CHAPTER TWO

ARTHUR MILLER VIEWS ON DRAMA AND DRAMATIC MODE
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Besides being an eminent playwright, screenplay and story writer, Arthur Miller is a great theoretician who has created a significant body of dramatic and critical theories on the contemporary serious drama. He has rendered invaluable contributions to the tradition of 'American Theatre' by elaborately enunciating his critical postulations on the aims, forms and functions of dramatic art. His critical insight, thoughts, and judgement attain maturity, clarity and precision as the dramatist "delves deep into his dramatic art". R.A.Martin has justly evaluated the significance of his dramatic and social formulations:

"Collectively, Arthur Miller's essays on drama and theatre may well represent the single most important statement of critical principles to appear in England and America by a major playwright since the Prefaces of George Bernard Shaw." 1

It is through his essays and 'Preface' that Miller has propounded clearly his social and dramatic principles. He candidly confesses "the theatre as a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say, less alone." 2 Miller's conviction that the theatre should be a "serious business", one that places serious issues before public, appears in various

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forms again and again in his critical compositions, which set forth his beliefs against the background of his plays.

A careful and indepth examination of his plays reveals that Miller as a playwright offers a chance for society to solve some of its major problems. Infact, the post world war society suffered from spiritual aloneness uprootedness, disintegration, loss of faith and moral values, "By the end of last century one could become aware of this growing isolation as one discovers the first indications in the theatre of that sense of alienation both from God and from society which underscores the fact that man's belief in eternity had been shaken."¹ But in presenting this chance, Miller also outlines numerous dilemmas which he feels mankind refuses to face. It is apparent that Miller's central themes accentuate the foremost problems of man's relationship to his fellows. Dennis Welland has appropriately commented on this sort of relationship in his plays. He maintains that Miller's central theme has always been integrity - the integrity of the individual towards himself and towards his fellow human beings - but the cost of the integrity for most of his characters has been life itself."² It has generally been agreed upon by critics that Miller is a playwright who has placed the idea of commitment and responsibility at the centre of his dramatic theory and practice.

and moral involvement in the great issues of his times has imparted his theatre its serious and tragic stature.

Robert Hogan, who first touched upon the tragic status of his plays, has also pointed out that his concepts of social concern and moral responsibility have been the major achievement of Arthur Miller. He says that Miller's plays embodied that austere tradition of western tragedy derived from classical and later models like Sophodes, Racine and Ibsen. According to Hogan two points connect him with the tradition of austere tragedy; first, an individual is pushed to definition, forced to irreclaimable and self-destructive action. That self-destruction is paradoxically an affirmation of morality, for it asserts belief is more important than life. Second, the individual is forced to choose his agony that comes from his awareness.¹ Benjamin Nelson has described him a dramatist with "a sense of purpose"² and traces Miller's concern for themes like personal integrity and social responsibility right through his earliest amateur plays and radio-scripts. The radio script of the "The Pussy Cat and the Expert Plumber who was a Man" suggests the central preoccupation of Miller's mature work. At one point Tom, the cat remarks:

"the one thing a man fears most next to death is the loss of his good name."³ Ronald Hayman, too, notices the

dominance of social perspective in his plays and tries to determine the role of society in them. Regarding "Death of a Salesman" he says, "Miller uses sex as a means of carrying his social argument forward."¹

Miller has, in fact, concentrated on two themes in his plays. The first is that man cannot divorce himself from the rest of humanity. Each person is inevitably linked to all those around him. All the central characters in Miller's plays are involved in a hegira of the soul from Abdication to Awareness. The second major theme - one of universal guilt - is inextricably interwoven with the first. The seven central characters, from 'All My Sons' to 'The Price', feel and acknowledge their guilt emanating from their lack of actions. Miller states his theme bluntly and powerfully- "man cannot escape moral responsibility for his own acts - life being so thoroughly interwoven."²

Miller believed that dramatic art must hold "a lamp upto contemporary reality"³ and in his dramas he earnestly endeavours to illuminate, as well as reflect the condition, and predicament of man, revealing the areas of darkness and tension in modern life and modern consciousness, and the underlying spring of a purpose, an affirmation, and a possible assurance of harmony. "The quality

of inward search and their exploratory nature have enabled his plays to step out of its confining theatrical walls, and walk back, as ultimately all drama should, into the open reality of life."¹

Miller, in fact, explores and delineates negativeness of the society in his plays to bring into the light 'real values' and to create a social awareness. He examines in detail 'man' and his social relationships to formulate a rational stand for mankind. The plays of Arthur Miller, are, therefore, "cultural mile-stones holding within them the hopes, dreams, struggles and ceaseless inquietude of man's conflict with himself and the external world."²

He attempts to eliminate social evils by exploiting the reformatory potential of his art "whose end is the creation of higher consciousness and not merely a subjective attack upon the audience's nerves and feelings."³ Miller's plays "reveal the evolutionary quality of life."⁴ All kind of serious plays, according to him, are ultimately involved with the basic problems. How may a man make of the outside world a home?"⁵ Obviously, he finds the existing world deficient in some significant respects when he compares it with home; it

does not, for instance, have "the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honour"¹ which the very idea of family so spontaneously evokes. To remove this polarity between home and the world he suggests that individuals change themselves as well as the world they are living in. "He is a prophet in the sense that he warns us to the possible bitter harvest that may be reaped from our present limited ways; he calls attention to the moral and ethical decisions that must be made; and he dramatizes the problem and the need for individuality and will. These may well prove to be the ultimate meaning of hope."²

Miller is fully convinced that drama can instruct, that its power to move an audience can be reformatory. While he was still an undergraduate at the University of Michigan in the 1930's he dedicated himself to the task of creating such a drama.

"with the greatest presumption, I am convinced that the great writer was the destroyer of chaos, a man privy to the council of the hidden gods who administer the hidden laws that blind us all and destroy us all if we do not know them." ³

The range of his interests and intensity with which has pursued the twin concepts of truth and morality as the highest priority in his work, is really astonishing. In an interview at the premiere of 'All My Sons' in 1947, Miller quite clearly set forth his basic

theoretical view on drama and his pragmatic approach to playwriting:

"In all my plays and books I try to take settings and dramatic situations from life which involve real questions of right and wrong. Then I set out, rather implacably and in most realistic situations I can find, the moral dilemma and try to point a real, though hard, path out. I don't see how you can write anything decent without using the question of right and wrong as the basis." 1

It is a natural instinct of man to unveil the truth of the world around him and the world within him by creating so many specialized means. He found that means of drama embraces the many-sidedness of man and is more dynamic than that of physical sciences, the psychological sciences, the disciplines of economic and historical researches and theory. He, therefore, speaks passionately and idealistically about the possibilities of drama:

"It can depict, like painting, in designs and portraits, in the colors of the day or night; like the novel it can spread out its arms and tell the story of a life, or a city, in a few hours - but more, it is dynamic, it is always on the move as life is, and it is perceived like life through the motions, the gestures, the tones of voice, and the gait and nuance of living people." 2

It was his strong conviction that drama can play a reformatory role in the society by "raising the truth-consciousness of mankind to a level of such intensity as to transform those who observe it."3

3. Ibid.
Miller's thematic emphasis on "questions of right and wrong" and his attempts to locate "the normal dilemma" in realistic situations suggest his theatrical inclination to merge objective and subjective forces that extend from 'All My Sons' to 'Death of a Salesman', and that continue with only minor modifications into 'The Crucible' and 'A View from the Bridge'. Intermixing of 'private' and 'public' psychological and social aspects of human personality generated a great deal of misunderstanding about his plays and evoked other responses than those the playwright thought he had aimed at. Miller's critical proclamations are, in fact, his own story of efforts to realize his intentions from one play to the other. He himself has expressed his mental turmoil when his plays earned unfavourable criticism for them from them, from the critics and audience alike:

"Troughs of dejection on being exposed to unexpected critical and audience responses to a newly completed play are followed by swells of creativity informed by the dramatist's determinations to make himself more clearly understood in the next one." 1

From the early criticism of 'Death of a Salesman' critics have observed that the cardinal problem in the evaluation of Miller's work is a conflict of themes, real or apparent, within each play. Eric Bentley has highlighted this problem in 'Death of a Salesman' in a very pronounced manner:

Mr. Miller says he is attempting a synthesis of the psychological, and, though one may not see any

synthesis, one certainly sees the thesis and the anti-
thesis. In fact, one never knows that a Miller's play is
about: politics or sex. If 'Death of a Salesman' is
political, the key scene is the one with the tape recorder
if it's sexual, the key scene is the one in the Bostan
Hotel. You may say of the Crucible that it isn't about
McCarthy, it's about love in the seventeenth century.
And you may say of 'A View from the Bridge' that it isn't
about informing, it's about incest & homosexuality."

The same conflict has been pointed out by
John Mander in his analysis of 'Death of a Salesman' in
his 'The Writer and Commitment':

"If we take the "psychological" motivation as
primary the "social" documentation seems gratui-
tous, if we take the "social" documentation as
primary, the "psychological" motivation seems
gratuitous. And we have, I am convinced, to
choose which kind of motivation must have the
priority; we cannot have both at once." 2

Mander's criticism refers to the synthesis
of two incompatible masters Freud and Marx.

But more sympathetic dramatic critics observe
that Miller's plays successfully embody the playwright's
intention of dramatizing a synthesis of the two kinds of
motivations. Edward Murray, for example, has made the
same observation as have Bentley and Mander, but in his
view the difficulty of branding Miller either a "social"
or a "psychological" dramatist points to a strength rather
than to a flaw in his work.

1. Bentley Eric. "What is Theatre? Incorporating the
Dramatic Event and other Reviews, 1944, (New York, 1968),
p. 261.
"At this best, Miller has avoided the extremes of clinical psychiatric case studies on the one hand and mere sociological reports on the other... he has indicated... how the dramatist might maintain in delicate balance both personal and social motivation." 1

Sheila Huftel, the first to provide a detailed account of the dramatist's background and literary career, contends that Miller provides the best synthesis of the social and psychological elements in his plays. She compares and contrasts him with Shaw and Brecht on the one hand and Tennessee Williams on the other and concludes: "In his synthesis of social and psychological drama Arthur Miller... siezes the best of both the worlds." 2

In the analysis of the play, 'After the Fall' she has made this point abundantly clear:

"the synthesis of social and psychological in 'After the Fall' has always been with him, the cornerstone on which his plays are built." 3

Miller himself has often spoken of modern drama in general and his own in particular in terms of a split between the private and the social. In the 1956 essay, "The Family in Modern Drama", he claims that the various forms of modern drama "express human relationships of a particular kind, each of them suited to express either a primarily familial relation at one extreme, or a primarily social relation at the other." 4 At times he has pointed

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3. Ibid.
to his own affinity with one or the other of these two extreme points of view on human relationships, as when he talks of the forties and fifties as "an era of gauze" for which he finds Tennessee Williams mainly responsible: "One of my own feet stands in this stream. It is a cruel, romantic neuroticism, a translation of current life into the war within the self. The personal has triumphed. All conflict tends to be transformed into sexual conflict." ¹ More often, as in "The Shadow of the Gods" Miller has seen himself primarily in the social traditions of the thirties. It is in this essay that Miller makes one of his most explicit statement on the need for a synthesis of the two approaches:

"Society is inside of man and man is inside society, and you cannot even create a truthful drawn psychological entity on the stage until you understand his social relations and their power to make him what he is and prevent him from being what he is not. The fish is in the water and the water is in the fish." ²

The synthesis of social and psychological aspects of human personality provides him with opportunity to analyse modern man's predicament in its totality and to formulate the ways of "integrated life".

Miller is self-acknowledged writer of social plays which he defines as "the drama of the whole man". In his plays and theatrical essays he again and again turns to social relationship to stress that the drama

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and the playwright, as exemplified primarily by Ibsen, are the reflections of social barometer. As a social playwright, Miller is almost didactically preoccupied with teaching his audience social responsibility and this responsibility comes from self knowledge and social awareness. 1

Ibsen, Shaw, Chekhov, Brecht and Miller share in common the philosophy that the fate of man is social, and that the stage should be considered as a medium more important for ideas than for mere entertainment and should serve a serious purpose intellectually. Like Clifford Odets, Miller is concerned with social issues, possesses a "bold and sensitive social conscience" and dramatizes social current in an attempt to deliver a warning to the American people. 2

'An Enemy of the People', for one of many examples Miller defends the rights of the playwright to engage his audience. Miller defends the right of the playwright to engage his audience in serious issues, and places Ibsen in the tradition of playwright-as-philosopher and dramatic provocateur.

"The dramatic writer has, and must again demonstrate the right to entertain with his brains as well as his hearts. It is necessary that the public understand again that the stage is the place for ideas, for philosophies, for the most intense discussions of man's fate. One of the masters of such a discussion is Henrik Ibsen, and I have presumed to point this out once again. 3

2. Jeanne, Martin A. "Odets, Miller and communism" College Language Association Journal, 19 (June, 1976), 0. 486.
For Miller primary aim of drama is "to arouse the passions of its audience so that by the route of passion may be opened up new relationships between a man and man and between Men and man."¹ In his youth he absorbed from his environment a conviction that society could be changed and that art could be an agent of that change. This conviction continues to mature and permeate through all his plays.

The concept of social tragedy or tragedy as a mode of social drama is usually considered invalid and self contradictory. Critics argue that since society is a man-made institution, man can improve what man creates. Since improvement of society is possible, it cannot be reconed as a tragic force. "Tragedy in the classic sense," says Joseph Wood Krutch "insists that the universe rather than society is the ultimate cause of human predicament."² Herbert J.Muller, too, sees dramas of "social and political injustice" that ask for tragic action as examples of "impure art". But he does not rule out the possibilities of tragic action in social plays:

"A writer treating timely theme(s) will not achieve the full tragic effect unless he brings out its timeless implications such as a sense that the injustice is not merely the fault of a particular society, but the age old story of man's inhumanity to man that we can never do anything about it that we might like to do, or ought to do, that at best there will always remain suffering beyond remedy, bringing us back to the painful mystery of man's being in a mysterious universe."³

Lionel Trilling, however, sees distinct possibilities of tragedy in plays about society. He writes:

"It would seem that a true knowledge for society comprehends the reality of the society forces it presumes to study and is aware of contradictions and consequences; it knows that some times society offers an opposition of motive in which the antagonists are in such a balance of authority and appeal that a man who so wholly perceives them as to embody them in his very being cannot choose between them and is, therefore, destroyed. This is known as tragedy."  

Tragic playwrights in general in the twentieth century, Arthur Miller in particular, have attempted to make society a force powerful enough to instigate tragic action and to evoke tragic feelings. Elizabethan drama, in the words of William Archer, "displays no social consciousness, which is today almost a criminal attitude."  

Miller's attempts at building tragedies along the lines of powerful social themes have been decried by some critics including Eric Bentley who wrote about 'Death of a Salesman':

The tragedy destroys the social drama; the social drama keeps the tragedy from having a genuinely tragic stature. And Bentley added:

"The tragedy and the social drama actually conflict. The tragic catharsis reconciles us to, or persuades us to disregard, precisely those material condition which the social drama calls our attention to."  

Miller, in fact, does not find any clash between 'social drama' and the tragedy because he emphatically asserts that from the very beginning drama is primarily a social form of art in the sense that it revolves around

and involves an entire community and transcending its temporal limits becomes a part of the universal society of all human beings. A fine balance of objective and subjective existence of the protagonist constitutes the substratum of Miller's social drama. Morris Freadman explicitly emphasizes the role of society in the art of drama:

"of all the literary arts, then drama is the most social, the one immediately responsible to the context which it emerges and in which it appears."¹

The concern of the dramatists has invariably been the continuous frustration of all human efforts to reach a synthesis which forms the core of tragic literature, and the persistence of this perpetual conflict both in the individual and the social psyche. Victor Turner says that:

"In all cases from the familial and village levels to International conflicts social dramas reveal 'subcutaneous' levels of the social structure."²

and one can see various kinds of

"opposition among class, sub-classes, lineages, families, age-sets, religious and political associations."³

and, therefore,

"social life even its apparently quietest moments is characteristically 'pregnant' with social drama. It is as though each of us has a 'peace' face and 'war' face, that we are programmed for co-operation but prepared for conflict. This primordial and perennial agnostic mode is the social drama."⁴

Thus for Turner social life itself is revealed as drama and, therefore, he says, "the roots of theatre are in social drama." The social origin of drama has been

³. Ibid., p.11.
⁴. Ibid., p.11.
substrantrated by 'the drama festivals' also, as Eva Figes says:

"Drama festivals held-as in ancient Greece or medieval Europe - at special times of the cyclic year, are an important means of reaffirming the collective ideas of a society." 1

Miller has himself explained the importance and the vital role of social forces in the Tragedy. Adhering to the Hegelian canons of dialectic method applied to the drama. Miller strongly believes that an unstable equilibrium between man's will and his environment originates the tragic conflict. He puts forward his views like this:

"If all our miseries, our indignities, are born and bred within our minds, then all action, let alone, the heroic action, is obviously impossible." 2 and,

"If society alone is responsible for the cramping of our lives, then the protagonist must needs be so pure and faultless as to force us to deny his validity as a character." 3

The dramatization of either 'psychiatric' or 'sociological' view of life does not produce a fine balance in the play as Miller points out:

"From neither of these views can tragedy desire, simply because neither represents a balance concept of life. Above all else, tragedy requires the finest appreciation by the writer of cause and effect." 4


3. Ibid., p. 6

4. Ibid., p. 6
Northop Frye has sincerely attempted to
dissolve the possibilities of differences between the
concept of 'Tragedy' and the 'social drama' -

"In Tragedy...... characters are defined by their
social function and tragedy itself often turns on
the isolating of a central character from his
society, such isolation, whether brought about
through external forces or through the unexpected
consequences of an act normally leads to the
dissolving of identity." 1

In his essay, "Tragedy and the Common Man",
Miller views the human situation as the product of forces
beyond the control of the individual and the tragedy
inherent in the situation as a consequence of the indivi-
dual's total war against a system that degrades. So, then,

"the function of tragedy is to reveal the truth
concerning our society which frustrates and denies
man his right to personal dignity and the enlight-
enment of tragedy is the discovery of the moral
law that supports this right." 2

Social drama can acquire the force and
dignity of tragedy provided it does not get confined to
a mere indictment of social ills. 'Death of a Salesman',
for example, may have the "documentary accuracy" of a
"Living News-paper" but Miller's craftsmanship helps raise
it beyond the level of what might otherwise have seemed
to be only agitation and propaganda. 3 How does Miller
does it? First, by subordinating social protest to
character analysis and psychological motivation. Secondly,
by comprehending the moral nature of the issues involved.
Miller is not content with the social character or news
value of the problems involved but with their human and

1. Frye, Northrop. "The Critical Path", (Bloomington:
2. Steinberg, M.W. "Arthur Miller" and the Idea of Modern
3. Harold Clurman, Lies Like Truth (New Macmillan,1968),
ethical aspects. He uses realistic themes and social
issues as mere background to project basic human passions
and emotions. He never forgets that the tragic imagina-
tion is essentially a moral one and not a moralising one.
If the moral imagination is missing, a social tragedy
might only end up in social protest. It may thus become
an indictment of society. This is one of the reasons why
John Wexley's play against racial prejudice, 'They shall
not Die', fails as tragedy. He expresses his severe
indignation against social injustice and does not go beyond
that. Due to this very reason Shaw could not achieve great
success as a tragedian because in his plays there is a
strong note of protest and propaganda. Even in 'Saint
Joan', which he claims to be a high tragedy, Shaw is not
able to impart tragic effect. He is always pleading for
something like a reformer. A tragedian has nothing to
plead for. A reformer is always concerned with life's
"possibilities" and a genuine tragedian deals with life's
impossibilities". The true essence of tragedy is that
"it could not be otherwise." Miller, for example, catego-
rically mentions that 'Death of a Salesman' was not written
to ameliorate the conditions of salesmanship: "I was trying
neither to condemn a profession nor particularly to improve
it." 2

The emphasis on society in Miller's plays
does not diminish their tragic intensity because:

(i) he eschews what Shaw deliberately employs-rhetoric.

(ii) his characters, unlike that of Shaw, are never mere embodiments of ideas. When they become embodiments of ideas, as they do in 'Incident at Vichy', the play suffers as a tragedy.

(iii) the social criticism in Miller's plays is always subordinated to tragic action and character delineation.

In his essay "On Social Plays" Miller argues:

"The social drama in this generation must do more than analyse and arraign the social network of relationships. It must delve into the nature of man as he exists to discover what his needs are so that those needs, may be amplified and exteriorized in terms of social concepts. Thus the new social dramatist, if he is to do his work, must be an even deeper psychologist than those of the past and he must be conscious at least of the futility of isolating the psychological life of man lest he falls, always short of tragedy and return again and again to the pathetic swampland where the waters are old tears and not the generative seas from which new kind of life arises." 1

Here Miller makes two important points: one, that social drama must not be a mere arraignment of social evils; two, that the psychological life of man is inextricably linked with his social existence and that the two cannot be studied in isolation in a tragedy. In this context the analogy given by him of the fish being inside the sea and the sea being inside the fish is very appropriate.

"Social drama", says Miller "is the drama of the Whole Man. It is not merely an arraignment of society's

evils such as Ibsen allegedly invented and was later taken up by left-wing playwrights whose primary interest was the exposure of capitalism for the implied benefit of socialism or communism.¹ Miller's concept of social drama is based on the ancient Greek concept derived from an understanding of Greek plays. He says, "if one can look at the idea of 'social drama' from the Greek viewpoint for one moment, it will be clear that there can be only either a genuinely social drama or, if it abdicates altogether, its true opposite, the anti-social and ultimately antidramatic drama."² On this basis we can safely compare Miller's social tragedies with the Greek tragedies and trace some proximity and parallelisms. The difference is that Miller chooses to dramatize realistic themes (the Greeks hardly did that) but in the process of dramatizing these themes he transcends realism.

The precise difference between Miller and his American predecessors such as Clifford Odets, Elmer Rice, S.N. Behrman, Robert E. Sherwood and Lillian Hellman is that they insist on showing how modern society has been repeatedly committing acts of criminal injustice against the individual whereas he does not do that. Through his tragedies, which are fundamentally social, Miller simply "prodded the conscience and stimulated the imagination."³ His protagonists never fall in the line of victimised

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² Ibid., p.3.
innocents and martyrs. Social protest is never his primary aim as a dramatist. He is deeply aware that "the problem of the social dramatist in this generation is not the same as it was for Ibsen, Chekhov and Shaw. They and the left-wing playwrights were oriented either towards an arraignment of some of the symptoms of efficiency men or towards the ultimate cure by socialism."¹ The problem he explores in his plays is the same which the Greek drama put so powerfully before mankind: How are we to live?" From what fiat, from what ultimate source are we to derive a standard of values that will create in man a respect for himself, a real voice in the fate of his society, and above all, an aim for his life...."² Miller's call is not for thesis drama. He tries to search for an answer to the more fundamental question; namely, how to live?

The emphasis in Miller's plays invariably falls on human dignity. He is more anxiously concerned with the stature and dignity of man, with the interplay of social relationships rather than with providing solutions to socio-economic problems. Although some of his plays can be defined in terms of social (Death of a Salesman), political (The Crucible), autobiographical (After the Fall), or even economic (The Price) issues, his ultimate achievement as a dramatist lies in his capacity to transcend these realistic and temporal issues by synthesising them with more fundamental and universal questions about love, freedom,

² Ibid., p. 12.
guilt, justice, etc. Tragedy in Miller's hands is thus made compatible with social drama because social drama ceases to limit itself too narrowly to the exposure of society's life. His primary interest is man and his social relationships and his chief objective is to explore how men ought to live. Miller's aims and intentions as a social dramatist are thus different from those of Ibsen (early plays), Shaw and Galsworthy; or from those of Odets, Rice and Sherwood. The focus in his plays is always on larger issues like man's ultimate status in society, a search for stable human relationships and an endeavour to synthesize human dignity with social needs and challenges. Social drama and tragedy are thus so well matched in his plays that the two do not cancel each other.

A typical Miller tragedy does not usually have more than four or five characters. 'The Crucible' is the only exception which has a larger caste than any other play, but even there the main characters are only four; namely John Proctor, Elizabeth, Abigail, Williams and Mr. Hale. The rest are minor figures. 'The Price', it seems, has the smallest list of dramatis personae. What is still more important is that a Miller play is pre-eminently the story of a single person, the hero. 'The Price' is one exception where it becomes difficult to say that it is the story of one individual. The two brothers, however, are complementary to each other and represent the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

Another characteristic of Miller's tragedy is that its story does not always lead to the death of the
hero. While the heroes of 'After the Fall' and 'The Price' survive, those of the other foul plays die at the end of each play. A Miller play, however, can be a high tragedy without involving the death of the protagonist because what constitutes the tragic effect is not death of the hero but a serious presentation of a moment of crisis leading to suffering and disintegration of his personality. 'After the Fall' and 'The Price' match the dignity of tragic art because a powerful and irrevocable sense of loss is felt in the action of both these plays. They are more absorbing as tragedies than a play which might leave the stage littered with corpses; for what arouses the tragic emotion is not always the spectacle of death but the sense of loss and waste, of grief and suffering.

Tragedy, for Miller, is not concerned with person of high rank, with kings and princes but with the common man. Miller himself remarked:

"It is time, I think, that we who are without kings took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possibly lead on our time- the heart and spirit of the average man." 1

Miller repudiates those critics who would deny the democracy of human soul and who would limit the tragic hero to those of "high station". In rejecting such a view, Miller by contrast holds that since interior greatness is of primary importance, one cannot expect to find heroes of tragic stature limited to any one social class. Tragedy occurs when such a man fails to recognise his place in society,

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when he gives it up because of false values. That is,

"Miller's tragedies are about men who are not at one with society because they have sinned against it or have refused to assume their rightful place it it." 1

Miller does not deny the importance of hero's stature. According to him,

"so long as the hero may be said to have had alternatives of a magnitude to have materially changed the course of his life he cannot be debarred from the heroic role." 2

And again 'the question of rank is significant... because it reflects the question of the social application of the hero's character'.

"Stature of the protagonists is not dependent upon his rank provided that his career engages the issue, ......... the survival of the race, the relationship of man to God - the question in short whose answers define humanity and the right way to live so that the world is a home, instead of a battleground." 3

In the preface to the 'Collected Plays', Miller introduces an idea that will form the key to much of his subsequent thinking about the heroes of his drama: "It is necessary," he says, "if one is to reflect reality, not only to depict why a man does what he does, or why he nearly didn't do it, but why he can't simply walk away and say to hell with it..... In truth there are an extremely small number of conflicts which we must, at any cost, live out to their conclusions." 4

Here Miller goes beyond the demand for simple character motivation in terms of the "tragic flaw" of

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3. Ibid., p. 47.
4. Ibid., p. 45.
the Poetics. The author probes to the deeper level of values and asks of the dramatist a keener insight into the actions of the hero: "I take it that if one could know enough about a human being one would discover some conflict, some value, some challenge..... which he cannot find in himself to walk away from or turn his back on."¹

This indeed is the vital question that tragedy of any age must ask. What is it that makes Oedipus pursue his quest for knowledge to the moment of destructive clarity, or forces Macbeth deeper into his sea of blood when the disaster of such a course becomes evident, or, for that matter, drives Willy Loman relentlessly to the edge of insanity and suicide? Miller suggests an answer: "I take it as well, that the less capable a man is of walking away from the central conflict of the play, the closer he approaches a tragic existence. In turn, this implies that the closer a man approaches tragedy, the more intense is his emotion upon the fixed point of his commitment."

Analysis of Miller's thought in this passage reveals several insights into the nature of his tragic heroes. The hero is a man who cannot "walk away and say to hell with it." First of all, he is a person of great intensity, one who follows out his chosen path with the fullness of his emotional and intellectual nature. He is not a man of halfway measures. Secondly, the "fixed point" of the conflict lies in the "commitment" of the hero.

"some conflict, some value, some challenge." Miller implies that the tragic hero is one whose commitment to some value or set of values is of such a fundamental nature that he would rather face death than relinquish it. The word commitment itself, in modern usage, carries philosophical and religious overtones that are important. One might say that, among other things, a commitment involves the notion of a personal free act by which an individual makes a decisive choice. His subsequent mode of being and acting are some show affected by this act.

If there is question of a commitment in his plays, Miller realizes that there is a concomitant need for knowledge. Therefore, another key idea that the author stresses throughout his preface is the intellectual nature of the effect of drama. Miller, following the precept of Ibsen, stresses the need for careful exposition "because characters can never hope to attain the maximum degree of consciousness unless they contain a viable unveiling of the contrast between past and present." There is a two fold enlightenment involved here, that of the character and that of the audience through the medium of the character. In proposing that this consciousness is at the heart of drama. Miller seems to be returning, in theory at least, to a more classic type of tragedy in which the audience is not only emotionally but intellectually involved in the conflict of the hero. Much the same view has been expressed by such modern critics as Francis
Ferguson, Kenneth Burke, and John Gassner. All agree that tragedy must terminate in knowledge. "An attack on the audience's nerves and feelings" is not enough.

Having established the necessity for the hero's basic awareness, Miller next approaches the problem of nobility or stature. In defense of heroes like Willy Loman, the playwright replies that it is not a question of rank but of stature that one must consider. He concludes: "So long as the hero may be said to have alternatives of a magnitude to have materially changed the course of his life, it seems to me that in the respect at least, he cannot be debarred from the heroic role." To the criterion of magnitude of action, Miller adds the further requisite of intensity of the hero's commitment. "It matters not at all whether a modern play concerns itself with a grocer or a president if the intensity of the hero's commitment to his course is less than the maximum possible." The twofold criterion for the nobility of the hero according to Miller might be summed up: action of a sufficient magnitude to change the character's life and such intensity of commitment to some value that the individual will sacrifice life itself for his conviction. The basic passions

5. Ibid., p. 32.
and emotions are practically the same in a peasant and a prince; a peasant might be easier, thinks Miller, to identify ourselves with him than with a high born character. Besides, Miller also believes that the underlying struggle in a tragedy "is that of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' position in society." In his battle to secure or retain "his rightful place in the world," the "character gains size, the tragic stature which is spuriously attached to the royal or the high born in our minds." ¹

Willy Loman is an ordinary salesman; John Proctor is a farmer; Eddie Carbone is a longshoreman; Victor Franz is a policeman. But each one of them achieves tragic dignity and merits tragic status by virtue of the exceptional challenges that he face heroically. None of Miller's tragic heroes is prepared to compromise or settle for half and that makes them exceptional men.

In Miller's tragedies social forces as well as the individual's guilt precipitate the tragic crisis. It is never social forces alone that lead to disaster. The hero always contributes in some measure to the disaster which engulfs him. Generally, in the Greek tragedy, an unknown, all-powerful, and malignant fate is responsible for the suffering of the tragic protagonist and consequently his death; in the Shakespearean tragedy, usually, the tragic protagonist himself, due to some error of judgement on his part, is chiefly responsible for the catastrophe that overtakes him; in the tragedies of Arthur Miller it

is neither the society nor the individual alone who is responsible for the final doom. The division of blame is shared between man and society. Hence Miller's observation on the nature of man is pertinent: "The idea of realism has become wedded to the idea that man is at best the sum of forces working upon him and of given psychological forces within him." Yet "he is more than the sum of his stimuli and is unpredictable beyond a certain point." Miller strikes a new balance between social determinism and free will. He believes "that we are made yet are more than what made us." 

The debate on social determinism and free will inevitably leads to the question of tragic conflict in his plays. Who are the combatants in this conflict? This is not a conflict between two individuals, nor is this a conflict between two groups. The basic conflict in Miller's plays is always between the individual and the society. Joe Keller follows the social law of success and errs; Willy breaks the law of success and makes the corresponding error. John Proctor, pitted against institutionalized religion, is the best possible representation of the individual struggling against the force of society. Similarly, Eddie Carbone is destroyed when he breaks the law of community living; Quentin is a product as well as a victim of the same drive for success and survival. The father and son conflict in 'All My Sons' and 'Death of a Salesman', the conflict between husband and wife in

'After the Fall', and, finally, the conflict between the brothers in 'The Price' are dramatic variations on the same fundamental conflict between the individual and the society, between private conscience and public issues. Mostly this conflict is presented through external means but sometimes, in 'After the Fall', it is presented in the form of an internal conflict.

This leads us to yet another feature of Miller's tragic substance. In his plays there is a blending of the social and the psychological elements. Tragedy, according to Miller, is not possible to a purely "psychiatric view of life or the purely sociological." He could never take seriously a drama of individual psychology written for its own sake. There is a fine blending of the social and psychological issues in his plays. 'All My Sons' is one exception which does not have adequate psychological interest, but as we progress through his plays we find these two elements getting fused together. This synthesis reaches its culmination in 'After the Fall'. In fact, after 'All My Sons' Miller seems to be slowly shifting towards an emphasis on characterization and subordination of social forces to a delineation of individual psychology. Nevertheless, individual psychology is never separated from the social milieu. A typical Miller play is usually as much concerned with the milieu as with the character, as much with the territory as with its inhabitants. An understanding of the social factors or pressures is very important to an
understanding of the action and behaviour his characters and, finally, to an understanding of the meaning of his tragedies. The ultimate "power" which operates in the tragic world of Arthur Miller may be described in terms of the whole system, or social order of which the individual characters form an integral part.

Miller explains the noble and lofty concept of drama when he remarks:

"A great drama is a jurisprudence. Balance is all. It will evade us until we can once again see man as whole, until sensitivity and power, justice and necessity are utterly face to face, until authority's justifications and rebellion's too are tracked even to those heights where the breath fails, where - because the largest point of view as well as the smaller has spoken - truly the rest is silence." 1

Miller attempts to attain "balance" in his plays by the fusion of "I" and "We", that is, by mixing the social and the psychological. In 1947 he declared:

"My development is toward an ever-greater examination of human nature. So many people are talking about new form. This to me is an evasion of the problem of playwriting, which is a revelation of the problem of playwriting, which is a revelation of human motives regardless of form." 2

Miller seems to have never been scared by the problem of finding a dramatic means to inter-relate "social and psychological mechanisms" because he believed "most playwrights, including himself, reach rather instinctively for that form." 3 He later on adds:

"...however important considerations of style and form have been to me, they are only means; fools to pry up the well worn, inevitable surfaces of experience behind which serarm the living thought and feelings whose expression is the essential purpose of art."

Miller has, in fact, shown a tremendous concern for his "tools" throughout his career. It is his examination of human nature he dwelt mainly on a single subject, his dramatic methods have certainly undergone a considerable modification. In several analyses of his own plays, he illuminates those changing artistic strategies and his continuous struggle with the technical questions entailed by his thematic interests. He's emphasis on 'single subject' is clearly expressed by him:

"It has gradually come to appear to me over the years that the spectrum of dramatic forms, from Realism over to the verse drama, the Expressionistic techniques, and what we call vaguely the Poetic drama, consists of forms which express human relationship of a particular kind, each of them suited to express either a primarily familial relation at one extreme, or a primarily social relation at the other."

The most comprehensive and penetrating analysis of Miller's dramatic mode may be found in his Introduction to the collected plays. Here he exhibits his preoccupation with the three stylistic modes prevalent in modern drama - the realistic, the expressionistic, and the rhetorical. But in reality Miller began his playwrighting career exploring the possibilities of some very different dramatic forms. He incorporates the techniques of expressionism, symbolism, and even verse drama in his early unproduced plays which bear little resemblance to the kind of realistic narration

that we associate with the concise arrangement of his mature style. "I wrote a verse, or nearverse, tragedy of Montezuma and Cortez," he says, "which had no relation whatsoever to any Ibsenesque theatre. I wrote a rather expressionist play about two brothers in the University when I was a student" and "I wrote two or three attempts at purely symbolic drama..... what bothered me was that I didn't believe in any of these plays that I had written."¹

Miller's youthful experimentation with the dramatic styles available to him was an earnest search for compatibility between the contingencies of his medium and his developing and deepening social consciousness. "The spade-work proved crucial : it meant that on the road to realism Miller would take a variety of detours his work would never completely abandon."²

"Before All My Sons I had written 13 plays, none of which is realistic and none of which got me anywhere. So I decided at the age of 29 that I wasn't going to waste my life in this thing. I already had one child, and I couldn't see myself going on writing play after play and getting absolutely nowhere. I sat down and decided to write a play about which nobody could say to me, as they had with all the other plays, "What does this mean?" or "I don't understand that" or some such thing. And I spent two years writing that play just to see if I could do it that way. Because I was working in a realistic theater, which didn't know anything else. But that doesn't mean I was at bottom simply a realistic playwright."³

Miller has remarked in his 'Introduction' that "I have stood squarely in conventional realism." His acknowledged indebtedness to Ibsen confirms this:

"When we think of Realism we think of Ibsen - and if we don't we ought to, because in his social plays he not only used the form but pressed it very close to its ultimate limits. What are the main characteristics of this form? We know it by heart, of course, since most of the plays we see are realistic plays. It is written in prose; it makes us believe it is taking place independently of an audience which views it through a "fourth wall," the grand objective being to make everything seem true to life in life's most evident and apparent sense. In contrast, think of any play by Aeschylus. You are never under an illusion in his plays that you are watching "life", you are watching a play, an art work." 2

And he further declares:

"I have no vested interest in any one form - as the variety of forms I have used attests - but there is one element in Ibsen's method which I do not think ought to be overlooked, let alone dismissed as it so often is nowadays. If his plays, and his method, do nothing else they reveal the evolutionary quality of life one is constantly aware, in watching his plays of process, change and development." 3

A situation in his plays is never stated but revealed in terms of "hard actions, irrevocable deeds." 4 Ibsen helped Miller answer the "biggest single (expository) Problem, namely, how to dramatize what has gone before." "What I was after", Miller recalls, "was the wonder in the fact that consequences, of actions are as real as the actions themselves." 5

4. Ibid., 54.
5. Ibid., p.54
Miller accepted words, gestures and shapes of the familiar world and tried to "expand realism with an imposition of various forms in order to speak more directly...... of what has moved me behind the visible facades of life."[1]

Miller has expanded the horizons of realism by enriching it with "an evaluation of life - a conscious articulation of ethical judgement, and with a social perspective of this reality. Therefore, the main points in Miller's realism would be : life - likeness, proper focussing, a commingling of the objective world and of the individual psyche and some kind of moral slant. Miller, in other words is interested in drama as a complete and integrated picture of life; it should introduce events and personages and their growth and inter action in a plausible and convincing manner; it should not be just an artful and carefully contrived fabrication, it should ignore neither the sociological nor the psychological world; and finally it should add up to something in terms of improving us and our world.

Miller of course, had written one realistic play, "a family play", even before 'All My Sons'.[2] 'The Man who Had All the Luck' tells the story of seemingly Blind Fortune in small town America. In this early work Miller asks a question his work will pose again do individuals in our society get what they desire or they helpless

victims of some cold, indifferent force? 1 Miller's man with all the luck finds success in businesses, romance, and family while his hapless fail through 'bad luck'. But the realization that an inhuman abstraction like fate decides who shall live and who shall die slowly begins to drive this 'lucky' man insane. He tempers his uneasy consciousness by trying to understand how his own ability and actions are responsible for the good fortune life brings his way. Although Miller's device for exposing the dark side of an American success story is far too obvious to make us believe this is indeed a true slice-of-life, The Man who Had All the Luck nevertheless demonstrates his growing fascination with the apparatus of realism. "Despite the heavy-handed intrusion of determinism in this sometimes awkward parable of fate in the Midwest, Miller's manipulation of the realistic technique remains, nonetheless, very much intact." 2

After completing 'The Man Who Had All the Luck', Miller realized that he had not been able to avoid a rhetorical, or discursive, presentation of his theme with the next play, he determined to "forgo" the sentiments that did not arise naturally from the action. The plan in 'All My Sons' was to "seek cause and effect, hard-actions, facts, the geometry of relationships, and to hold back any tendency to express an idea in itself unless it was literally forced out of a character's mouth."

'All My Sons' has been based on the real story of a daughter informing on her father and Miller used it in Chris Keller's threat to his father that he would get him arrested by bringing to the notice of authorities his fraudulent dealings in supplying defective cylinders for fighting planes. Miller expertly accommodates a theme of human responsibility in a social sphere and with the writing of this play Miller moves from table to social realism.

In 'Death of a Salesman', Miller succeeds in creating a realism that is at once human in scale yet larger than life. Both 'All My Sons' and 'The Man Who Had All the Luck' had demonstrated the dramatist's impatience with what so often becomes in the naturalistic mode the "ploceyme illusionism" of every day life." Miller knew very well how a strict fidelity to scenic and structural detail could, in the theater, obscure any confrontation with reality itself. "Deceiving the audience into thinking it had seen the truth when it had merely been exposed to a series of facts, the realistic tablean needed to find a stage device capable of embodying the symbolic texture that helps to explain the present." It is not a question of "reporting something", Miller said, referring to the construction of this work. "It's a question of creating a synthesis that has never existed before out of common materials that are otherwise chaotic and unrelated." Integrating new stage mechanics,

'Death of a Salesman' makes the past literally simultaneous with the present - a concurrence of past and present. The staging of Willy Loman's psyche, his frustrated hopes and his unfulfilled dreams Miller uses the expressionistic devices and reveals it clearly by the use of symbols. The plot is naturalistic, but the tone's everywhere symbolic; the realism in this play reveals the substance of myth. Miller has himself observed:

"From the theatrical view point that play .... broke the bounds, I believe, of a long convention of realism. ..... I had willingly employed expressionism but always to create a subjective truth. .... I had always been attached and repelled by the brilliance of German expressionism after world war I, and are aim in salesman was to employ its quite marvellous shorthand for humane, 'felt' characterizations rather than for purpose of demonstration for which the Germans had used it." 1

This "shorthand" reproduced the psychological immediacy and clarity of past events in an astonishing manner before the audience.

In 'Death of a Salesman', Miller presents us with a realism concerned far less with what happens than why. "A totally articulated work instead of an anecdote, the play has made highly selective use of expressionistic techniques only to reveal more clearly the pattern of life itself." 2 Miller again and again points out this aspect in his writings - "I've become aware now that I was dealing with something more there than Willy Loman, the factile quality of the experience of one particular character." 3

1. Miller, Arthur. 'Introduction', p.27.
The very special theatrical style of this work, therefore, has much to tell us about the structure of realism in light of what John Gassner once called it "multivalent and relativistic character." 1 "Realism, concerned in Miller's hands with the family and, by extension, with the family of men, can be the most symbolic dramatic style of them all." 2

In writing 'The Crucible', he was still bemused by 'a kind of interior mechanism', but hoped to "left" his study "out of the morass of subjectivism." The play directly dramatizes the notorious Witch-trials of Salem, but it is technically less interesting than its predecessors just because it is based on a historical event which the level of action and statement is explicit enough to solve, or not to raise, the difficult dramatic problems which Miller has previously set himself. The importance of the witch-trials is that in them the moral crisis of a society is explicit, is directly enacted and stated, in such a way that the quality of the whole way of life is originally present and evident in the qualities of persons. Through this action Miller brilliantly expresses a particular crisis - the modern witchhunt - in his own society, but it is not often, in our own world, that the issues and statements so clearly emerge in a naturally dramatic form. The methods explored in the earlier plays are not necessary here, but the problems they offered to solve return immediately outside the context of this particular historical event.

2. Brater, Enoch. 'Miller's Realism', p. 126.
Realism has benefitted a great deal from Frend's depth psychology. Many facts of human experience, like sexual dynamics, whose expression was taboo in sentimental domestic fiction, now find their way to uninhibited articulacy.

A View from the Bridge (1955; revised 1957) brings back the intensity. The capacity to touch and stir deep human feeling was marked in the earlier plays, but Miller has said: "The end of drama is the creation of a higher consciousness and not merely a subjective attack upon the audience's nerves and feelings." The material of 'A View from the Bridge' is to most people deeply disturbing and Miller's first impulse was to keep it abstract and distant, to hold back "The emphatic flood which a realistic portrayal of the same tale and characters might unloose". But, in his own view, he went too far in this direction, and subsequently revised the play towards a more intense realism.

'A View from the Bridge' follows the earlier works in that it shows a man being broken and destroyed by guilt. Its emphasis is personal, though the crisis is related to the intense primary relationships of an insecure and partly illegal group - a Brooklyn waterfront slum, with ties back to Italy, receiving unauthorized immigrants and hiding them within its own fierce loyalties. Eddie Carbone's breakdown is sexual, and the guilt is deeply related to love. And the personal breakdown leads to a sin against this community, when in the terror of his complicated jealousies Eddie betrays immigrants of his wife's him to the external law.
At the centre of the drama again is the form of a relationship between parent and child, but here essentially displaced, so that the vital relationship is between a man and the niece to whom he has been as a father. The girl's coming to adolescence provokes a crisis which is no more soluble than if they had been father and child in real sense. Eddie is shown being destroyed by forces which he cannot control, and the complex of love and guilt has the effect of literal disintegration, in that the known sexual rhythms break down into their perverse variations: the rejection of his wife, as his vital energy transfers to the girl, and then the shattering crisis in which within the same rush of feeling he moves into the demonstration of both incestuous and homosexual desires. The crisis burns out his directions and meanings, and he provokes his death shouting "I want my name". This establishment of significance, after breakdown, through death, was the pattern of Joe Keller and Willy Loman. We are at the heart, here, of Miller's dramatic pattern, and his work, in this precise sense, is tragedy. The loss of meaning is always a personal history. Equally, it is always set in the context of a loss of social meaning, a loss of meaning in relationships. Miller's drama, as he has claimed, is a drama of consciousness, and in reaching out for a kind of social consciousness Miller, for all the marks of difficulty, uncertainty, and weakness that stand within the intensity of his effort, seems clearly to be a central figure in the drama and consciousness of our time.
The play has no romantic hanky-panky about it, that a clearly realistic intent is clearly at work, has been clearly pointed out by Welland:

"If you want to look at views from the bridges, to explode the normal facade of a house to see what goes on inside, you must be prepared to accept what you see and to assess it for what it is, not for what you would like it to be." 1

In *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), Miller returns to the direct dramatization of modern living. In it he deploys the themes in the scattered form of a series of impressions, with the dramatic centre in memory rather than in action or crisis. The work atmosphere is in some ways significantly caught, and there is always the mark of Miller's insight into the importance and passion of what many others dismiss as "ordinary" lives. There is an occasional flare of dramatic feeling, as in the last speech of Gus, but in general the tension is much lower than in the earlier plays, and the dramatic methods seem often mere devices. The Irish singer and reciter; the insets of flat sub-Auden verse; the lighting and scenic devices of the passing of time: these, at this tension, seem mechanical. And a central image of the play — when the workers clean the windows to let in a sight of the sun of trees, and let in actually a view of a cat-house (brothel) — seems to be contrived. Miller's fertility of experiment is important, but experiment, as here, involves failure.

The title *A Memory of Two Mondays* is in itself interesting in this connection as it suggests an implied narrator, someone whose memory is projected on the stage as

is Alfieri's. This technique is developed to its furthest extreme in After the Fall, where "the action takes place in the mind, thought, and memory of Quentin."\(^1\)

The play has become illustrated narrative, and is essentially a two act monologue which the narrator and main character Quentin, directs at the audience. Significantly, since the flow of narration is essential to the play and the many dramatizations of situations in the narrative are incidental, Quentin's audience is in Miller's stage directions defined as a "Listener, who, if he could be seen, would be sitting just beyond the edge of the stage itself."\(^2\)

The images presented on the stage are illustrations of Quentin's consciously controlled discourse or of the working of his sub-consciousness as he struggles for self-understanding and self-acceptance. In either case, the device of giving characters within "the mind, thought, and memory of Quentin" a semi-independent status on the stage and allowing them to speak for themselves, makes possible an objective view of the self-image projected by Quentin in his discourse. Essentially, however, Miller has placed a character on the stage and given him the opportunity of examining his life and motives and explaining himself to a Listener through a monologue that lasts the whole length of a two act play. From point of view of genre the result is a cross between expressionist drama, stream of consciousness novel and dramatic

\(^1\) Miller, Arthur. 'After the Fall', p.4.
\(^2\) Ibid., p.5.
monologue. The result, however, is good theater: it works on the stage. The critical attacks on 'After the Fall' have mainly been concerned with Miller's subject matter and theme, not his experiment with dramatic form.

In his next play, at least, Incident at Vichy, written immediately after the critical disaster of 'After the Fall', he returned to the form of the straightforward, realistic play. By concentrating on one of the two poorly integrated themes of 'After the Fall', that represented by the concentration camp tower, the later play, moreover, avoids the conflict between two different kinds of "morality" or "motivation" many critics have found in his plays up to and including 'After the Fall'. Incident at Vichy may be too much the drama of ideas (and not very new or original ones at that) to be successful in the theater, and Von Berg's development may not be quite convincing on the stage; but at least there is no need for any "Requiem," explanatory footnotes or narrator to express the play's dominantly public theme.

Four years later Miller returned to the material of 'All My Sons', 'Death of a Salesman' and 'After the Fall' in another family drama, 'The Price'. The play is also a return to the realistic style and retrospective technique of 'All My Sons'. But of course Miller had traveled a long distance since 1947. There is a greater economy of characters and incidents, a more subtle and dramatically integrated use of symbols, no more need for manipulative, mechanistic
devices like surprise arrivals or unsuspected letters. Two hours in an attic with old furniture and four people—and the experience in the theater is of something organic, something that comes alive and evolves before us on the stage. The playwright appears relaxed, confident that the "action" expresses its "generalized significance": the characters speak for themselves and the play speaks for Arthur Miller.¹

In spite of the success, with audiences as well as with critics, of 'The Price', following the disastrous reception of his experiments in 'After the Fall', Miller seems unable to rest comfortably in the strong and protective arms of Realism. His latest play is his first attempt to express himself through comedy and pure fantasy, and in this his most radical departure from realism his earlier concern with the problems of integrating man's private and social life has given way to teleological speculation. Behind the fanciful cosmological draperies, however, one may discover the playwright's old story of the two sons and familial conflict. Indeed, the new play serves as a reminder that the Cain and Abel story is an archetypal pattern in 'All My Sons', 'Death of a Salesman', 'After the Fall' and 'The Price'.

Miller's experimentation with expressionistic, realistic, and rhetorical styles has been conditioned by his overriding desire to declare objective truths about man in society: "our standards of right and wrong, good taste

and bad, must in some way come into either conflict or 
agreement with social standards."¹ A playwright's object 
should be to merge "surfaces of experience" (the objective) 
with "cogent emotional life" (the subjective) and "philoso-
phically or socially meaningful themes" (the analytic) so 
as to make known the public significance of private engage-
ments. "Drama is akin to the other inventions of man in 
that it ought to help us to know more, and no merely to 
spend our fellings. The ultimate justification for a 
genuine new form is the new and heightened consciousness 
it creates and makes possible - a consciousness of causation 
in the light of known but hitherto inexplicable effects."² 
Miller's aim as a craftsman has been to "make real on stage 
as in life that part of man which, through passion, seeks 
awareness. There is no contradiction between the two."

Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill have done 
perhaps more than any other American dramatists to "relate 
the subjective to the objective truth" : 'Death of a Sales-
man' and O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night are two 
of the finest works in the American theatre. Contrary to 
Miller's assertion, however, there is in his plays a contra-
diction between passion and awareness, between irrational 
impulse and rational concept. His best dialogue mirrors 
psychological conditions, yet he constantly returns to the 
formal generalization; he can skilfully manipulate emotional 
tension, yet he seeks aesthetic detachment; his figures act 
most intelligibly in a family context, yet he feels obliged

to make explicit their connection with a social "environment." Miller sees his cardinal subject - the drive for self-justification - mainly as an internal process activated by "mechanisms" that repress or involuntarily recall shameful memories and motives, that effect rapid transitions between tant and relaxed moods. When his characters fervently defend egocentric attitudes, their futility evokes a genuine sense of terror and pathos that indirectly but powerfully reinforces his thesis on the necessity for 'meaningful' accommodation in a society. When, on the other hand, his characters intelligently reform, their self-knowledge remains only a rhetorical promise. The mature newmen-Lawrence Newman, David Prieber, Cris Keller, Biff Loman, John Proctor, Gay Langland, Quentin, Leduc, and Von Berg - appear just long enough to predicate their liberating insights. A tendency to impose judgment upon action - the tendency Miller worried about after writing his first Broadway play, The Man Who Had All the Luck - has prevented him from achieving the harmony of story he has long sought. His attempt to enlarge the "interior psychological question" with "codes and ideas of social and ethical importance" has distorted his subjective perspective and so compromised his exceptional talent.

Miller's construction is never formless; his metaphors are sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle. His dialogue swings between extremes of brilliance and insipidity. Colloquial speech may be heard in an amazing variety of accents - Irish, Swedish, German, Sicilian, Slavic, Barbadas,
Yiddish, Puritan, Brooklyn, Southwestern, and Midwestern. 'After the Fall' and 'Incident at Vichy', in fact, were the first work that did not make extensive rise of subliterate English. Whether in historical, religious, or foreign dialect, Miller's dialogue is the most touching when it works by implication.

Explicit analyses of motivation may, of course, serve a legitimate and even commendable purpose by establishing a rational perspective. Thus, Biff Loman and Charley reflect on the meaning of Willy's existence: the misfits as philosophers explain the misfits as doers; Quentin during his psycho-analysis contemplates Quentin before; Leduc and Von Berg answer the question puzzling the other prisoners. Rhetorical differences corresponding to differences in perceptiveness are often pronounced: the obstruseness of Shory, Hester, and David Frieber contrasts with the folksiness of their friends in 'The Man Who Had All the Luck'; the incisiveness of Newman's thoughts contrasts with the triteness of his conversation; Chris Keller's abstractness, with his father's solidity; Proctor's eloquence, with the girls' incoherence; Alfieri's fluency, with Eddie's awkwardness; the lyricism of A Memory of Two Mondays, with the slanginess. Too often in these instances, however, 'analytic inspection' receives disproportionate emphasis, produces artificial wisdom, and unbalances the interplay between idiomatically authentic, emotionally intense, and ethically rational language styles.

Miller favours a logical structure, an organic whole, in plays. Insisting on "the organic necessity",
Miller remarks: "That a play is written prosaically does not make it a realistic play, and that the speech is heightened and intensified by imagery does not set it to one side of realism necessarily. The underlying poem of a play I take to be the organic necessity of its parts. I find in the arbitrary not poetry but indulgence."¹ Miller's sense of relatedness is evident in his plays. His parts may be episodic in character, but his wholes are usually effective and unforgettable.