting to be the best and there's no question that you do need a certain fanaticism. Until you've eliminated everything extraneous - including people. And of course the time comes when you realize that you haven't merely been specializing in something - something has been specializing in you. You become a kind of instrument... that cuts money out of people, or fame out of the world. And it finally makes you stupid. Power can do that. You get to think that because you frighten people they love you. Even that you love them - And the whole thing comes down to fear. But there's one virtue in going nuts - provided you survive, of course. You get to see the terror-not the screaming kind, but the slow, daily fear you call ambition, and cautiousness, and piling up the money." 2

And analyzing this terror, Walter relates it to his abandonment of his father. He views his flight as an escape generated by the annihilating fear that his

father's failure and degradation could also be his legacy. He even suggests that Victor's choice to remain with the elder Franz was a manifestation of that same fear.

Vic, we were both running from the same thing. I thought I wanted to be tops, but what it was untouchable I ended in a swamp of success and bankbooks, you on civil service. The difference is that you haven't hurt other people to defend yourself. And I've learned to respect that, Vic; you simply tried to make yourself useful. 1

Both the brothers made their choices in the past and now both feel agonized with their respective, independent decisions and each thinks that the other made a better choice. It brings to mind the poignant irony concealed in Robert Frost's poem - "The Road Not Taken" - where the traveller feels at the end of his journey that it was the choice of the wrong road which made all the difference. The dreadful irony of the situation is that there is no going back and starting it all over again. That, in fact, provides the bed-rock for Miller's tragic vision in this play, Victor cannot retrace and start his career all over again; Walter can't begin his family life afresh. Victor tells this to Walter when the letter offers him a job:

Walter, I haven't got the education, what are you talking about? You can't walk in with a splash and wash out twenty-eight years. 'There's a price people play. I've paid it, it's all gone. I haven't got it any more. Just like you paid didn't you? You've got no wife, you've lost your family. You're rattling around all over again from a scratch? 2

No, obviously not none of them can start all over again from a scratch. There is, all along in the play, a dominant feeling of loss, an irretrievable loss, and that is one of the most essential features of this play which contribute to its ultimate impact as a tragedy. The "straggling heap of unhewn stones" was all that remained of the sheepfold Michael was building and that presented a strong visual image of his own dissolute life; similarly, here in this play, the old furniture which the two brothers have gathered together to dispose off before the building is demolished, provides an adequate visual image of the waste that their own lives have been. What the play succeeds in bringing out is the process of dissolution and reducing of man's achievements and his very life to shapelessness and disintegration. The play is not a tragedy in the conventional sense of the world but it has a definite tragic vision. The loosening of the bond between man and man has been so disturbingly depicted with the help of short, crisp expository and punching dialogue that it portends a future of meaninglessness in which man has nothing to strive for.

The dominant metaphor in the play is money. The title, 'The Price' is just another variation on the same. It is not only the price of the old furniture that is in question but also the price of one's career, one's happiness, and above all, one's integrity. To quote Morris Freedman: "Repeted variations are rung on the concept of price. What price does one pay for a happy marriage? For a successful career? To fulfill ambition? For breaking-off family ties? For filial sacrifice?... Nothing is bought, nothing is bargained for, nothing is received without an
appropriate payment. Walter tells this to Victor: "You wanted a real life. And that is an expensive thing: it costs" Victor had to pay a heavy price in terms of his career and ambition for the sake of his loyalty. But he knows the power that money has. He says to Soloman, the furniture dealer, that "ther's no respect for anything but money." Years ago when he was supporting his father, his brother, Walter who has then a successful surgeon used to contribute a meager sum of five dollars a month, "but the few times he'd come round, the expression on the old man's face—you'd think God walked in." Demanding a heavy price for the furniture Victor says, "if you got that (money) you got it all you're even lovabele! ....Give me the price."

'Money' is certainly the most crucial operating metaphor throughout the play. It gives the play its rich texture of meaning by individuals. (The entire frame of references of the Great Depression, howsoever, obsolete it might appear in a play written in the late sixties, is intended to provide the socio-economic background that plays a vital part in the tragic drama being enacted before us on the stage.) The Depression is not just an isolated phenomenon that belonged to the thirties and has no relevance in a play written thirty years after. It is, on the contrary, symbolic of the economic forces and the crucial part

3. Ibid., p. 44.
4. Ibid., p. 44.
they play in the drama of human lives. The play explores the ramifications of the drama of human integrity in a society governed by economic considerations. [Esther, too, like Victor, knows the power of money and says, "I want it, Vic. I want money."]

Walter's viewpoint on the other hand, is different. He worked like "an instrument that cuts money out of people." He forsook his parents, his brother, his friends and even his wife for the sake of money. He worked like a money-maniac, evading taxes, cultivating rich patients and building up a rich empire with his three nursing homes. But he has known the terror and "the daily fear you call ambition" associated with "piling up the money." He realized only after his health broke down that he had not been specializing in something," something had been specializing in him. Money made him a monster and, one night, he says "I found myself in the middle of my living room, dead drunk with a knife in my hand, getting ready to kill my wife." Money gave him power but it failed to give him peace and comfort. He confesses it to Victor, "I thought I wanted to be tops, but what it was untouchable. I ended in a swamp of success and bankbooks."

The other key word, besides "money," that has been frequently used in the play, is "love". Love and money do not seem to co-exist. As in life, they exist

2. Ibid., p. 62.
3. Ibid., p. 69.
4. Ibid., p. 71.
exclusive of each other. Love, as a matter of fact, does not exist at all the world dramatized here. Victor thinks that his father loved him and he sacrificed his career to support his father but the most painful discovery for him is that the elder Franz had four thousand dollars with him all the time and he never disclosed this to Victor.\footnote{1} Walter, who is the more pragmatic of the two brothers, tears apart the veil of illusions from Victor and tells him that there was no question of any love falling apart in their house since there was none. There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement.\footnote{1} Even their parents did not love each other. "They were never lovers," says Walter, "she mother said a hundred times that her marriage destroyed her musical career."\footnote{2} An absence of love and the drive for success formed a part of Quentin's self-discovery also in 'After the Fall'. It was the same conflict in 'Death of a Salesman'. Willy became a victim to the law of success and ignored. "The system of love which is the opposite of the law of success .... embodied in Biff Loman"\footnote{3} and by the time Willy recognized that his life had been sacrificed for success.\footnote{1} Thus the tension between money in terms of material success, and thus love in terms of human values has continued to be the forte of Miller's social tragedies.\footnote{1}

and landed up in a hospital where "for the first time," he says, "since we were boys I began to feel... like a brother". Walter, it seems, has reached a stage of self-realization. His proposal to donate the furniture to the salvation Army and thereby save around twelve thousand dollars in taxes simply suggests that Walter is a man of the world compared to Victor who is an idealist. The two brothers basically represent a conflict between two different social attitudes—the pragmatic and the idealistic. In the "Author's Production Note" to the play Arthur Miller has drawn attention to this fact:

"As the world now operates, the qualities of both the brothers are necessary to it, surely their respective psychologies and moral values conflict at the heart of the social dilemma...."

The playwright, once again, stands by his social commitment and "The Price" is an embodiment of his social vision. Compared with 'All My Sons' and 'Death of a Salesman', his social vision has certainly matured. The tension between the two attitudes remains unresolved till the end. From his handling of similar situations in 'All My Sons' and 'Death of a Salesman', Miller's attitude has definitely broadened in this play. Victor and Walter are both victims of a rat race and their lapses and failure are more universal in nature. Miller, in fact, declared in an article he wrote in 1972 that he was beginning to recognize only universal patterns and archetypes behind individual portraits. So far is 'The Price' concerned, this factor would always contribute to its lasting appeal as a tragedy.

In one of the most damaging articles, Robert Brustein tries to find fault with the play for its failure to refer to current political events. He says, "The nations' cities are in total disarray, drowning in swill, torn by violence, our disgraceful involvement in the Vietnam conflict is making large numbers ashamed of being American.... Yet, Arthur Miller, the most public-spirited of dramatists continues to write socio-psychological melo-dramas about Family Responsibility." One wonders how a critic of Robert Brustein's stature could forget that Arthur Miller is a social dramatist and not a topical playwright. Family structure has been used by Miller again, and in this play as well, to reflect the larger social pressures. It may not be proper to isolate the family from the society as a whole. Miller, in reply to an identical question put by Kenneth Tynan during a television interview, said that "a play written in references to current events is likely to be superficial and will be of out date as soon as the events are no longer topical." Robert Brustein also accuses Miller, in the same article, of a lack of seriousness in this play. "A serious play," he says, "in interpreting the lives of its characters, interprets the lives of the auditors, providing images that intensify awareness. But 'The Price' is virtually divorced from concerns that any modern audience can recognize for its own." Once again, the critic seems to deny to this play what it so evidently

2. Ibid.
contains and dramatizes. The equation between love and money cannot be said to be divorced from the concerns of the modern audience, nor has Miller treated it non-seriously in the play. The problem ultimately amounts to one of material prosperity versus moral responsibility.

This conflict can be felt from the very beginning of the play. It has been rightly observed that "structurally, 'The Price' is a tightly wound, electrically charged time-bomb that begins to crackle the moment curtain rises and detonates in a series of perfectly gauged explosions."  

The tightness of the spring begins to recoil when the two brothers confront each other after a gap of sixteen years. Their latent hostility floats to surface and the conversation explodes into an overt post-mortem of their respective behaviour towards their father. The tragic tension also mounts accordingly," as brother lacerates brother in a desperate attempt to justify his life."  

The discussion of the price of furniture leads them forth to a discussion of the price each of has paid for the kind of life he has lived. In this process of bitter recriminations, the past is resurrected but without any deviation from the present. Since the present has to be determined in the light of the past, Miller intelligently unfolds the past story through the dialogue itself between the two brothers. The "Centre Chair" serves all the time as a powerful symbol of the dead father. Unlike Beckett and Pinter who shun the past and whose characters find it difficult to remember what happened as far as yesterday, Miller's social commitment as a playwright forced

2. Ibid., p. 295.
him to tell the story in terms of cause and effect and for that reason he had to rely on restrospection. The tragic feeling is aroused by the irrevocabilty of certain deeds and actions accomplished in the past. Victor, for instance, cannot go back on a decision he took twenty eight years ago. He can at best understand and accept in full measure the impact of that decision on his life. Walter helps him do that. He makes him face facts both past and present.

He says:

We invent ourselves Vic, to wipe out what we know
You invent a life of self sacrifice, a life of duty
but what never existed here cannot be upheld........
And that's all that is standing between us now-an
illusion, Vic. I am not your enemy. It is all an
illusion and if you could walk through it, we could
meet.

Isn't Victor too much a victim of illusion? Perhaps, he is, His choice was based on too many graceful illusions. The scene where Walter confronts Victor in a bid to disillusion him, brings to mind a parallel scene from 'Death of a Salesman' where Biff confronts Willy with "cold facts" and tries to make his father shed his illusions. Victor is not quite prepared for it just as Willy was not. Both Willy and Victor have something in common. They are both impulsive and impractical. Victor refuses Walter's offer of a job just as Willy refused Charley's offer in Salesman. But he is certainly more heroic than "the knowing and affluent Walter (who) is suddenly seen..... as radically weaker that the tried Victor, who even in error made a commitment to others which will now sustain him." ²

If Victor reminds us of Willy, Walter who is more successful reminds us of Willy's brother Ben. He is more pragmatic like Ben. He boldly tells Victor: "I wanted the freedom to do my work. Does that mean I stole your life? You made those choices, Victor! And that's what you've to face!" He would not allow Victor to destroy him "with this saintly self-sacrifice, this mockery of sacrifice.

It is also possible that Walter has been driven into self-justification by an implicit feeling of guilt. Victor's failure does give him a moral edge over his more wealthy and successful brother. Walter also seems to feel like an accomplice in his brother's failure. The only thing is that he wouldn't accept it. He acknowledges the differences between Victor and himself: "The difference is that you haven't hurt other people to defend yourself... you simply tried to make yourself useful." He is evidently trying to atone for his past error by offering Victor a job. But Victor cannot accept Walter's attempt to "walk in with one splash and wash out twenty eight years." He refuses to make a compromise and give Walter the satisfaction of having saved them. He says, "We don't need to be saved, Walter! I've done a job that has to be done and I think I've done it straight." That really constitutes the essential uncompromising attitude of pride of a tragic protagonist. He refuses to settle for half. He refuses Water's offer of a job. No price seems big enough for the loss of his career and happiness in life and Walter can give no compensation for all that Victor has missed in life.

2. Ibid., p. 71.
3. Ibid., 81.
Unlike Prince Von Berg in 'Incident at Vichy' who succeeds in making atonement for his guilt when he gives away his pass of liberty to LeDuc, Walter fails to do that since it is already too late and no escape is possible.

Walter's transformation in the play is however important for an understanding of Miller's emphasis upon the hollowness and futility of a life oriented toward material success. Money fails to give him peace and alienates him from every one. But eventually he reaches a stage where, in Esther's words, he comes "to such an understanding with himself." On the other hand, Victor's disillusionment and acceptance of his fate is even more important from the viewpoint of the play's tragic vision. It might be "impossible to know what is important," yet says Victor, "you've got to make decisions before you know what's involved." That explains the underlying tragic dilemma; namely, "the relation between human freedom and human limitation." and constitutes the essential irony at work in this tragedy which is Sophoclean in conception and execution. The lack of awareness on the part of Victor and Walter reminds us strongly of the ignorance of limited perception of Oedipus. While each of them thought he was taking the right decision, both of them took the wrong decision and that made all the difference. The tension between freedom and determinism is very well maintained throughout and Miller is able to combine, with Sartrean dexterity, "the lines which connect individual choice with social injustice and immorality." He recognizes the

3. Ibid., p. 19.
imperfection of human nature, but also insists on socio-economic forces of as the determining factors in man's life.

It, however, does not absolve man from accepting responsibility for his own actions. The need to "take one's life in one's hand" as Holga put it in 'After the Fall' has been underscored through the Jewish figure of Gregory Solomon in 'The Price'. At eighty nine, he, unlike Victor, still looks for "more possibilities" in life. He, too had to pay a heavy price for his survival, but at the same time, he has faced life without a retreat into illusion. He had a daughter who was young and beautiful. She took her own life and every night, he says, as "I lay down to go to sleep, so she sits there." But he refuses to advertise his sorrows or breakdown under its pressure. He can still laugh and make others laugh. Gregory Solomon is not just a comic figure in the play. He is "a multi-dimensional figure." He has not only age but wisdom and experience that go with age. He serves both as a foil for Victor and as a chorus in this tragic drama. His appearances in Act II are well timed for that matter and when ever the tempers pick up high between the two brothers, he always comes out of the adjoining bed-room with a well calculated remark. His one single remark, for instance: "Time you know is a terrible thing" emphasizes the tragic awareness that lies behind the brother's powerlessness to alter the role each has played for more than half his life. He indirectly points to the painful dilemma facing the two brothers and provides depth and intensity to the tragic vision of the play. When

3. 'The Price', p. 29.
he says, the whole thing is a viewpoint. It's a mental
world,"1 he helps us understand the structure of the
play. The play, after all, consists of three viewpoints
only - those of Victor, Walter and Soloman. Soloman
stands for endurance rather than death. Miller introduced
this concept of the tragic hero in 'After the Fall' and
it persists in 'The Price'. Salvation for Miller's tragic
heroes lies in self-knowledge rather than death, Soloman
is not the hero of the play. He is an actor commentator.
'The Price', in fact, is not the tragedy of an individual,
it is the tragedy of Man and hence there is no one single
character in the play worth the name of a traditional
tragic hero.

Miller's primary interest in 'The Price', it
seems, lies in portraying the tragedy of life and the play
embodies a definite tragic vision, which is wholly independ-
ent of any theoretical definition. It expresses the inter-
connection of man and his world of action, of man with man, and the
human hopes and values with the situation in which they
are exercised. It also depicts that when the inter-
woven threads of human pattern are broken, the fabric falls
apart. Miller treats an entirely realistic family situation
with the skill of the Greek masters of tragedy. He brings
out the quintessential predicament confronting mankind and
presents it in universal terms. Man's endeavour to accom-
plish something in universal terms. Man's endeavour to
accomplish something in life ultimately amounts to inscribing

1. 'The Price', p. 42.
"One's name on a cake of ice on a hot July day." 1 This is so partly because man lives in a world full of socio-economic pressures and his choices are always governed by glorious uncertainties. 2 Nelson, has explicitly announced that the centre of power and provocation of the play lies "in its outstanding humanity, in its deeply sympathetic yet unsentimental depiction of genuine human beings caught in the ordinary but painful attempt to explain and justify their reasons for existence." 2