RHODES UNIVERSITY

TRAGIC THEMES IN THE PLAYS OF ARTHUR MILLER

Presented for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English in January, 1968
by Christopher John Wortham.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to the many who have helped me in the preparation and presentation of this thesis.

I owe particular thanks to Dr. A.R. de Villiers, who undertook to supervise my research and who has made a number of most valuable suggestions. His advice and encouragement have been much appreciated.

The Librarian and staff of the University College of Rhodesia's Library have assisted greatly in obtaining so much of the material I have used. I wish to add a special thanks to Miss M. Robertson and Miss M.R. Renaud for their patience and hard work in obtaining, from a variety of sources, material which was not readily accessible. The Librarian and staff of the Rhodes University Library have also been most helpful. I would also like to record my thanks to the many other libraries, too numerous to mention individually here, which have helped me with inter-library loans and with photostat material.

The Research and Publications Committee of the University College of Rhodesia has given generous support in the form of a travel and research grant, without which this study could scarcely have been completed. I am also grateful to the Faculty of Arts for paying the major expenses involved in the production of this thesis in its final form and also for giving me the opportunity to present for public examinations my views on some aspects of modern drama which are closely linked with the subject-matter of this study.

The English Association kindly invited me to express my opinions on the work of Arthur Miller - the questions which followed were most stimulating and illuminating. For this contact with the minds of other people interested in Miller's work I am indebted to the Association.

I should also thank my colleagues in the English Department for relieving me of much of my other work while I was busy with the final phase of my thesis. I am also most grateful to Mr. Patrick Berthoud for his most helpful and enlightening comments on the necessary background work which preceeded the writing of the chapters which follow.

Miss Jean McCraken gave invaluable help with the typing of my thesis; Mrs. Paula Jawitz's considerable contribution to the typing should also be recorded. I am very grateful to them both for bearing with this labour in a spirit of infinite patience and good nature.

Finally, I must thank my wife for her constant encouragement.

CONTENTS

TRAGIC THEMES IN THE PLAYS OF ARTHUR MILLER

CHAPTER 1.

OF TRAGEDY

Aeschylus wrote that we learn through suffering.[1] Whether one agrees with this statement or not, one has to recognise that it has given rise to a great deal of discussion about tragedy. What kind of suffering we can associate with tragedy will be considered in the chapters which follow. The more immediate concern is the business of learning.

Man can learn a good deal about the problems that confront him, but he cannot learn all there is to know about anything. His knowledge is relative. He may postulate the absolute, but it is beyond the grasp of the human mind to perceive the absolute in its absoluteness. The relativist can avoid an epistemological quagmire by simply accepting that a relativistic attitude is only of relative value; he has the intellectual humility to recognise that whatever he thinks or says is likely to reveal only part of the truth.

Arthur Miller has suggested that the best serious literature is concerned with the absolute, in that he criticises one of his contemporary playwrights for writing a work which fails "to extend itself so as to open up ultimate causes."[2] Miller is not, however, demanding the impossible. Nowhere in his theoretical writing does he contend that it is possible to know these "ultimate causes" in their fulness. What he does commend is a

spirit like that of Dostoyevsky, whose The Brothers Karamazov "is always probing beyond its particular scenes and characters for the hidden laws, for the place where the gods ruminate and decide."[3]

It is the probing, questioning quality which characterises serious writing of the kind we can associate with tragedy. The questions are, in a way, more important than the answers because they allow for a great variety of answers, each of which may illuminate the questioning mind without ever completely satisfying it. We have to accept that there will always be limitations to our insight, but not in a mood of defeat.

To accept that human insight is always limited and that almost every human being will see things somewhat differently from almost every other human being is to allow that theories of tragedy must of necessity be as varied as human thought. Nevertheless, one does not have to go to the pessimistic extreme of Pirandello and declare that even the most self-evident of facts has a purely subjective value, "whatever value anyone cares to set on it."[4] Instead one can take the view that, despite individual insights and idiosyncrasies, most words have a common residue of meaning for most of us. Common sense tells us that we do communicate with each other and that without a common residue of meaning communication would be virtually impossible.

Words like "book", "canary" and "telephone" pose relatively few problems in meaning in that they are easily associated with finite, visible objects. It is with abstractions like "novel", "poetry" and "tragedy" that the difficulties begin. If one is to speak of "tragic" themes one must not only have a clear idea as to what tragedy is about but also establish that one's meaning is as clear and as accurate as possible for most

of one's listeners. In other words, when dealing with abstractions of as difficult and tenuous a nature as the term "tragedy" one should try to ensure that the principles upon which one establishes meaning are semantically sound.

Bernard C. Heyl deals with the semantic problem clearly and convincingly in the first part of his work New Bearings in Esthetics and Art Criticism.[5] Following the views of A.J. Ayer and Mrs S.K. Langer, Heyl defines semantics as having to do with symbols, not with signs.[6] He holds that words, as symbols, have to do with conceptions rather than referents and that there is no connection between words and objects other than through the intermediate process of conception.[7] Following I.A. Richards Heyl quotes from Coleridge:

> It is the fundamental mistake of grammarians and writers on the philosophy of grammar and language, to suppose that words and their syntaxis are the immediate representatives of things, or that they correspond to things. Words correspond to thoughts, and the legitimate order and connection of words, to the laws of thinking and to the acts and affections of the thinker's mind . . .[8]

This hypothesis about the relationship between referents - or objects - and words is of great importance if one bears it in mind when formulating definitions. As Heyl puts the matter:

> Since, therefore, a cleavage exists between symbols and things symbolised, we cannot justly say that words have any single "real," "right," "correct," "proper,"ultimate," or "true" meanings . . . . In short, as Welby says: "There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as the Sense of a word, but only the sense in which it is used - the circumstances, state of mind, references, 'universe of discourse' belonging to it . . . .
>
> Closely allied with and partly dependant upon the false notion that a one-to-one or direct relation exists between words and referents is the equally false notion - and this is perhaps the chief misconception leading to semantic befuddlement - of what semanticists call "real" or "metaphysically realistic" or "quasi" definitions. These are definitions which pretend to reveal the "true nature,"

> "ultimate characteristic," "whatness," "Essence", or "Reality" of their referents.[9]

Thus Richard B. Sewall, for all the brilliance of his book, The Vision of Tragedy, expresses a questionable view when he speaks of tragedy in terms of "our search for its underlying essence."[10] However, as has been suggested (above, p.2) there is no need to despair. Awareness of our limitations makes it possible for us to come to terms with them:

> But if real definitions are a major source of semantic confusion in esthetics and criticism, another sort of definition offers a major solution for our problem. I refer to definitions which have been called "volitional," "nominal," "arbitrary," and "empirically descriptive." As these various adjectives suggest, such definitions differ both from conventional, dictionary ones which, by providing verbal synonyms, report or explain the meanings words have already been given, and from real ones which purport to convey the Essence of something. Volitional definitions, in brief, are arbitrarily chosen means of describing an object, quality, situation, relation and so forth. Most words, up to a point, may mean what we wish to have them mean; we can therefore volitionally define them, intending by our definitions simply proposals for a working agreement in the use of certain terms: "Let us agree that by 'art' we will mean such and such."[11]

The italicised words "up to a point" indicate that, unlike Lewis Carroll's inimitable Humpty Dumpty, we cannot make words mean what we want them to mean. If we want to be understood and taken seriously by our fellows we should concede that, while no one word has any one "true" meaning, words do at least "apply to groups of similar situations, which might be called areas of meaning."[12] The volitional definition of tragedy which follows will be of no value if it fails to fall within the "area of meaning" most of us would consider to be within the compass of the term.

Tragedy may be volitionally defined as "that literature which pursues the ultimate causes of the most basic and intractable problems of man's existence." Philosophy, it may be

said, does the same, but for the purposes of this definition philosophy and literature may be distinguished in much the same way that Aristotle draws his distinction between Homer and Empedocles in the first chapter of his Poetics.[13] To allow for a wide range of expression of the tragic, this definition does not suggest what forms may or may not be proper to tragic expression. At least two influential modern thecrists apply the term "tragedy" to a mode and quality of thought rather than the means by which that thought is expressed; Sewall goes so far as to say that within the last century and a half the novel has shown itself to be the inheritor of the tragic spirit; Willard Farnham, looking back to the relationship between medieval non-dramatic literature and Elizabethan drama, writes:

> . . . I have been guided by a conception that tragic expression is a special artistic and critical approach to the mystery of man's suffering on earth.[14]

It is significant that Farnham concentrates his attention almost exclusively on non-dramatic literature in The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy.

It is not the purpose of this study to decide whether the term "tragedy" should be confined to dramatic literature or not. The workings of the tragic spirit are inevitably revealed through conflict and history has proved that the stage is undoubtedly a most suitable medium for the presentation of the conflict between individuals and the ideas they represent; to insist that the stage is the only proper medium is to take up a rigid stance upon a semantic problem and, as I have been at pains to assert, rigidity is unprofitable in such matters. In any case, the chapters which follow have to do with Miller's dramatic work. Any reference to Miller's other writing is introduced simply to amplify or emphasise a point made in connection with his plays.

For a variety of reasons, some of which have been presented above, it is more useful to direct one's thoughts towards the tragic rather than towards tragedy in a study which is concerned with themes. There is another reason which deserves mention. Tragedy is frequently used as a term when it implies a critical value judgement. It is common practice among critics to apply the word as a seal of approval upon the quality of a work as a whole, and to discount the pretentious but unsuccessful as, for example, melodrama or pastiche. In an assessment of more recent works in particular the granting of the warranty of tragedy is problematical because such works are not graced by distance in time and the authority of long usage with the title. For example, usage will demand that Seneca's Medea be regarded as a tragedy and Thomas Godfrey's The Prince of Parthia not, even though both plays have tragic possibilities but are in execution equally second rate.

The chapters which follow do not present a critical value judgement on any one of Miller's plays. To consider the quality of each of Miller's works as a whole is outside the scope of this study. However, because the effective statement of theme is inextricably bound up with structure, characterisation and other elements of importance, some fairly comprehensive judgements emerge.

Many themes are woven into the fabric of Miller's plays and, thematically, most of Miller's plays have much in common. On the subject of the repetition of theme Miller has written: ".... self-knowledge ... develops only as a result of having repeated the same themes in different plays."[15] However, it is almost inevitable that one's ideas should change somewhat over as long a period as that which spans the years between the writing of All My Sons (1946) and Incident at Vichy (1965), and Miller's have indeed changed. There has been a good deal of astute

critical writing about the themes in individual Miller plays and very recently there have been perceptive studies of Miller's development as a dramatist, but no writer has yet made a far-reaching excursion into the world of Miller's ideas in relation to the richness of their associations, their development in inter-connection with one another, and the changes in emphasis which have emerged. The present study is intended to contribute to the filling of this gap.

Each of the three following chapters deals with a proposition. Each proposition posits a group of themes which may be regarded as tragic in that they can readily be associated with the volitional definition of tragedy given above (p. 4). The grouping of themes within propostions and the sequence in which the propositions are arranged are designed to show the relationship between Miller's themes and the development of his thought simultaneously.

References.

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2. "The Shadows of the Gods," Harper's Magazine, 217 (August, 1958), pp.40.

3. Ibid., p.37

4. Right You Are (If You 'hink So), trans. F. May (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1962), p. 55.

5. (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1943

6. Ibid., p.5.

7. Ibid., p.6.

8. Ibid., p.7.

9. Ibid., pp. 7 & 9.

10. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 157.

11. Bernard O. Heyl, Op. Cit., p. 13.

12. Ibid., p. 15.

13. European Theories of the Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., Rev. ed. 1965), p.5.

14. The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Rev. ed 1956), p. xiii.

15. Arthur Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p.37.

CHAPTER II

MAN AND SOCIETY

One way of exploring "the ultimate causes of the most basic and intractable problems of man's esixtence" lies in the examination of man's relationship with his fellow men. For those writers of our time whose theories about tragedy are grounded in existential attitudes this sort of examination is particularly valuable. Raymond Williams is one such writer. In his attack on the attitudes exemplified by Georges Steiner[1] and Joseph Wood Krutch[2], Williams maintains:

> In the suffering and confusion of our own century, there has been great pressure to take a body of work from the past and to use it as a way of rejecting the present. That there has been tragedy (or chivalry or community) but that lacking this belief, that rule, we are now incapable of it, is a common response of this kind. And of course it is necessary, if this position is to be maintained, to reject ordinary contemporary meanings of tragedy, and to insist that they are a misunderstanding.
>
> Yet tragic experience, because of its central importance, commonly attracts the fundamental beliefs and tensions of a period, and tragic theory is interesting mainly in this sense, that through it the shape and set of a particular culture is often deeply realised[3].

Williams holds a relativist position which tends towards the subjective in that he restricts the value of his comments to contemporary theory in relation to contemporary practice. Sewall, though holding similar existential views, finds a more universal validity for contemporary theory. We

have noted that he goes too far in trying to establish objective truth (above, p.4), but his work is exciting for its attempt to find a common spirit in the tragedy of all ages.

Following Kierkegaard, Jaspars, Paul Tillich and Ralph Harper, Sewall uses the term "boundary situation" and applies it to the tragic dilemma "when human existence is confronted by an ultimate threat" and "where the existential man 'at the limits of his sovereignty' finds the consolations of philosophy no longer effective."[4] To be sure, Sewall emphasises throughout The Vision of Tragedy that man finds his "boundary situation" in his isolation, but he makes it equally clear that a "boundary situation" is reached through the hero's relationship with his society. In writing of Job's trials and sorrows Sewall comments:

> As the poet contemplated Job's case, he saw that the single-voiced response - the lament or the diatribe - was inadequate. The case was not clear; at its center was a bitter dilemma, every aspect of which, in the full and fair portrayal of human suffering like Job's, must be given a voice. The Counselors were partly right, and Job was partly wrong.[5]

To a great extent the 'Counselors' represent the mores of the society within which Job finds himself.

If one wishes to look to classical Greek tragedy for authority, one can soon find evidence that the Greek tragedians, in particular Sophocles, used man's relationship with his society as an important means of testing tragic themes. It is a commonplace to say that whereas Aeschylus was primarily concerned with man's direct relationship with the divine powers, Sophocles was more concerned with tracing the relationship through man's contact with his fellows. In asking himself why Sophocles introduced the

third actor into Greek tragedy, Kitto states:

> The Aeschylean conception [of tragedy] implies the single-minded tragic hero, one who is all hamartia - or rather one in whom the hamartia is all that concerns us. Hubris is done, and Heaven smites, through its chosen instrument. Sophocles does not see the simplicities but the complexities of life. Certain persons, because they are like this and not like that, and because their circumstances are those and not those, combine to bring out the catastrophe.[6]

It is equally true to say of Miller's plays, that "certain persons, because they are like this and not like that, and because their circumstances are these and not those, combine to bring out the catastrophe." And it would be equally unfair to attribute to either an attitude of simple determinism. The comparison between Sophocles and Miller may be considered by some to be invidious or unfortunate; nevertheless, one should acknowledge that Miller's intentions at least are similar in his desire to introduce us to

> that realm where the father is after all not the final authority, that area where he is the son, too, that area where religions are made and the giants live, only when we see beyond parents, who are, after all, but the shadows of the gods.[7]

Man in the family: the father.

The passage just quoted hints at Miller's use of the father - or the father-figure - as a symbol. In all Miller's "tragic" plays, with the exception of The Man Who Had All the Luck, the protagonist is not only a father or father-figure: his dynamic role grows out of his position in the family circle. Miller discarded The Man Who Had All the Luck from his collected edition, the introduction to which significantly contains the following comment on the excluded play:

> ....however I tried I could not make the drama continous and of a piece; it persisted, with the beginning of each

> scene, in starting afresh as though each scene were the beginning of a new play. Then one day, while I was lying on a beach, a simple shift of relationships came to mind, a shift which did not and could not solve the problem of writing The Man Who Had All the Luck, but, I think now, made at least two of the plays that followed possible, and a great deal else besides.
>
> What I saw, without laboring the details, was that two of the characters, who had been friends in the previous drafts, were logically brothers and had the same father. Had I known then what I know now I could have saved myself a lot of trouble. The play was impossible to fix because the overt story was only tangential to the secret drama its author was unconsciously trying to write. But in writing of the father-son relationship and of the son's search for his relatedness there was a fullness of feeling I had never known before; a crescendo was struck with a force I could almost touch. The crux of All My Sons, which would not be written until nearly three years later, was formed;[8] and the roots of Death of a Salesman were sprouted.

All My Sons is a moral, and somewhat trite, tale about a father whose sins catch up with him. Although critics have justly attached the play for being too contrived, Joe Keller's relationships with his wife and surviving sons are convincing enough. As head of the family he has striven, past and present, to do his best for them. His commitment to his family's welfare is genuine enough, even though there is an element of self-interest. The core of irony in the play is that his very concern for his family destroys his family, because he has guarded its safety at the espense of all those outside the family circle. When his son, Chris, learns that Joe has been largely responsible for the production and shipment of faulty parts for aircraft in wartime, as a result of which many planes had crashed, Joe tries to exculpate himself before his son in terms of both self-

interest and family commitment:

> . . . . what could I do! I'm in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you're out of business; you've got a process, the process don't work you're out of business. . . you lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Chris, I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you.[9]

What Joe has failed to realise is that commitment to the immediate family does not exclude commitment to society. A letter (the most unfortunate of the contrivances in the play) is produced to show that Larry, the dead elder son, committed suicide when he learnt that his father had been responsible for the deaths ofhis (Larry's) fellow airmen. When the final revelation takes place Chris and his mother are both shattered, and Joe's suicide becomes inevitable. What happens to each member of the family depends upon Joe's position as father.

One of the factors which makes Death of a Salesman a much better play than All My Sons is the more subtle treatment of family relationships. The protagonist, Willy Loman, is again a father. Much of the action and significance of the play again arises out of his role as father.

Willy, returning utterly exhausted from a selling trip on which he had barely set out, recalls in his memory an earlier trip. He recalls in his mind how he had lied to Linda, his wife:

> WILLY: I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston.
> LINDA: No! Wait a minute, I've got a pencil. (She pulls pencil and paper out of her apron pocket.) That

makes your commission . . . Two hundred - my Gow! Two hundred and twelve dollars!
WILLY: Well, I didn't figure it yet, but . . . .
LINDA: How much did you do?
WILLY: Well, I - I did - about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence. Well, no - it came to - roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip.[10]

There is a disarming pathos in this exchange, but there are also deeply serious implications. As long ago as the time when Biff and Hap had been young boys, the time in the past when this scene takes place, Linda had become used to lies from Willy. The passage just quoted shows that she had come to accept his lies with loving tolerance, recognising in them the unmalicious cry from a spirit torn between a dreamworld of aspirations and the cruel insistence of reality. However, there is an ominous connection between Willy's lie here and the incident of the "borrowed" football a few pages earlier in the script.[11]: Willy had conditioned his sons to the "way of mind" (a term Miller uses) which seeks to resolve the dichotomy between extravagant dream and reality by ignoring reality.

Soon after the scene where Willy lies to Linda about his conquistadorial efforts in Providence and Boston there is another scene illustrating the harmful effects that Willy's attitudes have had on his sons:

WILLY: . . . . Boys! Go right over to where they're building the apartment house and get some sand. We gonna rebuild the entire front stoop right now!
. . . . . .
CHARLEY: Listen, if they steal any more from that building the watchman'll put the cops on them!
LINDA: (to Willy): Don't let Biff. . . .
Ben laughs lustily.
WILLY: You shoulda seen the lumber they brought home last week. At least a dozen six-by-tens worth all kinds of money.
CHARLEY: Listen, if the watchman -
WILLY: I gave them hell, understand. But I got a couple

of fearless characters there.

. . . . . .

BERNARD (rushing in): The watchman's chasing Biff!
WILLY (angrily): Shut up! He's not stealing anything.[12]

Willy's furious reaction: "He's not stealing anything" is not a simple expression of moral blindness: it is rather the result of an inability to see beyond the limits of the family in moral terms. In this respect Willy is like Joe Keller. Neither father can see beyond the limits of family because of his obsession with family welfare; he cannot relate his position as father to the reality of a wider sphere of responsibility. In other words he is unable to find what Miller had called "the relatedness . . . . between our private lives and the life of the generality of men which is our society and our world."[13] And from this situation directly follows the question which Miller sees as the tragic issue which man must solve afresh in every age: "How may man make for himself a home in that vastness of strangers and how may he transform that vastness into a home?"[14] It is the father who is especially bound to find the answer to this question of the relationship between family and society because he is, after all, head of the family.

In All My Sons and Death of a Salesman family relationships dominate the action. John Proctor's relationship with his wife in The Crucible demands attention, but it is one of a number of important elements in the play. Miller's shift in emphasis is based on a theory he has developed about theme and structure. His theory will be considered in more detail in the next section, but it should be outlined here.

For Miller, one of the qualities of the competent artist is his ability to be scrupulously selective in his choice of material; nothing must be irrelevant or included by the way: commenting on the failure of The Man Who Had

All the Luck, he writes:

> . . . . I had tried to grasp wonder, I had tried to make it on the stage, by writing wonder. But wonder had betrayed me and the only other course I had was the one I took - to seek cause and effect, hard actions, facts, the geometry of relationships, and to hold back any tendency to express an idea unless it was literally forced out of a character's mouth. . . . Above all, the precise collision of inner themes during, not before or after, the high dramatic scenes. And quite as suddenly I noticed in Beethoven the holding back of climax until it was ready, the grasp of the rising line and the unwillingness to divert an easy climax until the true one was ready. If there is one word to name the mood I felt it was Forego. Let nothing interfere with the shape, the direction, the intention.[15]

Death of a Salesman contains a wealth of domestic detail; The Crucible allows very little. However, the difference in style does not imply a self-critical judgment of Death of a Salesman, because "the shape, the direction, the intention" are quite different in the earlier play. In Death of a Salesman Miller concentrates on the ties between man and man in the family. In the next play man is protrayed in society, in public life, where other issues are more important. Miller eloquently explains the differences in aim and approach in his recorded commentary which includes readings from these two plays.[16]

In distinguishing, then, between "family" plays and "social" plays, Miller selects his material according to what he considers to be the demands of each. Nevertheless, John Proctor is given the qualities of a responsible father-figure and is thereby accorded a greater dignity than he could otherwise claim.

A View from the Bridge was first written as a one-act play, which was soon after expanded into two acts. In including the second rather than the first version in his Collected Plays, Miller comments: "The present version is a better play, I think,

but not that much better."[17] One of the chief differences between the two versions is, according to Robert Hogan, that "The revision of the play made Eddie theatrically somewhat fuller."[18]

In the second version of A View from the Bridge, then, Eddie Carbone is more strongly characterised as the "family" man. He is not unlike John Proctor, but he has more in common with Willy Loman. In fact, this play shows a close connection between the "family" drama and the "social" drama; another point to be considered more fully in the next section. Eddie Carbone has the awkward role of step-father to an attractive young girl. There is no taboo of blood-tie to restrain his largely unconscious feelings of sexual attraction towards Catherine, but there is an obvious responsibility towards his wife. Behind the more "social" theme of Eddie's betrayal of Marco and Rodolpho lurks the deeper theme of the internal conflict between impulse and responsibility, the forces which tear Eddie apart and drive him towards his destruction. Nevertheless, it is Eddie's role as father-figure which is primal in this play which enacts the destruction of a family.

Quentin, the central figure in After The Fall, is characterised in much the same way as Eddie Carbone is in A View from the Bridge, because both plays have a similar orientation in theme and structure: the relationships within the family circle predominate in both plays, though in both wider social issues are strongly suggested through these relationships. The difference which makes Quentin narrator as well as protagonist is superficial. The real difference between the two plays is the extent to which family relationships are associated with the parable of The Fall in the later work. After The Fall suggests the religious mystery of the

family of Man.

The role of father inevitably suggests the role of husband. It is as husband that Proctor's symbolic position of paterfamilias is evoked, and Quentin is similarly characterised in After The Fall. Quentin's fatherhood is seldom directly mentioned in After The Fall, but when the mention occurs is it crucial. For example, Maggie, Quentin's second wife, blames him for the disintegration of her personality and their marriage in these terms:

> You know when I wanted to die. When I read what you wrote, kiddo. Two months after we were married, kiddo.
> . . . . . .
> I was married to a king, you son of a bitch! I was looking for a fountain pen to sign some autographs. And there's his desk - She is speaking toward some invisible source of justice now, telling her injury - and there's his empty chair where he sits and thinks how to help people. And there's his handwriting. And there's some words. She almost literally reads in the air, and with the same original astonishment. "The only one I will ever love is my daughter. If I could only find an honourable way to die." Now she turns to him. When you gonna face that, Judgey? Remember how I fell down, fainted? On the new rug? That's what killed me Judgey.[19]

Very early in the play Quentin talks of "two divorces in my safe-deposit box."[20] Miller focuses much of his attention on the two broken marriages and the possibility of a third marriage. For all the weight given to the husband-and-wife relationships, it is when husband is identified with father that Quentin's symbolic significance is fully asserted, as Maggie's speech testifies. For Maggie, Quentin has the double role of husband and father; her own father has spurned her and before she finds the fatal "letter from hell"[21] she looks to Quentin as "king" and "judge" for affirmation of dignity and security.

Once again, in Miller's latest play, Incident at Vichy, it is the role of husband and father which brings the protagonist to dramatic and moral crisis. It might be unfair to the magnitude of the parts of Bayard, Lebeau, Monceau and Von Berg to call Leduc "protagonist", but it is Leduc who states the major themes of man's complicity with his own humanity.[22] And in Leduc's name there is a hint of his symbolic stature. Like John Proctor, Leduc is the same man who sees and rejects fully the insanity all about him; unlike Proctor, Leduc has the trained perception of a twentieth-century psychiatrist and understands more fully whence the evil insanity comes.

Edward Murray's recent study of Miller's plays includes a commentary on Incident at Vichy in which he says that "Leduc is in many ways Von Berg's opposite, or foil."[23] He is right in stressing the dialectical opposition which the two characters represent, but he would have done better to state the converse: Von Berg is foil to Leduc. Leduc has exposed himself to danger for the sake of wife and family and his arrest by the Nazis follows as the almost inevitable result of his action, whereas Von Berg has been arrested by mistake and can look forward to his release. The denouement which reverses their situations is not relevant here and will be considered later. (below, p. 110)

In the conversation between Leduc and Von Berg, as they await interrogation, it transpires that for all the aristocrat's aesthetic sensibility he has no understanding or experience of what it means to be head of a family. Von Berg is not to be derided for his pride in name and family, for there is an unpretentious simplicity in his attitude, but his whole framework of ideas is revealed as being dangerously superficial. His artless admissions "I know so little about people"[24] and "I have no great . . . . facility with women"[25] reveal his innocence.

Leduc, on the other hand, has a great fund of knowledge about humanity and the practical experience of family life. He does not disagree with Von Berg on every point - the latter is not a complete fool - but where he does disagree it is with the voice of authority. Leduc is like Quentin in that he recognises the impurity of his own motives, and both men earn respect for their honesty. Quentin is also an intelligent man, but his revelations are more groping and based in emotional sensitivity; Leduc, the latest of Miller's father-protagonists, is also his most fully intellectually conscious.

The family and society.

In coming to an understanding of Miller's work one must be aware of the meaning he attached to the ideas of "family" and "society". For Miller the concepts are related, but the analogies are limited. Critics who interpret the family as the microcosm of society are on the wrong track. One of these is Ronald Bryden, who states:

> The heart of *The Crucible* is the image of a household torn, of parents turning against each other because they cannot forgive their children or themselves.[26]

In reality, Miller's emphasis is quite different. He is trying to *find* the points of relatedness, to see how far they exist, and in what way.

Miller deals with these matters at length in his article "The Family in Modern Drama."[27] In distinguishing between the family and society he goes so far as to suggest that contrary modes of dramatic expression are suitable when a play-wright is concentrating his attention on one rather than the other:

> . . . . I have come to wonder whether the force or pressure that makes for Realism, that even requires it, is the magnetic force of the family relationship within the play, and the pressure which evokes in a genuine, unforced way the unrealistic modes is the social relationship within the play.[28]

He goes on to illustrate his meaning with reference to his mentor Ibsen and to O'Neill and Thornton Wilder. Of Ibsen he says:

> It is striking to me, for instance, that Ibsen, the master of Realism, while writing his realistic plays in quite as serious a frame of mind as in his social plays, suddenly burst out of the realistic frame, out of the living room, when he wrote Peer Gynt. I think it is not primarily the living room he left behind, in the sense that this factor had made a poetic play impossible for him, but rather the family context. For Peer Gynt is first of all a man seen alone; equally, he is a man confronting non-familial, openly social relationships and forces.[29]

Of O'Neill:

> O'Neill. . . . seems to have been seeking some fate-making power behind the social force itself. . . however, so long as the family and family relations are at the centre of his plays his form remains - indeed, it is held prisoner by - Realism.[30]

Of Wilder's Our Town:

> The preoccupation of the entire play is quite what the title implies - the town, the society, and not primarily this particular family - and every stylistic means is used to the end that the family foreground be kept in its place, merely as a foreground for the larger context behind and around it.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If it is true that the presentation of the family on the stage inevitably forces Realism upon the play, how did this family manage to transcend Realism to achieve its symbolistic style?
>
> Every form, every style, pays its price for its special advantages. The price paid by Our Town is psychological characterisation forfeited in the cause of the symbol.[31]

The most interesting part of the article, however, comes when Miller proceeds to ask, as a result of the formal differences he observes, "the final question": If there is any truth in the idea of a natural union of the family and Realism as opposed to society and the poetic, what are the reasons for it?" His answer to this question is central to our understanding of the differences between familial and social relationships as he sees

them, and it is worth quoting at some length:

> First, let us remind ourselves of an obvious situation, but one which is often overlooked. The man or woman who sits down to write a play, or enters the theater to watch one, brings with him in each case a common life experience which is not suspended merely because he has turned writer or become part of an audience. We - all of us - have a role anteceding all others: we are first sons, daughters, sisters, brothers. No play can possibly alter this given role.
>
> The concepts of Father, Mother, and so on were received by us unawares before the time we were conscious of ourselves as selves. In contrast, the concepts of Friend, Teacher, Employee, Boss, Colleague, Supervisor, and the many other social relations came to us long after we gained consciousness of ourselves, and are therefore outside ourselves. In any case, what we feel is always more "real" to us than what we know, and we feel the family relationship while we only know the social one. The former is the very apotheosis of the real and has an inevitability and a foundation indisputably actual, while the social relation is always relatively mutable, accidental, and consequently of a profoundly arbitrary nature to us.
>
> Today the difficulty in creating a form that will unite both elements in a full rather than partial onslaught on reality is the reflection of the deep split between the private life of man and his social life. Nor is this the first time in history that such a split has occurred. Many critics have remarked upon it, for instance, as a probable reason for the onset of Realism in the later Greek plays, for it is a rule of society that, as its time of trouble arrives, its citizens revert to a kind of privacy of life that excluded society, as though man at such time would like to banish society from his mind. When this happens, man excludes poetry too.
>
> All of which, while it may provide a solution, or at least indicate the mansion where the solution lives, only serves to point to the ultimate problem more succintly. Obviously the playwright cannot creat a society, let alone one so unified as to allow him to portray man in art as a monolithic creature. The playwright is not a reporter, but in a serious work of art he cannot set up an image of man's condition so distant from reality as to violate the common sense of what reality is. But a serious work to say nothing of a tragic one, cannot hope to achieve truly

> high excellence short of an investigation into the whole gamut of causation of which society is a manifest and crucial part . . . there is now a certain decadence about many of our plays; . . . for it is proper to ascribe decay to that which turns its back upon society when, as is obvious to any intelligence, the fate of mankind is social.[32]

One point of especial interest is contained within the rather controversial assertions of the last quotation. It is Miller's contention that "what we feel is more 'real' to us than what we know, and we feel the family relationship while we only know the social one." The problem of social relationships, as Miller sees them, is that man needs to understand society but that very often he cannot do so; he cannot come to terms with that which he cannot feel as well as know. Understanding involves both knowing and feeling. Man has to bridge the gap between these modes of expreience in what Miller frequently calls "the search for relatedness."[33] He goes so far as to say that "all plays we call great, let alone those we call serious, are ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this: How may a man make of the outside world a home?"[34]

To construe this statement too narrowly is to make as superficial a judgement as those critics who assert that the tragedy of Willy Loman is that he is not on a pension scheme. Miller is concerned with spiritual as much as material security. He expands the question "How may a man make of the outside world a home?" as follows:

> How and in what ways must he struggle, what must he strive to overcome within himself and outside himself if he is to find the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honour which, evidently, all men have connected in their memories with the ideas of family.[35]

Furthermore, the question is a spiritual one in a truly religious sense. Miller's enquiry is based on an existential approach and, as Professor Robert Craig has pointed out, "Existentialism, in

its religious manifestation, has spoken of that homelessness of man in the present world which Reinhold Niebuhr has described as the ground of all religion."[36] The religious implications of Miller's drama will be considered more fully further on in this study.

The interplay between familial and social relationships is, then central to Miller's thematic development of plot. In the early plays this interplay is most openly stated. The emphasis is so strong that one can sympathise with those critics, wrong though they may be, who complain that Miller is "propagandist" or "preachy"[37] All My Sons offends particularly: Joe Keller can be heard as the small mean voice of capitalism who is concerned with little more than "how a buck is made in this world."[38] Chris can be made the representative of socialism, or social conscience at least:

> Kids were hanging in the air by those [cylinder] heads. . . Where do you live, where do you come from? . . . . I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business? Is that as far as your mind can see, the business? What is the world - the business? . . . . Don't you live in the world?"[39]

The moral is punched home in the last page of the script, where Joe sees the truth: "Sure, he was my son. But I think to him [Chris] they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were."[40]

Death of a Salesman has received the same kind of criticism, but with less justification. In this play the issues are not over-simplified; similar problems are dealt with in greater depth, revealing a complex web of paradoxes and ironies. Death of a Salesman can only be described as a "thesis" play insofar as Miller asserts that the values of a society are formulated by the values of the family within

that society, an argument reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's Notes Towards a Definition of Culture.[41] Death of a Salesman does not suggest an easy solution in the strengthening of moral values within the family, however; the converse also applies: the standards of a society exert enormous pressure on the family. Willy Loman creates his false ideals - and his society is full of men like him - but these ideals have also been impressed on him by his society. One can escape the false vision, as Charley does, but a man like Willy will have a different "way of mind" and may need, to make life livable, the very aspirations which will destroy him.

In The Crucible a family is destroyed by a savage society. The horror of the destruction is intensified when it is realised that the Proctor family is to be torn apart even before the birth of the coming child. That Elizabeth is to be spared until she is delivered of her child deepens the irony: the respect for life which is embodied in the letter of the law is absent from the spirit of the society administering the law. The Proctor marriage has survived one of the most severe of the internal stresses to which marriage is subject - but is broken from without. Danforth, believing that he is acting for Christ and country, succeeds where Abigail Williams has failed.

The principle concern of The Crucible is to trace the causes of a situation. In this situation a society proclaims the right to perpetuate its existence at the expense of the families and individuals who comprise that society. Miller does not advocate the absolute supremacy of private interests over public interests; what he says of Tennessee William's Cat on a Hot Tin Roof could equally apply here: "The question here, it seems to me, the ultimate question, is the right of society to renew itself when it is, in fact, unworthy."[42]

In his dramatisation of the Salem witchhunt Miller is not presenting a "history" play; neither is he commenting on MacCarthyism. Of those who have seen too close a connection between the subject matter of Miller's plays and his own life he says: "It took years for them to understand that. . . . The Crucible was not an anti-MacCarthy thesis."[43] Miller would not deny that there are many points of connection between the attitudes which prevailed in Salem and the attitudes which lay behing the actions of MacCarthy and his followers, but he would prefer to say that both instances are manifestations of a perennial problem.

The aspect of this problem which concerns the broad sweep of society is the need for its member, individually and corporately, to find a valid relatedness between the individual and the group. Relationship within the family circle leads to recognition by the members of the family of their rights and responsibilities with respect to each other. If the members of the family cannot recognise their relationship, then that family is on the shortest road to destruction.

The analogy which Miller seems to be making in The Crucible is that the family stands in much the same relationship to society as the individual to the family. And the community over which Danforth presides in judgment assuredly destroys its families. Responsibility involves moral issues; a society which has a social ethic based on a delusion of one sort or another cannot recognise where its responsibilities lie. The delusion of the society that murdered Proctor and so many other citizens was that it equated human government with the expression of divine will. In his note to The Crucible Miller explains how such a delusion can arise:

> In the countries of Communist ideology all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilised intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.[44]

The deluded Danforth believes that he is carrying out not only the state's will but also God's. He asks Proctor: "Do you know, Mr. Proctor, that the entire contention of the state in these trials is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children?"[45] And soon after Danforth declares: ". . . we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it."[46]

Theocracy is Salem's downfall. Aldous Huxley sets out the circumstances in which such a delusion can arise in Brave New World Revisted.[47] The relevant passage is quoted in Chapter IV (below, p. 97).

A View from the Bridge is more like All My Sons than The Crucible in that it exposes the internal destructive forces which may destroy the family rather than the external ones. There is also a comparison to be made with Death of a Salesman. Eddie Carbone, Willy Loman and Joe Keller all have at least one thing in common: each of them views the world as a place divided into "them" and "us". For each, relationship goes no further than the immediate family circle, at least until it is too late and the damage has been done.

Although Marco and Rodolpho are Beatrice's cousins,

Eddie fears their intrusion. His immediate reaction is defensive. "Beatrice," he says, "all I'm worried about is you got such a heart that I'll end up on the floor with you, and they'll be in our bed."[48] Eddie soon feels repentant and resolves to do his best for the new immigrants, but his good will fades when he begins to suspect Catherine's growing attachment to Rodolpho. In addition to the sexual jealousy already mentioned (above, p. 17). Eddie is also motivated by a sense of family unity. He cannot face the fact that children must grow up and leave their parents' home, that the family ties between parent and child must be superseded by others. The others come from the world outside, which in this case is represented in the person of Rodolpho. Alfieri vainly tries to lead Eddie to the truth:

> ALFIERI: . . . . We all love somebody, the wife, the kids - every man's got somebody that he loves, heh? But sometimes . . . there's too much. You know? There's too much, and it goes where it mustn't. A man works hard, he brings up a child, sometimes it's a niece, sometimes even a daughter, and he never realises it, but through the years - there is too much love for the daughter, there is too much love for the niece. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?
> EDDIE: sardonically: What do you mean, I shouldn't look out for her good?
> ALFIERI: Yes, but these things have to end, Eddie, that's all. The child has to grow up and go away, and the man has to learn to forget. Because, after all, Eddie - what other way can it end? Pause. Let her go. That's my advice. You did your job, now it's her life; wish her luck and let her go.[49]

However, Alfieri's words fall on deaf ears. Because Eddie cannot, or will not, acknowledge his secret motives he cannot come to terms with them and his efforts to preserve the family lead to its total destruction. His betrayal of his wider, social, responsibilities leads to his ruin as surely as Joe Keller's leads to his ruin.

Incident at Vichy, like The Crucible, concentrates on

the destructive forces which attack the family from without. Danforth and his fellow judges descend on Salem from Boston. They had much closer links with the men and women of Salem, however, than the Nazis have with the people of France. The Nazis in Incident at Vichy represent an alien, conquering society, so that the French, Gentile and Jew alike, appear to have a more tenuous connection with the force that engulfs them. But the appearance conceals a deeper reality which begins to emerge as the play takes its course. The reality, as Miller sees it, is that the Nazis represent an element in all of us. All men in all societies are basically the same, all equally capable of evil; therefore to look upon the Nazis as invaders is, in a sense, to ignore human nature. This theme of the evil at the heart of all men finds its first clear and sustained expression in After The Fall, where Quentin says, before the blasted tower of the concentration camp: "My brothers died here - he looks down from the tower at the fallen Maggie - but my brothers built this place; our hearts have cut these stones!"[50]

The Major in Incident at Vichy is a most significant figure. As the waiter says of him:

> . . . . Tell you the truth, he's really not a bad fellow. Regular army, see, not one of these S.S. bums. Got wounded somewhere, so they stuck him back here.[51]

The later action confirms that the Major is an unwilling agent of Nazi atrocity, but that he is an agent none the less. Like Ezekiel Cheever in The Crucible he takes refuge in obedience to orders. Cheever says "You know I must do as I'm told," attempting to evade his personal responsibility.[52] The Major's argument is similar:

> I have you [to Leduc] at the end of this revolver - indicates the Professor - he has me - and somebody has somebody else.[53]

Neither Cheever nor the Major can face the fact that he shares

complicity with the forces of evil, for without agents like them evil could not thrive. Each man is mistaken in believing, or appearing to believe, that his complicity makes no difference.

Although Leduc is symbolically important as head of a family, the family relationships are played down in Incident at Vichy to an even greater extent than in The Crucible. In this play, as in The Crucible, "it mattered less who a man was. . . . than what his attitudes were. . . . The play is concerned with man in his public functions. The private details are kept to the minimum . . . . in the presentation of the issues by which Everyman was torn."[54]

The view of society in Incident at Vichy is considerably more sombre than it had been in The Crucible. The Crucible is about the horrors which befall a society deluded; Incident at Vichy reveals a society in which the most powerful elements are dedicated to evil. As Miller wrote in the years between the two plays:

> In reading the record of the Salem trials . . . . I found one recurring note which had a growing effect on my concept, not only of the phenomenon itself, but of our modern way of thinking about people, and especially of the treatment of evil in modern drama. Some critics have taken exception, for instance, to the unrelieved badness of the prosecution in my play. I understand how this is possible, and I plead no mitigation, but I was up against historical facts which were immutable. I do not think that either the record itself or the numerous commentaries on it reveal any mitigation of the unrelieved, straightforward, and absolute dedication to evil displayed by the judges of those trials and the prosecutors. . . . There was a sadism here that was breathtaking.
> . . . . . .
> It was not difficult to foresee the objections to such absolute evil in men; we are committed, after all, to the belief that id does not and cannot exist. Had I this play to write now, however, I might proceed on an altered concept. I should say that my own - and the critics - unbelief in this depth of evil is concommitant with our unbelief in good, too.

> I should now examine this fact of evil as such. Instead, I sought to make Danforth, for instance, perceptible as a human being. . . . I think now, almost four years after the writing of it, that I was wrong in mitigating the evil of this man and the judges he represents. Instead, I would perfect his evil to the utmost and make an open issue, a thematic consideration of it in the play. I believe now, as I did not conceive then, that there are people dedicated to evil in the world; that without their perverse example we should not know the good.[55]

Incident at Vichy incorporates the ideas which Miller felt, on reflection, would have belonged in The Crucible. The ironic hope of the later play is that the recognition of evil brings the recognition of good. Von Berg comes to this recognition and acts accordingly. His individual act shines out in the pervasive darkness.

In After the Fall, written a few months before Incident at Vichy, Miller had already come to tackle the same issues. After the Fall is a more interesting play, though structurally a weaker one, than Incident at Vichy. Its frame of reference, as the title implies, is broader and it deals explicitly with those aspects of themes which have become buried rather far beneath the surface in Incident at Vichy.

In After the Fall Quentin contemplates the failure of his ideals. He had wanted to be ". . . .brave. . . .or smart; then, what a good lover; then, a good father; finally how wise, or powerful or what-the-hell-ever."[56] Looking back he says, "Yes! it's that I no longer see some final saving grace! Socialism once, then love; some final hope is gone that always saved before the end."[57] In other words, his hopes for society and for the more personal relationships, particularly those within the family, governed by love, have dissipated. The new hope to which he gropes is that the individual may recongise the evil in his humanity and "with some gift of courage one may

look into its face when it appears, and with a stroke of love - as to an idiot in the house - forgive it."[58] Holga has earlier described this hope in terms of taking "one's life in one's arms" as an idiot child with a broken face.[59] "Quentin," she says, "I think it's a mistake to ever look for hope outside one's self."[60]

In this internal form of love, removed from the false hopes linked with society and the family, Miller seems to see the only hope. The lesson of the Fall is that no-one "can be innocent again on this mountain of skulls."[61] We have lost our innocence, but gained a potentiality for knowledge. However, only a few individuals can face their loss of innocence; in the rest the potentiality of learning through suffering is stifled.

Society and the individual

Although the question "How may a man make of the outside world a home" remains, for Miller, one of tragic seriousness, the context within which that question is asked has shifted somewhat in Miller's two plays written in the 'sixties. The context of familial and social relationships has not disappeared; it remains to counterpoint a now more dominant theme which tells of man in his isolation. In the earlier plays, perhaps even including The Crucible, the protagonist is not isolated as are Quentin and Leduc. These two can be more fully described in terms of "boundary situation". On the lines of Sewall's analysis they invite comparison with Job on the ash-heap, with the blind and banished Oedipus, with the tormented Faustus, with Lear on the blasted heath, with Hester Prynne on the pillory, with Captain Ahab on the quarter-deck, with the blood-stained soul of Dimitoz Karamazov and with Faulkner's Quentin in the tragic dilemma of the South.[62] Perhaps Proctor

too is worthy of the comparison, with his cries *in extremis*: "Is the accuser always holy now?"[63] and "I have made a bell of my honour! I have rung the doom of my good name."[64]

In Miller's earlier plays the question "How may a man make of the outside world a home?" is asked more literally than in the later works. The two constituents in this question, for which a relationship must be found, are "man", or the individual, and "the world", or society at large. There is a reciprocal responsibility between the individual and society, as Paul West succintly sums up in these words:

> The trouble with Joe Keller, the father, is that he can't in any way see that he is obliged to his fellow men: he has no sense of human responsibility. . . *Death of a Salesman* shows Willy Loman being crushed by the society to which he has sold himself. Where Joe Keller is apart, Willy Loman is too far in. The one is not for sale; the other is sold up. In *The Crucible* John Proctor defies a society which has given itself over to evil.[65]

The question which arises is whether Joe Keller, Willy Loman and John Proctor have the stature to carry the burden of Miller's theme.

Joe Keller comes to some measure of self-knowledge in his last words: "Sure, he was my son. Bit I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were." It has been suggested that *All My Sons* it too tritely moral (above, p. 24) it might be unfair to add that Joe's coming to self-knowledge is forced and unconvincing, but such a criticism would come close to identifying one of the major faults of the play: Joe Keller lacks the mental stature to cope with the implications the play seeks to clarify.

Miller has himself risen to the defence of Willy Loman before similar charges:

The play was always heroic to me, and in later years the

> academy's charge that Willy lacked the "stature" for the tragic hero seemed incredible to me. I had not understood that these matters are measured by Greco-Elizabethan paragraphs which hold no mention of insurance payments, front porches, refrigerator fan belts, steering wheels, Chevrolets, and visions not seen through the portals of Delphi but in the blue flame of the hot-water heater.[66]

This criticism of neo-Classical standards of judgment will probably seem to most readers to be quite justified. Miller goes on to make a positive claim for Willy as tragic hero:

> Had Willy been unaware of his separation from values that endure he would have died contentedly while washing his car, probably on a Sunday afternoon with the ball game coming over the radio. But he was agonised by his awareness of being in a false position, so constantly haunted by the hollowness of all he had placed his faith in, so aware, in short, that he must somehow be filled in his spirit or fly apart, that he staked his life on the ultimate assertion. That he had not the intellectual fluency to verbalise his situation is not the same thing as saying that he lacked awareness, even an overly intensified consciousness that the life he had made was without form and inner meaning.[67]

In this passages and the sentences which follow it there is more than a grain of truth, but Miller's argument is based on a dubious assumption, namely the need to justify the protagonist as having self-awareness, even if unexpressed. Willy Loman does not communicate the agony, the conscious torment, which his author claims for him and if Miller is to be judged on grounds of intention and the fulfilment of intention he must be considered to have failed. However, as a tragic figure rather than tragic hero Willy is a powerful creation; like Euripides' Medea he <u>is</u> his tragic flaw in a play in which the tragic elements can similarly be said to be distributed amongst the characters rather than synthesised into one person.[68] Eddie Carbone may be viewed in much the same terms.

These figures of the earlier plays are fine and moving creations, but they scarcely step forward into isolation from the

background of their relationships. It is true enough that these characters are symbolically isolated in their deaths, but it is the sense of isolation if life which is missing, or at least not fully realised. The deepening sense of tragedy comes with the later plays, "when for reasons internal and external, spiritual and sociological, the questions of ultimate justice and human destiny seem suddenly to have been jarred loose again."[69] Sewall explains how such situations arise:

> Often these critical periods, or "moments", come after a long period of relative stability, when a dominant myth or religious orthodoxy or philosophic view has provided a coherent and sustaining way of life. Suddenly the original terror looms close and the old formulations cannot dispel it. The conflict between man and his destiny assumes once more the ultimate magnitude. It appears to be not a matter of accident, a temporary and limited disturbance, but an essential change in the face of the universe. The whole of society is involved and the stake is survival. Thus the sense of despair in the early chapters of Job's complaint, the sense of doom in Greek tragedy, Gloucester's fears in the first act of Lear, and the sense of disintegration in The Brothers Karamazov.[70]

Earlier Sewall speaks of a "sense of ancient evil, of 'the blight man was born for'," which one first begins to feel with real concern in The Crucible. In After the Fall and Incident at Vichy Miller's previous statement that "society is inside of man and man is inside society . . . . The fish is in the water and the water is in the fish"[71] holds good, but the link has a new mystery and sense of horror. In fact, the individual has become society in microcosm: every man is shown as potential killer as well as potential victim.

This last point is illustrated most vividly in Incident at Vichy. Each of the characters represents certain human attitudes and attributes, though all share in common the humanity which prevents them becoming two-dimensional figures of the kind

one would find in a morality play; and together they represent the sum of human nature. In the years between the plays of the fifties and the plays of the sixties Miller made the following criticism of the play version of The Diary of Anne Frank, and one can detect in his comments the germs of ideas to become explicit in his subsequent plays:

> . . . . I found myself putting to this play the question . . . . what is its relevance to the survival of the race? Not the American race, or the Jewish race, or the German race, but the human race. And I believe the beginning of an answer has emerged. It is that with all its truth the play lacks that kind of spread vision, the over-vision beyond its characters and their problems, which could have illuminated not merely the cruelty of Nazism but something even more terrible. . . . . What was necessary in this play to break the hold of reassurance upon the audience, and to make it match the truth of life, was that we should see the bestiality in our own hearts, so that we should know how we are brothers not only to these victims but to the Nazis, so that the ultimate terror of our lives should be faced - namely our own sadism, our own ability to obey orders from above, our own fear of standing firm on humane principle against the obscene power of the mass organisation.[72]

How closely these ideas of "over-vision", "the bestiality in our own hearts" and "the ultimate terror" accord with Sewall's description of the "boundary situation". In After the Fall and Incident at Vichy Miller incorporated the necessity "to break the hold of reassurance upon the audience" into his own work.

Tragedy and the common man.

When Miller wrote his essay "Tragedy and the Common Man"[73] he was adding his voice to those which were already raised in the heat of controversy. The latter half of the nineteenth century had produced playwrights of stature whose serious drama was no longer concerned - quite unashamedly - with the demise of kings and princes. The rejection of the symbolic value of royalty was at once bourgeois and socialist.[74] In the twentieth century

a new tradition has grown up, strengthened and confirmed by both successful playwrighting and cogent theory. In America there had been quite early, but sporadic, attempts at creating a serious drama whose characters came from the middle reaches of society. However, no-one seemed able to steer successfully through the nineteenth century Scylla and Charybdis of archaism and melodrama. Even themes of immediate relevance suffered: Andre, William Dunlap's play of the War of Independence, is written in pseudo-Shakespearian blank verse;[75] Boucicault's The Octoroon, which tells of the South in the shadow of the impending Civil War, scarcely rises above the level of melodramatic scenes between villains, heroines and faithful retainers;[76] Bronson Howard's Shenandoah has the rather negative virtues of not being written in an archaic style and of not presenting characters within the conventions of melodrama, but it is centred about the out-worn theme of the conflict between love and honour, a theme which had only had any real significance in the cavalier days of more than two centuries before.[77]

However, with the advent of Eugene O'Neill the American drama acquired a vitality it had never known before. In his introduction to a collected edition of O'Neill's plays (1931), Joseph Wood Krutch writes "During the last fifteen years the American drama has become, for the first time, a part of American literature. . . . By common consent, Eugene O'Neill is acknowledged to be the most distinguished of the group which created the serious American drama."[78]

Once modern drama had begun to invite comparison with the tragedy of former ages the issue of the tragic hero was bound to become contentious. In "The Tragic Fallacy" Krutch has spoken of "the failure of all modern attempts" to achieve tragedy because "tragedy must have a hero if it is not merely

to be an accusation against, instead of a justification of, the world in which it occurs."[79] A few years later he changed his mind and concluded his introduction to O'Neill with the words: "he has created his characters on so large a scale that their downfall is made once more to seem not merely pathetic, but terrible."[80] In insisting on a drama of the passions Krutch made demands of the tragic hero, even in his acceptance of O'Neill, which many later writers would think unreasonable, but he had the critical acumen to realise that O'Neill had created a new dimension in American drama.

Arthur Miller is in the direct line of the tradition established by O'Neill: he presents the most basic and intractable problems confronting man with the common man, and not the king, as protagonist. The same may be said of Miller's contemporary, Tennessee Williams. It would be foolish to ignore or minimise the achievement of these men. Furthermore, the considerable corpus which their work represents is ably supported with contributions from other figures, including Clifford Odets, Thornton Wilder, Lillian Hellman and Carson McCullers. One may compare the protagonist of today with the tragic hero of old, but in doing so one must have the same respect for what has been written in our age as Aristotle had for what had been written in his, and the mark of this respect is the adoption of an inductive method.

An inductively pursued exercise must, however, be related to points of comparison between ancient and modern if it is to be of value for this study. If we are concerned with finding out whether there is any significant link between the tragic hero of earlier times and the protagonist of today, we should not review in isolation the question whether the common man is fit to be termed the tragic hero in modern drama. We

should at the same time try to understand why kings have been most suitable as tragic heroes at one time or another and why they may or may not be so at present.

"Can the common man be a tragic hero?" one asks. To answer this question in relation to the other lines of enquiry just mentioned one could profitably split the question into two further questions: "Can the common man carry the burden of the theme?" and "Has the common man adequate symbolic stature?" The two questions are, of course, closely connected, but can be considered separately for the sake of clarity. The first emphasises the playwright's intentions and the quality of his achievement;[81] the second emphasises the audience's ability to recognise the connection between the protagonist and mankind.

Can the common man carry the burden of the theme? Where an author is at pains to trace the relationships between the individual, the family and society and to extract from them some universally valid statements, there can be no objection to him portraying a ruthless business man, a defeated salesman, a New England farmer, an emigré longshoreman, a lawyer or a psychiatrist as protagonist. All these men are part of society; most of them will have families too. Some of them will be consciously religious; others will think that they are not. But all are likely to be confronted with moral crises at some time in their lives. The crises may pass and be forgotten, but some crises may, however, be so terrible that they may lead the men who suffer them to ask questions about the universe and about God, questions which they would never have asked before and, assuredly, whether they find an answer or not, life can never be the same again for them. And whatever happens, death waits for them all with unwavering finality.

In none of the plays being considered in this study does

Miller raise up a protagonist who is faced with a merely difficult situation. He forges man *in extremis*. In the later plays the extremity is accentuated by a sense of isolation (above, pp. 32-36). One might speak rather of a sense of alienation if the term isolation might, erroneously, lead one to think that Miller no longer attaches importance to the relationship between society and the individual.

One could contend that in an earlier century Miller would have explored the same themes more poetically by writing within the framework of royal households and a mythology of epic proportions, but that these counters have vanished, leaving an impoverished art behind.[82] Even if one were to admit, regretfully, that the poetic range of a Sophocles or a Shakespeare were no longer possible, would one need to concede that it is the modern concern with man at the lower levels of society which is responsible for our loss? Miller, in his explanation of the differences between the drama of the family and the drama of society, has held that the modern drama can be poetic, depending on its orientation. He sees the issue as having no dependence on the social status of the protagonist.

For Miller the argument is to be decided in terms of Realism and Expressionism: he claims that the determining factor is whether the dramatist is primarily concerned with family relationships or with wider, social, issues:

> . . . . I have come to wonder whether the force or pressure that makes for Realism, that even requires it, is the magnetic force of the family relationship within the play, and the pressure which evokes in a genuine, unforced way the unrealistic modes is the social relationship within the play. In a generalised way we commonly recognise that forms do have extratheatrical, common-sense criteria; for instance, one of the prime difficulties in writing modern opera, which after all is lyric drama, is that you cannot rightly sing so many of the common thoughts of common life. A line like "Be sure

> to take your bath, Gloria", is difficult to musicalise, and impossible to take seriously as a sung concept. But we normally stop short at recognition of the ridiculous in this problem. Clearly, a poetic drama must be built up on a poetic idea, but I wonder if that is the whole problem. It is striking to me, for instance, that Ibsen, the master of Realism, while writing his realistic plays in quite as serious a frame of mind as in his social plays, suddenly burst out of the realistic frame, out of the living room, when he wrote Peer Gynt. I think that it is not primarily the living room he left behind, in the sense that this factor made a poetic play impossible for him, but rather the family context. For Peer Gynt is first of all a man seen alone; equally, he is a man facing non-familial, openly social relationships and forces.[83]

The main point here is Miller's conviction that a distinction must be made between the two different contexts in which the common man may appear as protagonist. And the truth of what Miller says about the difference between the drama of the family and the drama of society is borne out by its relevance not only to Ibsen, but also to the lyrical quality of Miller's own subsequent work, especially After the Fall. The fact that Quentin is a middle-class lawyer of nondescript origins does not prevent him from speaking some of the most poetically compelling lines in modern English. Though Quentin's life is presented in detail, the primary concern of the play is the broader question which faces all mankind: what is the meaning of the fable of the Fall? And speaking to and of mankind Quentin cries:

> Who can be innocent again on this mountain of skulls? I tell you what I know! My brothers died here - but my brothers built this place; our hearts have cut these stones. And what's the cure? . . . . No, not love. I loved them all, all! And gave them willingly to failure and to death that I might live; as they gave me each other, with a word, a look, a trick, a truth, a lie - and all in love! . . . . But who will defend her? He cries up to Holga: that woman hopes! Or is that - exactly why she hopes, because she knows? What burning cities taught her and the death of love taught me: that we are very dangerous! And that, that's why I wake each

> morning like a boy - even now, even now! I swear to you, I could love the world again! Is the knowing all? To know, and even happily, that we meet unblessed; not in some garden of wax fruit and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the Fall, after many, many deaths.[84]

Let us knw return to another point which Miller makes in connection with Peer Gynt. In stressing that the play is equally about man alone and man's social relationships, Miller has focused on an aspect of tragedy which can be found in the Greek and in Shakespearian drama, but which has been especially highlighted in the writing of Herman Melville and his artistic successors: it is ambiguity. Man is alone and yet in society. The values of his private conscience may be different from the values of the public conscience. As Sewall reiterates, one may be faced with a situation in which whatever one does will be right in one sense but wrong in another. Erich Fromm, the American social psychologist, has noted that this sense of alienation is a recurrent characteristic in the life of today.[85] Therefore, there is no reason why the common man should be inadequate to express such ambiguity; the schizophrenia which draws Willy Loman to his death threatens us all. Schizophrenia and alienation are complementary.[86]

It is true that if a king or prince encounters an irresoluble dilemma the effects are more widely felt throughout the land than those which follow from the humble death of a travelling salesman; the extension of consequence can be most impressive, but surely it is not the only means of expressing the ramifications of the tragic situation which threatens all mankind? Surely it will be just as effective to present the common man as Everyman, so that every member of the audience can recognise the possibility of the same dilemma striking terror into his own soul?[87]

The question of identification brings us to the second part of our enquiry about the common man as hero: has he adequate symbolic stature? If one assumes that the tragic hero is generally the focus of the audience's attentions, and that the members of the audience generally feel a strong sense of identification with the tragic hero in his predicament, then it is necessary to consider what kind of man can, as protagonist, inspire the bond of identification.

Aristotle considered that some measure of identification was necessary. Even if we cannot today be really sure what he meant by catharsis, his comments on how pity and fear are engendered continue to be of great interest to the modern student of tragedy. Aristotle said that the hero should not appear either too worthy or too depraved, but should partake of both qualities.[88] The hero, for Aristotle, should not be as depraved as we, the general run of men, are, but at least he should have enough in common with us to make us fear a similar fate.

In neo-classical theory identification seems to be implied in the insistence that kings are the appropriate heroes for tragedy: high poetry is their proper form of expression because they have highly developed sensibilities - we in the audience see a glimmer of their sensitivity in our lesser selves; conversely, comic figures are to be taken from the lower orders, at whose insensitive folly we can laugh in full measure. Identification has become wholly associated with rank. How did this extent of association, which is still so much alive today, come about? This question deserves an answer at some length, for even if the relevance to Miller's work, and to other modern dramatists, is not immediately apparent, the relevance will later emerge.

In the Poetics Aristotle picks out the artistic qualities which he expects to find in tragedy. He acknowledges that "tragedy, indeed, originated from those who led the dithyramb"[89] but it is not to his purpose in the Poetics to go into the influence which the dithyramb, with its religious associations, had on the development of tragedy. Although Plato and the Sophists had condemned the religious myths as superstitious claptrap, it is likely that Aristotle excluded reference to the myths simply because he took them for granted. At one point Aristotle concludes that "now the most beautiful tragedies are composed about a few families . . . ."[90] He does not suggest that the families which he goes on to mention have any important symbolic meaning of a religious kind. The lack of connection between hero and religious symbolism becomes more marked in neo-classical theory after Aristotle.

The question of religious meaning should be given some attention if we are to come any closer to understanding why the kingly figure has so frequently been employed by tragedians as hero. We are inheritors to a great deal of critical prejudice and confusion which must be seen for what it is if we are not to judge the common man's possibilities as tragic hero by the wrong or irrelevant standards.

If Sir James Frazer is right, myth grows out of magical or religious ritual.[91] The Greek tragedies enact myth, and therefore bear resemblance to the original ritual. In fact, some classical scholars have gone so far as to suggest that most of the surviving Greek tragedies are in structure very similar to the form of vegetation ritual which lies behind the myths dramatised.[92]

The most substantial body of myth concerned with vegetation ritual in the Greek world is that which tells of Dionysus.

Greek tragedy itself was an integral part of the annual religious festival of the Great Dionysia and so it was only natural that the myths surrounding the legendary life of Dionysus and similar gods should have been chosen for dramatisation.

Kings had disappeared from Attic Greece long before the age of tragedy, and so the political significance of the kingly figure was slight. Perhaps the memory of the benevolent tyrant, Peisistratus, who was still remembered as a living figure by the generation to which Aeschylus's parents belonged, had added an aura of virtue to the idea of political kingship, but there are indications that the symbolic value of kings lay elsewhere. It seems that in most cultures political kingship grows out of priestly office, for the most influential magician or high priest is usually a highly intelligent man who knows how to handle his community and is likely to be requested for advice on a wide range of human problems.[93] The office of Archon in fifth-century Athens combined magisterial with religious functions and the chief Archon was known as the Archon Basileus, or King Archon. Here, then, is evidence that the religious significance of kingship remained alive in the minds of the Greek public.

Furthermore, from the concept of priest-king to the concept of god-king there is an easy mental jump.[94] It is not unreasonable to suppose that the tragic death of a king enacted in the course of the Great Dionysia would have symbolised the death of the god of the year to those seated in the audience. The plays themselves bear ample witness to their religious connections. The titles which Thespis, first of the tragedians, chose for his plays, the concealed death of the hero, the long robes and high boots of the tragic actors, and the use of masks all suggest an immediate relationship with the ritual worship of Dionysus and associated deities.[95]

With the next great flowering of dramatic tragedy, in the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, there comes a new wave of critical writing. And once again the tragic hero occupies a good deal of the discussion. In this age is formulated a universally-held theory about kings being the proper subject for tragedy, and without reference to religious symbolism.[96]

What has happened is that the neo-classical theorists follow Horace rather than Aristotle and, like Horace, they write at a time when the religious ideas which had sustained Greek tragedy have been forgotten. No longer understanding the inner dynamic and spirit of the Greek tragedy, they have to formalise tragedy into a network of rules wherein to imitate the Greeks. They observe the outward form of tragedy without understanding the inner forces which had once given it meaning. In not explicitly stating the religious associations involved in the tragedians' choice of tragic heroes, Aristotle had made possible the identification, by his later imitators, of the tragic hero with greatness in rank. The neo-classicists could claim the authority of Aristotle for that rule of decorum which required the tragic hero to be a man of high rank.

From Horace onwards the network of rules prescribed for tragedy becomes absorbed into the concept of decorum. Art is to be judged by the rules considered proper to the form wherein it is created. The hierarchical structure of society in which the sixteenth century neo-classicists lived and wrote also affected ideas, so that "Aristotle's 'better' [or worthy] and 'worse' [or depraved] as distinguishing the characters of tragedy and comedy had become universally 'of superior' and 'of inferior social standing.' "[97] Superficial as Horace and the neo-classicists might have been in their appraisal of Greek tragedy and the principles underlying its creation, their judgments were,

ironically, singularly apt in relation to Seneca's tragedies, which for many men of the sixteenth century were the models to be imitated. Seneca understood no more of the makings of Greek tragedy than did Horace, and his ignorance was of precisely the same kind.

However, the predominance of kings and the very great in rank as tragic heroes in the great period of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama had little to do with the first wave of neo-classical theory which immediately preceded it, fortunately. The popularity of Boccaccio's De Casibus Virorum Illustrium as a source of tragic plots and the still-surviving medieval concepts of order, the great chain of being, and Platonist correspondences between macrocosm and body politic all combined to make the royal figure one of genuine symbolic significance.[98] And here was a new group of religious associations.

Nevertheless, the associations were not entirely new. The Reformation idea of The Divine Right of Kings, which added a further topical interest in the kingship, actually harked back to the same primitive attributes that lay behind the Greek association of royalty with divinity.[99] The full richness of this background of symbolic significance which flourished in Shakespeare's day is most clearly evoked in Richard II.

So it was that once again, in Elizabethan drama, kings were significant, but not for the reasons put forward by the neo-classical theorists. The degree to which the religious significance of kings in Elizabethan drama would have been understood by even the most lowly members of the community can be substantiated with reference to the contemporary folk drama. The folk drama of England never came to very much, for a variety of reasons, but in it we can detect remarkably close parallels with

the vegetation ritual of Dionysus. This is not surprising, for almost all the communities of the Northern temperate regions, where the vegetation dies and is annually reborn to a very marked extent, have at one time or another known flourishing vegetation ritual in which the god of the year dies and is reborn. J.N. Figgis states in his treatise The Divine Right of Kings that there is indeed a connection between so sophisticated a doctrine as the Divine Right and primitive religion:

> It [the theory of the Divine Right] gathered up into itself notions of the sanctity of the medicine man, of the priestly character of primitive royalty. . . .[100]

He goes so far as to say that Heywood's Royal King and Loyal Subject and Beaumont and Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy prove "how strong was the popular belief in the mystical nature of kingship."[101]

An important aspect of the symbolic stature of kings in classical Greece and Elizabethan England - especially important from the practical dramatist's point of view - is that the symbolism was understood by, and appealed to, the public at large. Add to this aspect the fact, which I have sought to demonstrate in the last few pages, that the royal figure is most impressive as tragic hero at a time when kingship has a symbolic meaning which is substantially religious. Seneca's royal heroes lack symbolic vitality because at the time he was writing the important connections had faded out and ". . . . of emotional appeal, of spiritual strengthening, of explanation of life and its immediate problems, Roman religion had little to offer."[102]

If the above commentary on Greek, Roman and Elizabethan tragedy shows that a most important element in successful tragedy

is the degree to which the hero fits into a scheme of thought which is at once currently popular and religious, then the question "Has the hero adequate symbolic stature?" must be asked with these factors in mind. It seems that the issue of the audience's capacity to identify itself meaningfully with the tragic hero has close connections with these factors, as well as with any personal attributes of the hero which contribute to his appeal. Senecan tragedy and neo-classical works like Gorboduc or Jocasta prove that elaborate rules of decorum carefully observed cannot satisfy the audience's need to identify itself with the tragic hero.

Arthur Miller, himself a stern opponent of neo-classical assumptions, claims that today "the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings were."[103] We have already considered some of the ways in which Miller's protagonists can appeal to those who see his plays (above, pp. 9-32). We should also see whether his protagonists can lay claim to the support of any widespread popular belief of today which is also - at least in a broad sense - religious.

It has already been stated that over the last hundred years there has been a rejection of the symbolic value of royalty in drama and that the conservative bourgeois citizen and the socialist reformer have united in unseating the king from his heroic throne (above, pp.36-37). In Modern Tragedy Raymond Williams explains this rejection. Of the rejection of the king as hero by the middle class, Williams writes:

> We can only distinguish between tragedy and accident if we have some conception of a law or an order to which certain events are accidental and in which certain other events are significant. Yet wherever the law or order is partial (in the sense that only certain events are relevant to it) there is an actual alienation of some part of human experience. Even in the most traditional general orders, there has been this factual alienation. The definition of tragedy as

> dependent on the history of a man of rank was just such an alienation: some deaths mattered more than others, and rank was the actual dividing line. - the death of a slave or retainer was no more than incidental and was certainly not tragic. Ironically, our own middle class culture began by appearing to reject this view: the tragedy of a citizen could be as real as the tragedy of a prince. Often, in fact, this was not a rejection of the real structure of feeling as an extension of the tragic category to a newly rising class.[104]

Thus, according to Williams' line of reasoning, one finds in the modern tragedy of the common man an ethical substance which an attempt to write of kings, simply because kings had once been most worthy of tragic significance, would today lack. Willy Loman, Eddie Carbone, and the rest of Miller's protagonists could then be said to be more purely tragic figures for our age and stage <u>because</u> of their status as the common man. However, this point should not be taken too far lest it give rise to an inverse <u>decorum</u>.

Miller would probably prefer to emphasis, the socialist's views which lead to the same conclusions about tragic heroes for today. What is important, for Miller, in tragedy is not suffering as such, but its causes. For him, as for Hegel, mere pity and fear are not tragic pity and fear.[105] Miller's work is tragic in terms of our volitional definition (above, p. 4) because he is concerned with "ultimate causes". Where Miller differs from Hegel's socialist definition of tragedy is that Miller does not restrict causation to human free will. Hegel, who is most concerned with ethics and man's responsibility for his own fate, speaks of tragedy as follows:

> To genuine tragic action it is essential that the principle of individual freedom and independence, or at least that of self-determination, the will to find in the self the free cause and source of the personal act and its consequences, should already have been aroused.[106]

Miller does not, however, commit himself wholly to the dialectical arguments of Hegelian socialism - unlike, say, Clifford Odets - so that his figure of the common man can appeal to less radical sensibilities as well as to the socialist reformer. In commenting on the mind of Aeschylus, Miller writes:

> . . . . one did not have to be religious to see in our own disaster the black outlines of a fate that was not human, nor of the heavens either, but something in between.[107]

It is this intermediate quality of being able to see the interplay between human causation and something from beyond which Willard Farnham picks out as having been a distincitve characteristic of the greatest Elizabethan tragedy.[108] If Miller's protagonists are successful as tragic figures or heroes it is not only because they carry with them the same ambivalence that Shakespeare saw, but also because they are common men who can strike the sympathetic chord of identification in both the modern bourgeois and the modern socialist hearts.

It is true, however, that Miller's earlier work does have a predominantly socialist bias of the Hegelian order, and that critics have understandably found this bias irksome. In "Tragedy and the Common Man", written shortly after All My Sons, one can see this characteristic bias clearly enough when Miller states that the tragic hero is "ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing - his sense of personal dignity . . . The underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his rightful position in society."[109] All My Sons, and, to a lesser extent, Death of a Salesman, reflect this attitude.

Miller's ideas have changed since then, though, and Emile McAnany is right in saying that "To complete the picture of Miller's theory, we must not stop with this first essay. It

is important to observe to what extent he has shifted the emphasis of his dramatic criticism in the intervening. . . . years."[110] The shift in emphasis is towards an examination of commitment. In A View from the Bridge Alfieri comments on Eddie's total commitment to his chosen path:

> Most of the time we settle for half and I like it better. But truth is holy, and even as I know how wrong he was, and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory - not purely good, but himself purely . . . .[111]

Eddie is admirable, but he is terrifyingly wrong too. He is like Melville's Ahab, or Sophocles' Oedipus, in the intensity of his involvement. Eddie reaches his "boundary situation" because his intensity of involvement, of commitment, brings him inevitably to disaster. If one asks what drives Willy Loman and Eddie Carbone to destruction, one can turn to Miller for an answer, where he says "I take it . . . . that the less a man is capable 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."[112]

McAnany suggests that, for Miller, 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 then relinquish it."[113] Certainly, this kind of commitment would seem to be a most important factor in the deaths of all Miller's protagonists up to and including Eddie in A View from the Bridge. But he goes on to say that "If there is a question of commitment in his plays, Miller realises that there is a concommitant need for knowledge. ."[114] McAnany wrote this prior to the appearance of After the Fall, which is interesting because Miller's treatment of the fable of the Fall of Man is centred upon the notion that

man has lost his innocence, but he that has gained a capacity for knowledge which, if developed, can serve to protect him from the evils inherent in his fallen nature. Holga and Quentin do not need to die to achieve tragic grandeur any more than Aeschylus's Electra and Orestes need to, for both Holga and Quentin have each in their own way found "the rock upon which one may stand without illusion"[115] through terrible suffering. They have both learnt, as Quentin sums it up, "What burning cities taught her and the death of love taught me: that we are very dangerous."[116]

Incident at Vichy confirms what After the Fall suggests, which is that Miller has again changed his emphasis. In the latest play the folly of man's persistent belief in his innocence is revealed even more starkly than before as a threat to his existence. Leduc 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.[117]

A moment before Von Berg's turn comes to face the Nazi Professor he learns the truth of Leduc's argument; "What can ever save us?"[118] Von Berg now goes into the inner room where he makes his decision to die not for ideals, but for the loss of them and for what can be offered in their place. His commitment is quite different from John Proctor's.

What appeal do Miller's protagonists have for the theatre audience of today? The question is complicated by the fact just demonstrated, namely that Miller's protagonists differ in what they represent, reflecting the author's changing ideas. Furthermore, speculation about the temper of one's own period in history is not easily seen in perspective. Nevertheless, it seems to me that all Miller's protagonists are meaningful to the modern

audience because whatever the emphasis in any one play, they represent mankind at grips with the most basic issues troubling his existence now and for all time. Whether Miller starts off as a socialist, then turns to the naked idea of commitment once the ideals behind commitment have begun to fall apart, and still later rejects ideals altogether, the deeper significance of his protagonists remain. Whether he would agree now with what he wrote previously or not, the significance remains. Whatever the immediate meaning of his protagonists, they are man as he has always been, self-destructive in his urge for self-preservation, self-destructive in his need to clutch tenaciously to the false ideals by which his life has been maintained, self-destructive in his inability to come to terms with his own nature. Topical interests will change, but, as Miller has written in self-justification, The Crucible "is not any more an attempt to cure witch hunts than Salesman is a plea for the improvement of conditions for traveling men, All My Sons a plea for better inspection of airplane parts, or A View from the Bridge an attack upon the Immigration Bureau. . . . It is examining the questions I was absorbed with before - the conflict between a man's raw deeds and his conception of himself."[119] The final comment is, incidentally, indicative of what one might call Miller's middle phase, the period in which The Crucible and A View from the Bridge were written.

Is the symbolic meaning of Miller's protagonists in any sense religious? Among the early influences at work in the formulation of his ideas, Miller includes the Greek dramatists. It is interesting to note that his immediate reaction was to see that their plays were not merely religious, but that they still have a religious meaning for us today. I quote more fully from a passage that has already been noted in another context (above p.51).

> I was told that the plays of Aeschylus must be read primarily on a religious level, that they are only lay dramas to us now because we no longer believe. I could not understand this because one did not have to be religious to see in our own disaster the black outlines of a fate that was not human, nor of the heavens either, but something in between.[120]

In considering the modern drama, Miller goes on to talk about the religious question in relation to Eugene O'Neill and himself:

> I read O'Neill in those days as I read everything else - looking to see how meaning was achieved. He said something in a press conference which in the context of those years seemed to be a challenge to the social preoccupation of the thirties. He said, "I am not interested in the relations of man to man, but of man to God." I thought that very reactionary. Until, after repeated and repeated forays into one play of my own after another, I understood that he meant what I meant, not ideologically but dramatically speaking. I too had a religion, however unwilling I was to be so backward. A religion with no gods, but with god-like powers.[121]

This rather broad interpretation of religion is not a new one among serious dramatists. Kitto says of Euripides that "we cannot suppose that he believed in the primitive story he presents of the birth of Dionysus; we must, if we want poetry, and drama, allow the poet his symbols. That done, we can see in this Dionysus the symbol of an ecstasy that is above, or beside, reason, one which the plodding rationalist or moralist rejects at his peril."[122] Miller's "religion with no gods, but with godlike powers" is not necessarily very different from that of Euripides, whom Aristotle called the most tragic of all the poets.

Erich Fromm has noted that although almost the whole American population believes in God, "there seems to be hardly anyone who is worried about his soul, salvation, spiritual development."[123] On the other hand, Miller has felt in the members of his society a thirst for immortality.[124] Either way, it seems likely that man is not impervious to religious

questions of the kind that Miller broaches, and that Miller has rekindled an interest in ultimate causes.

In the world of the nineteen-sixties many people realise that self-annihilation on a global scale has become a very real possibility and with this realisation has come a renewed interest in the forces which influence man's thought and action. Miller himself has dwelt on the subject of these forces in his article "The Playwright and the Atomic World."[125] One of the forces which Miller has picked out in his later work is idealism. To illustrate his point that idealism can be an appallingly destructive force he has chosen as recent and as topical a phenomenon as Nazism in Incident at Vichy. Incident at Vichy raises the question which should have been raised, Miller says, in The Diary of Anne Frank: ". . . . what is its relevancy to the survival of the race? Not the American race, or the Jewish race, or the German race, but the human race?"[126]

The protagonists in all Miller's plays from All My Sons to Incident at Vichy raise this question through their presence, words and deeds: what indeed is the relevance to the survival of the race? Miller may have pointed successively to different answers, but he has never failed to ask the same question, which is always a religious one because its meaning is spiritual as much as material. The protagonists all appeal to us as being significant because they are also the fathers of the race and the shadows of the gods.[127]

Miller has support for his thesis that today "the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings were" because the common man of today potentially has the symbolic stature which kings had once, and more important, Miller has made that potentiality a truth in his plays.

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23. Edward Murray, Arthur Miller, Dramatist (New York: Ungar, 1967) p. 167.

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26. Ronald Bryden, "Miller's Woodcut", New Stateman, 29th January, 1965, p. 174.

27. Miller, "The Family in Modern Drama," pp. 35-41.

28. Ibid., p. 36.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 39.

32. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

33. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 15.

34. Miller, "The Family in Modern Drama", p. 36.

35. Ibid. pp. 36-37

36. Robert Craig, Religion, Its Reality and Its Relevance, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 14

37. Joseph Wood Krutch comments on such reactions in American Drama since 1918, p. 326.

38. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 120.

39. Ibid., pp. 115-16.

40. Ibid., p. 126.

41. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards a Definition of Culture, (London: Faber & Faber, 1948), pp. 43-44.

42. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 42.

43. Arthur Miller, "A propos of After the Fall", World Theatre, XIV, (Jan-Feb. 1965), p. 79.

44. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 249.

45. Ibid., p. 289.

46. Ibid., p. 293.

47. Aldous Huxley, Brave New World Revisited, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 143.

48. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 383.

49. Ibid., p. 409.

50. Miller, After the Fall, p. 127.

51. Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 22.

52. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 278.

53. Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 73.

54. Spoken Arts Recording.

55. Miller, Collected Plays, pp. 42-43.

56. Miller, After the Fall, p. 13.

57. Ibid., p. 26.

58. Ibid., p. 127.

59. Ibid., p. 33.

60. Ibid., p. 32.

61. Ibid., p. 127.

62. Richard B. Sewall considers each of these tragic figures in turn in The Vision of Tragedy. He sees each one of them as being confronted with a "boundary situation".

63. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 281.

64. Ibid., p. 305.

65. Paul West, "Arthur Miller and the Human Mice", Hibbert Journal, (Jan. 1963), p. 86.

66. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 31.

67. Ibid., p. 34.

68. H.D.F. Kitto interprets the structure of Medea in this way in Greek Tragedy, pp. 190-92.

69. Richard B. Sewall, p. 7.

70. Ibid.

71. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 39.

72. Ibid., p. 40.

73. Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man", European Theories of the Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark (rev. ed.; New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1965), pp. 537-39.

74. Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy, pp. 15-61.

75. Representative American Plays, ed. A.H. Quinn, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953), pp. 79-108.

76. Ibid., pp. 369-398.

77. Ibid., pp. 473-512.

78. Joseph Wood Krutch, Nine Plays, p. xi.

79. Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Tragic Fallacy", is included in Barrett R. Clark's European Theories of the Drama pp. 492-501. This statement is made at p. 499.

80. Joseph Wood Krutch, Nine Plays, p. xxii.

81. These criteria of judgment are formulated by Bernard C. Heyl in New Bearings in Esthetics and Art Criticism, pp. 125-155.

82. This is substantially the view of Steiner in The Death of Tragedy.

83. Miller, "The Family in Modern Drama", p. 36.

84. Miller, After the Fall, p. 127.

85. Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 141-43. There are many other references to alienation as well. They are listed in the index at the back of the book.

86. Ibid., p. 207.

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88. Barrett H. Clark, p. 13.

89. Ibid., p. 7

90. Ibid., p. 14.

91. J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (Abridged ed.; London: MacMillan, 1963, p. 427.

92. Gilbert Murray, Euripides and his Age (2nd ed. rev; London: Oxford University Press, 1946) pp. 38-40. G.R. Levy supports Murray's view in The Gate of Horn (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), pp. 323-24.

93. Frazer, pp. 109-19.

94. Ibid., p. 121.

95. Levy, pp. 316-18.

96. Barrett H. Clark pp. 38-51 gives extracts from the writings of Daniello, Minturno, Scaliger and Castelvetro, all of which show a simple concern for status.

97. Madeleine Doran, Endeavors of Art (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954) p. 78.

98. Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), pp. 340-420 and E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 37-50, 108-11.

99. J.N. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings (2nd ed; Cambridge: University Press, 1914), p. 256.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid., pp. 104-05.

102. R.H. Barrow, The Romans (1st ed. rev: Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 144.

103. Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man", p. 537.

104. Raymond Williams, p. 49.

105. Ibid., p. 32.

106. Ibid., p. 33.

107. Miller, The Shadows of the Gods", p. 37.

108. Farnham, p. 335.

109. Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man", p. 538.

110. E.G. McAnany, S.J., "The Tragic Commitment: Some Notes on Arthur Miller", Modern Drama, 5 (May 1962), p. 13.

111. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 439.

112. Ibid., p. 7.

113. McAnany, p. 14.

114. Ibid.

115. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 37.

116. Miller, After the Fall, p. 127.

117. Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 84.

118. Ibid., p. 87.

119. Miller, "Brewed in the Crucible", New York Times, (March 9th, 1958), p. 3.

120. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 37.

121. Ibid., pp. 37-38.

122. Kitto, p. 378.

123. Fromm, p. 141.

124. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 29.

125. Arthur Miller, "The Playwight and the Atomic World", Tulane Drama Review 5 (June 1961), pp. 3-20.

126. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 40.

127. Ibid., p. 43.

CHAPTER III

THE SHACKLING OF OPPOSITES.

The last chapter set out to show that some of the most basic and intractable problems confronting human existence can be traced in the outlines of man's relationships with his fellow men. This chapter is concerned with the dark and mysterious background before which human relationships are played out on the stage of this world. Man is a part of the setting which bears so strongly upon what he does, but he is distinct from it too. The interplay between human causation and something from beyond has been suggested (above, p. 51); that suggestion must now be examined as our second proposition and its implications explored.

"Man is free but fated, fated but free," writes Sewall in his commentary on Oedipus the King.[1] Farnham speaks of the "marriage of explicability and inexplicability . . . . which tragedy on the Elizabethan stage had . . . . brought most truly into being."[2] Willy Loman can only face life by dreaming the dreams which will ultimately destroy him (above, p. 25) In this vision of tragedy, which sees in the "boundary situation" a shackling of opposites, "Direction and focus may change, but the vision is constant."[3]

Direction and focus do change from one of Miller's plays to another, but the tragic dialectic persists. Miller sees man as being part of his environment and at the same time separate

from it, governed by the laws of nature and yet more than an animal.

Man and nature.

In the earlier plays Miller often takes parallels from other forms of life in order to comment on human existence. He is not, however, a romantic idealist of the kind who would say that human life most closely approaches perfection when it is lived according to nature. Miller's parallels reveal the ways in which man has broken immutable laws and has suffered accordingly. The parallels do not promise happiness or justice in mere observance of the laws, nevertheless, because there is no panacea for mortal ills: the laws which decree the conditions of life include death as one of the conditions.[4]

Only once does Miller succumb to the temptation to exploit the pathetic fallacy, in All My Sons. The attempt is singularly unsuccessful. A tree planted in memory of the missing son, Larry, is blown down in the night before the action of the play commences. Mrs Keller ends her account of the dream in which she heard Larry call to her with the words:

> I woke up and it was so funny - the wind . . . . it was like the roaring of his engine. I came out here . . . . I must've still been half asleep. I could hear that roaring like he was going by. The tree snapped right in front of me - and I like - came awake. She is looking at the tree. She suddenly realises something, turns with a reprimanding finger shaking slightly at Keller. See? We should never have planted that tree. I said so in the first place; it was too soon to plant a tree for him.[5]

Ann, who had been betrothed to Larry, has just arrived back at the Keller home, to the chagrin of Mrs Keller. Mrs Keller still believes that Larry is alive and resents the fact that her younger son, Chris, has replaced Larry in Ann's affections. For her there is a direct connection between Ann's return and the

fall of the young sapling:

> She points to tree. But why did that happen the very night she came back? Laugh, but there are meanings in such things. She goes to sleep in his room and his memorial breaks in pieces.[6]

The portent is ironically validated when Ann later brings out the letter - another contrivance - to prove Larry's death. However, all possible impact is lost because the outcome has been made inevitable not by what happens in the play but because everyone who sees the fallen tree talks about it in such a way that a symbolic significance is forced upon a mere coincidence.

Death of a Salesman and The Crucible draw images and parallels from nature much more convincingly, and in quite a different way. In these plays Miller shows how man has not made the best of his fate. Nature mirrors abstractions; the abstractions represent the best in a human existence which cannot be confined and yet is confined and restricted within nature's laws; man cannot find his image in the glass. Here is the heart of a conflict which has far-reaching implications:

> The Crucible is, internally, Salesman's blood brother. It is examining the questions I was absorbed with before - the conflict between man's raw deeds and his conception of himself.[7]

The first stage direction in Death of a Salesman calls for "A melody . . . ., played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon."[8] In its sound are Willy's dreams for a better life. Willy's dreams take him back to a memory of trees, sun and warm air.[9] He compares the present with the past:

> The street is lined with cars. There's not a breath of fresh air in the neighbourhood. The grass don't grow any more, you can't raise a carrot in the back yard. They should've had a law against apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elms out there?[10]

Willy accuses his society of having destroyed what was naturally good and desirable, but he holds the very values that made the destruction possible. Although he can never recognise his own complicity he is aware of his separation from values that endure. As Miller says in his defence, had he not been aware, "he would have died contentedly while polishing his car, probably on a Sunday afternoon with the ball game coming over the radio. But he was agonised by his awareness of being in a false position, so constantly haunted by the hollowness of all he had placed his faith in . . . . that he staked his life on the ultimate assertion."[11]

Whenever Willy dreams he goes back in his mind for associations with nature. Remembering the youth of Biff and Hap he thinks of elm trees and hammocks;[12] remembering the earlier days of his marriage he reminds Linda of lilacs and wisteria, peonies and daffodils;[13] remembering his own childhood he reminds himself, through the idealised figure of Ben, of wild flowers and great expanses of open country and the flutes which his father used to make and sell.[14] Life had been beautiful, but now the grass and carrots no longer grow in Willy's back yard.[15] Act One ends with his anguished cry, "Gee, look at the moon moving between the buildings!"[16] His recognition of mankind's perverse self-alienation is more than merely pathetic, while in the background the horror of what man has done to himself is emphasised in the silent action of Biff discovering the rubber tubing which Willy has planned to use for his suicide.

Man's destruction of his ties with nature leads to self-destruction. This truth, which is merely suggested at the end of Act One, is given proof at the end of Act Two. The final blow which severs Willy from his life comes when his two sons desert him in the restaurant and go off with prostitutes; here is utter perversion of natural relationships between father and

sons, between men and women. Ironically, Happy later takes flowers as a peace offering to his mother.[17] In desolation, Willy, left alone in the restaurant, asks the waiter whether there is a seed store in the neighbourhood. Abandoned by his own "seed", his two sons, he cries, "I've got to get some seeds right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground."[18]

The most terrible of the many ironies in the play now follows. Willy, trying desperately to be a part of creation, plants carrot seed and beet seed in the now-barren back yard, but while he is at work the figure of Ben returns. Ben represents Willy's ideals, his "unrealistic, indeed distorted, notion of a hard-driving, infallible and invariably successful tycoon."[19] And Ben tempts Willy to his own destruction.

Abigail Williams is introduced in The Crucible as "a strikingly beautiful girl . . . . with an endless capacity for dissembling."[20] Truth and beauty are usually very closely associated in aesthetic standards.[21] In Abigail there is no such association, or, rather, there is a complete inversion of the association. She is "unnatural" to the point of diabolism.

On Abigail rests much of the blame for the evil which bedevils Salem. Act Two begins in a pastoral atmosphere, in contrast with the frenzied crying-out against the supposed devil-worshippers at the end of Act One. John Proctor returns to the house after planting "far out to the forest edge."[22] The farm is "seeded" and the earth as warm as blood with the promise of green fields. Here is man close to nature, making the best of his existence; the association of warm earth with blood suggests a mysterious bond between man and the earth.[23] As in Death of a Salesman wild flowers are mentioned in a context suggestive of harmony with nature; John Proctor says to Elizabeth:

> It's winter in here yet. On Sunday let you come with me, and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers on the earth. (With good feeling he goes and looks up at the sky through the open doorway.) Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilacs is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring![24]

This speech is redolent of other things. Nightfall will bring Ezekiel Cheever, clerk of the newly-constituted court; Proctor's way of spending Sunday will be questioned with all the Puritan suspicion of Reverend Hale, custodian of a destructive religious conscience; the flowers will never be picked because John and Elizabeth will never again be free to walk the farm together.

Inevitably John Proctor would have died in the fulness of time, as would the flowers have died, whether picked or not. But the disregard that other humans have for nature, and all that it implies, results in Proctor paying that intolerable price, death, unjustly and all too soon.

By the end of the play man's inroads upon nature - of which he is a part in one sense but outside in another - have become evident. In Act Four Cheever tells Danforth, "There be so many cows wandorin' the highroads, now their masters are in jail . . . ."[25] Only a few minutes before this Herrick has reassured Tituba that the bellowing sound she hears is "not Satan, just a poor old cow with a hatful of milk."[26] The smell of nightfall in the cell where the action takes place is not the scent of lilacs, but "a prodigious stench."[27]

The Reverend Hale learns from nature what Danforth can not. Hale warns Danforth that if Proctor is executed there will be a rebellion; he tries vainly to convince Danforth that they have been terribly wrong by showing what effects the trials have had on man's life in relation to nature:

> HALE (Harder now): If you think God wills you to raise rebellion, Mr Danforth, you are mistaken!

DANFORTH (Instantly): You have heard rebellion spoken in the town?

HALE: Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlot's cry will end his life - and you wonder yet if rebellion's spoke?[28]

The perversion of nature which is exposed in The Crucible is described in terms of a more personal responsibility than is apparent in Miller's other plays. Even though Danforth is representative of a force much larger than himself, he is nevertheless personally responsible to a great extent. In the imagery which Miller uses the country folk are relatively free from the fate which city dwellers have to face, the fate of being born into a society wherein the laws of nature have been more wholly perverted - or perhaps just forgotten. T.S. Eliot reflects the same idea in the Four Quartets. In the second poem of the group Eliot tells of the harmony between rustic man and nature:

Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under the earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons . . . .[29]

Eliot does not suggest any more than does Miller that life according to nature is a cure for all ills, for the feet rising and falling tell of "Eating and drinking. Dung and death."[30] But such a life, which hides not from realities, is preferable to the self-deception practised by the dwellers in cities:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
Is a strong brown god - sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;

> Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
> The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
> By the dwellers in cities - ever, however, implacable,
> Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
> Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated
> By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and
> waiting.
> His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom, ...[31]

Though Eliot's description is not restricted to any one place it is undoubtedly linked by the title of the poem in which it occurs ("The Dry Salvages") to the unpropitiating New York into which Willy Loman has become absorbed and into which Marco and Rodolpho are driven by economic circumstances.

In Miller's New York plays man is in a cruelly difficult situation. The life which would be best for him he cannot live. Rodolpho quickly removes Catherine's illusions about life among the natural beauties of Italy:

> CATHERINE: . . . . I think we would be happier there.
>
> RODOLPHO: Happier! What would you eat? You can't cook the view! . . . . In two years you would have an old, hungry face. When my brother's babies cry they give them water, water that boiled a bone.[32]

The brother, Marco, is in a worse position. Though father of a family, he has had to break up the family to support his children. And Marco represents but one aspect of a great and terrible dilemma. Miller's plays are about a critical period in human affairs and in evoking its problems so fully through a variety of inter-related themes he sees with the tragic vision which comes when "for reasons internal and external, spiritual and sociological, the questions of ultimate justice and human destiny seem suddenly to have been jarred loose again . . . . Suddenly the original terror looms close and the old formulations cannot dispel it. The conflict between man and his destiny assumes once more the ultimate magnitude."[33]

A Memory of Two Mondays and The Misfits are not as fully of the tragic mood as Miller's other dramatic works, but they are important in the context of man and nature and so merit discussion in this context.

Miller describes A Memory of Two Mondays as being "a pathetic comedy"[34] and this description would probably be the most apt. The action takes place in a city warehouse which has factory-type windows stretching from floor to ceiling. Although these windows are in the background they "seem to surround the entire stage."[35] At the beginning of the play "they are encrusted with the hard dirt of years."[36] In the first part of the play the windows remain blackened, and in this setting we are introduced to Kenneth, the Irishman who has had to leave his beautiful homeland for the same reason that Marco and Rodolpho have had to leave theirs.

When Bert asks Kenneth where he learnt "all that poetry," Kenneth replies, "Why, in Ireland, Bert; there's all kinds of useless occupations in Ireland. 'When lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed . . . .' "[37] Gus interjects to ask Kenneth what he is doing and Kenneth continues:

> Why it's the poetry hour, Gus, don't you know that? This is the hour all men rise to thank God for the blue of the sky, the roundness of the everlasting globe, and the cheerful cleanliness of the subway system. And here we have some axles. Oh, Bert, I never thought I would end me life wrappin' brown paper around strange axles.[38]

The sheer incongruity of human life in the factory appeals to the Irishman's sense of humour. A little later he comments on the despatch of two axles to the country: "That a sweet thought? Sendin' these two axles out into the green countryside?"[39]

The most glaring weakness in this rather unsatisfactory play is that Miller overdoes his theme. Through Kenneth the

fatal dichotomy is expressed in tones of mawkish sentimentality and the deeper horrow elicited in the other plays is lost. However, there are moments in the second half of the play which reflect a less fanciful irony. When the windows have been cleaned and "all the windows around the stage burst into the yellow light of summer that floods through the room" Bert and Kenneth break into a rhapsodic account of what they can see outside - roses, trees, clouds, and the passing of the seasons.[40] However, it is not long before the humble beauties of city back yards become overshadowed by a new attraction, the establishment of a brothel.[41] The most exciting view from the windows - for some of the factory workers - becomes the scene of human perversion across the way.

The Misfits has been published as a filmscript-novel, following the filming of an adaptation of Miller's earlier short story of the same name.[42] One of the most interesting points of comparison between the short story and the filmscript-novel is that in the later version the references to nature and human life in relation to nature have been greatly expanded. In the later version Roslyn represents mankind struggling pathetically but nobly towards the dignity human life can claim when it is lived most nearly in harmony with nature. In the short story her character is quite different, from all accounts, and she does not actually appear, being only referred to by others. In the filmscript-novel her role is most important.

When Roslyn and Gay move into Guido's house in the wilds they do their best, largely under Roslyn's influence, to make the uncompleted derelict a home in which they can live with simple dignity. When Guido comes to visit them he is amazed to see that the house has been repaired and that the garden is

flourishing:

> Guido has been glancing at the place, and now walks to get a better vantage. "Am I in the right place?" His voice cracks into a giggle.
>
> Roslyn is extraordinarily sympathetic toward him, and Guido, despite the conventionality of his remarks, is moved by what he sees.
>
> "Did you see the vegetable garden?" Roslyn turns to draw in Gay and even to give him pre-eminence. "Gay did it. Took him a whole week just to get the soil turned over."
>
> Gay walks up beside her, and now that her feeling for him has returned he puts an arm around her waist. With wry pride: "Mowed the grass and put in them flowers, too. Even got your windows unstuck, and your fireplace don't smoke anymore."
>
> Guido turns from Gay to Roslyn. There is a subtle resentment toward both of them, but at the same time his eyes seem charged with a vision beyond them. "Roslyn, you must be a magician. The only thing this boy ever did for a woman was to get out the ice cubes."[43]

Wild flowers transform the living room.[44] Again they symbolise man trying to make the best of his place in nature.

Gay nevertheless shares humanity's guilt for the <u>hubris</u> of perverting nature. Gay has always earned his living by capturing wild horses. Formerly, the horses would have made "Christmas presents for kids. 'Cause they're small horses, you see, the kids loved them for Christmas. But . . . . kids ride motor scooters now."[45] Now the captured horses are sold to be killed for dog food. As Gay tells Roslyn of his plight, "she is beginning to listen, to perceive a dilemma in which he too is caught." The conversation continues:

> When I started, they used a lot of them I caught. There was mustang blood pullin' all the plows in the West; they couldn't have settled here without somebody caught mustangs for them. It . . . it just got changed around, see? I'm doing the same thing I ever did. It's just

> that they . . . they changed it around. There was no such thing as a can of dog food in those days. It . . . it was a good thing to do, honey it was a man's work, and I know how to do it.[46]

Gay is a misfit because what was once a man's work, and the only work he know, is no longer honourable. His sense of alienation and self-disgust is dulled only by his guilty plea that "if I didn't do it, somebody would."[47] Paul Tillich remarked that "Tragedy combines Guilt and Necessity."[48] With Ezekial Cheever and the Major in Incident at Vichy, Gay pleads necessity as a cover for guilt. Unlike them he attains the stature of tragic hero in that he later renounces his complicity in this particular guilt: "the response of the hero is neither to yield to fatalism nor humble himself in total guilt, but to press on in his action to find by experience the truth of his own nature and of the nature of man."[49] Gay learns the truth of his own nature and of the nature of man from his experience among the darkened hills on the night of the round-up:

> "God damn them all! They changed it. Changed it all around. They smeared it all over with blood, turned it into shit and money just like everything else. You know that. I know that. It's just ropin' a dream now." He slips his wrist out of Guido's grasp. "Find some other way to know you're alive . . . . if they got another way, any more." He turns to the rope (holding the stallion) and leans his weight on the knife; the rope, cut, falls to the ground.[50]

Earlier Gay has used the immutable law that "nothin' can live unless something dies" to excuse himself totally.[51] He has now learnt that necessity does not rule alone. Even if he will have to spend the rest of his days "making change in the supermarket" or loading the machines at the laundromat, he has regained his integrity.[52]

Integrity, After the Fall tells us, can only come when

we face the truth of our own nature and know it by an act of will. Eden, Quentin declares finally, is a lie, "a garden of wax fruit and painted trees."[53] His meaning is that man is never innocent of his own nature, which is basically evil, for "the wish to kill is never killed."[54] The difference between human nature and nature at large is that man alone has consciousness of good and evil; he alone has knowledge. But knowledge can, perhaps, atone for lack of innocence if we "know, and even happily, that we meet unblessed."[55] Man is bound by the laws of nature, but with knowledge he can mitigate his own cruelty. Implicit and explicit in the whole framework of After the Fall is a truth that had only been hinted at in earlier works. One of the first clear hints occurs when Chris Keller hurls at his father: "What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you?"[56] When Holga sets out to pick wild flowers for Quentin it is in the consciousness of man's dangerous nature and it is in the shadow of the concentration camp.

Life in the jungle.

When man abrogates his consciousness and conscience he not only reduces himself to the level of animality, he sinks below it. "No animal kills his own . . . . " says Chris Keller to his father. His father has betrayed his relatedness to society (above, p.33). Miller comments:

> The fortress which All My Sons lays siege to is the fortress of unrelatedness. It is an assertion not so much of a morality in terms of right and wrong, but of a moral world's being such because men cannot walk away from certain of their deeds. In this sense Joe Keller is a threat to society and in this sense the play is a social play. Its "socialness" does not reside in its having dealt with the crime of selling defective materials to a nation at war - the same crime could easily be the basis of a thriller which

> would have no place in social dramaturgy. It is that the crime is seen as having roots in a certain relationship of the individual to society, and to a certain indoctrination he embodies, which, if dominant, <u>can mean a jungle existence for all of us</u> no matter how high our buildings soar. (Italics mine.)[57]

Frequently in Miller's plays the idea that man has perverted his role in nature goes with the idea that man has, ironically, made of his world a jungle, and not a home. Miller goes on to say that it is man's sense of unrelatedness, or alienation, which is socially meaningful in his plays.[58] The sense of alienation which Fromm finds to be so widespread becomes in Miller's plays the mark of Cain in our society, the sense that something has gone awry.

In <u>All My Sons</u> there are a good many allusions to man as a predator. Chris Keller's mother tells him that people "can hate so much they'll tear the world to pieces."[59] There is Chris' speech already quoted (above, p. 74); there is also the sophisticated savagery of Joe Keller's practicality: "If Larry was alive he wouldn't act like this. He understood the way the world is made. He listened to me. To him the world had a forty-foot front; it ended at the building line."[60] Chris reacts to his father's practicality with an image drawn from the most distasteful level of animal existence: "The cats in that alley are practical . . . ."[61] Finally Chris sums up his society, which he sees as being a typical example of the world of human affairs:

> We used to shoot a man who acted like a dog, but honour was real there, you were protecting something. But here? This is the land of the great big dogs, you don't love a man here, you eat him! That's the principle; the only one we live by - it just happened to kill a few people this time, that's all. The world's that way, how can I take it out on him? What sense does that make? This is a zoo, a zoo![62]

The simile which describes a human being as acting like a dog is a very weak one, thoroughly overworked and lacking in any convincing meaning. However, at the moment of crisis which this speech represents the horror of the general impression of animality is adequately conveyed.

The theme of man's negation of his humanity, his descent into animality, is most strongly and persistently stated in Death of a Salesman. It has been noted that Ben represents Willy's ideal of the hard-driving, infallible and invariably successful tycoon (above, p. 66). And Ben is in fact no more than a predatory animal, romanticised through Willy's imagination. Almost every appearance of Ben brings with it mention of the jungle of human endeavour. "Why boys," says Ben to Biff and Hap, "when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. (He laughs.) And by God I was rich."[63] At this Willy reassures his sons that "the greatest things can happen," showing not only a perverted scale of values but also that contemporary American society is there to be exploited in the same way as the diamond mines of the African jungle. Ben himself uses the jungle as a metaphor to be applied to this society; "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy," he says to Biff. "You'll never get out of the jungle that way."[64] His courtly action in taking Linda's hand and bowing with the words "It was an honour and a pleasure to meet you, Linda!" serves as an ironic comment on the sincerity of civilised customs.

Willy is wholly fooled it appears, but the very strength of his protestation of faith in Ben suggests an underlying uneasiness. "That's just the spirit I want to imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right! I was right! I was right!" he affirms as the figure of Ben departs into darkness.[65]

In taking this attitude Willy is rendering himself an accomplice to the force which will destroy him, a materialism which is animalistic because it knows no moral law but only the law of the survival of the most rapacious and unscrupulous. Howard Wagner's reaction to Willy's plea for lighter work in his old age is of the kind which Ben would have approved. "No, but it's a business, kid, and everybody's gotta pull his weight," and "'Cause you gotta admit, business is business" are replies which, in their lack of sense of responsibility stemming from a lack of sense of relatedness, do in fact "mean a jungle existence for all of us no matter how high our buildings soar."[66]

When Willy complains to Charley about the inhuman treatment he has received from Wagner he recalls that he had known the man who has just fired him in a special relationship. "That snotnose . . . . I named him. I named him Howard."[67] To which Charley replies, truthfully if somewhat cruelly;

> Willy, when're you gonna realise that them things don't mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can't sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is you're a salesman, and you don't know that.[68]

Even after Willy has been deserted in the restaurant by his sons, whom Linda upbraids as being "a pair of animals",[69] he feels responsible to them; but even in his forgiving compassion and self-sacrifice his false values lead him to the most final form of self-destruction. The image of Ben returns to Willy in his last few minutes of life and urges him to self-destruction, counselling that "it does take a great kind of man to crack the jungle," and that "the jungle is dark but full of diamonds."[70] The only diamond which Willy can see glowing in the jungle of his own life is his life insurance policy.

In All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, A View from the Bridge, A Memory of Two Mondays, The Misfits, After the Fall and Incident at Vichy there is a horror to be found in the fact that Everyman, as in the medieval morality play of Everyman, has shown the capacity for becoming "much worse than beasts."[71] In The Crucible the horror is to be found in the evil that man does when he arrogates to himself the role of "scourge of God."[72] The implication that man does become bestial in adopting such a role is not to be denied, but in The Crucible the bestiality remains implied. We are concerned here with explicit reference.

When Alfieri describes the setting in which the action in A View from the Bridge is to take place, he refers to it as "the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world."[73] The image of the voracious monster lurks in the background throughout the play. Eddie Carbone, the alienated man whose only advice to his step-daughter is "don't trust nobody,"[74] reduces the image to the scale of human relationships; of his warnings to Catherine he explains to his wife that ". . . . most people aint people . . . . they'll chew her to pieces if she don't watch out."[75] Man is predatory in the eyes of the longshoreman; he is also vicious. Though Eddie seeks to absolve himself from complicity with the former characteristic, he proudly accepts the latter. "You wait, Marco," he says with apparent glee, weirdly elated and rubbing his fists into his palms, "you see some real fights here."[76] Eddie uses the fact that one has to learn to fight because "one a those days somebody's liable to step on his foot or sump'm" to attack Rodolpho with his fists under the disguise of training the young man to fight.[77]

A physical trial of strength follows as Marco demonstrates his prowess in lifting a chair from the floor by the bottom of one leg. Eddie cannot perform the feat and, after a

moment of silent tension, Marco "transforms what might appear like a glare of warning into a smile of triumph."[78] He has established his ascendancy as male animal. The animality being shown here is on a lower level than the sophisticated savagery of, say, Ben; however, it is a way of showing a proponsity in man that never dies and which can permeate all levels of human life. When Eddie reports the two illegal immigrants to the Immigration Bureau he is using the machinery of a supposedly civilised society as a substitute for the physical revenge he desires.

However, the last round to be fought between Eddie and Marco is a physical battle. "Animal! You go on your knees to me!" cries Marco as he strikes Eddie; "Anima - a - a - l!" again he shrieks as Eddie prepares to lunge at him.[79] Marco's taunt is justified enough in that Eddie has denied his human responsibilities, but it is also ironic in that Marco's reaction is just as animalistic. Civilised human standards are not to be maintained by violence.

Although A Memory of Two Mondays is not ultimately tragic, it is darkened by the same theme that informs Miller's more sombre work. Miller has called the play a "pathetic comedy," but he has qualified his description of it by also referring to it as "a kind of letter to that sub-culture where the sinews of the economy are rooted, that darkest Africa of our society from whose interior only the sketchiest messages ever reach our literature or our stage."[80] (Italics mine.) The atmosphere of the play justifies this last statement, but there is only one occasion in the play when there is fully explicit reference to society in terms of a jungle existence.

This occasion comes when Raymond, the overseer, remarks "It's like a circus around here."[81] Moments later Jerry looks

out of the window and sees that the prostitutes have moved in nearby; he is delighted that two of them are naked and when Kenneth asks what he is "gawkin' at them for" he merely replies: "There's another one down there! Look at her on the bed! What a beast!"[82] At which Willy chimes in "It's a cathouse! Gus! A whole cathouse moved in!"

The sexual depravity of Jerry and Willy is marked by their inability to see the women as human beings. To such men the sexual delight which the prostitutes promise is an uninhibited descent to the most purely animal level of existence. Again it is the failure to perceive relatedness which permits such reactions to go unchallenged by any higher sensitivity in themselves.

In <u>After the Fall</u> the attributes of the jungle in human life are related to a theme which had been developing gradually in Miller's plays, the theme of man's fallen nature. This theme will be discussed in the next chapter, but it will be mentioned here insofar as it is related to the present discussion.

What impresses Quentin most of all about Maggie when he sees her in the park is that she is so unaware of her own beauty. However, he realises the danger of her position and tries to warn her with the words "I wish you knew how to take care of yourself."[83] When it appears that she has not grasped the import of what he has said, he expresses himself more plainly: "Most of the animals around here are not in the zoo."[84]

The point which Miller makes here is that man is not honourable in his motives, a view which is commonplace enough, yet little understood. Man's nature is fallen, Miller says: the most dangerous mistake he can make is to believe in his own innocence or anyone else's. It is this last conclusion which

is not readily understood even by those who have few illusions about man's nature so long as they can believe at all in their own innocence. Maggie has the rare quality of lack of belief in what passes in most of us for morality in spite of her innocent trust of men. For this quality Quentin loves her. When she asks him "W - what's moral?" he replies: "You tell the truth, even against yourself. You're not pretending to be - Turns out to the listener, with a dread joy - innocent! Yes, that suddenly there was someone who - could not club you to death with their innocence!"[85]

In this last line is contained the central paradox of the play. Man can only begin to be good when he recognises that he is basically evil. He has not the innocence which the rest of nature enjoys, but to compensate him he has a capacity for knowledge. This capacity can save him from the cruelty which he attributes to the animal kingdom but which is worse when it appears in himself, because it is cruelty with consciousness. It is to cruelty with consciousness - sadism - which Leduc has no duty to make a gift of himself.[86]

One could cite further examples from After the Fall and from Miller's other recent works, but as the focus has changed other issues have assumed a more persistent importance than the theme of the jungle in our lives. We should now consider what directions Miller's thought has taken and where along the path the present focus lies.

The shackling of opposites - an aspect of the Dionysiac.

Whatever the changes in direction and focus, Miller's vision has indeed remained constant. It is as true of Incident at Vichy as it is of Death of a Salesman to say that we can "see in our own disaster the black outlines of a fate that was not

human, nor of the heavens either, but something in between"[87] Guilt and necessity are bound in a way that is, and always will be, a mystery.

It has already been suggested that tragic death in the Greek drama would have symbolised the death of the god of the year, (above, p. 45); it was further suggested that some attributes of the Dionysiac were reborn into the great drama of the Elizabethan period (above, pp. 41-48). In that discussion the emphasis was on the hero. We should now spare a little time for the overall meaning of Dionysiac myth as applied to the tragic drama. Gilbert Murray wxplains the meaning in this way:

> When we say that tragedy originated in a dance, ritual or magical, intended to represent the death of the vegetation of this year and its coming return in triumph next year . . . we must remember several things. First, a dance was in ancient times essentially religious, not a mere capering with the feet but an attempt to express with every limb and sinew of the body those emotions for which words, especially the words of simple and unlettered men, are inadequate. Again, vegetation is to us an abstract noun; to the ancient it was a personal being, not 'it' but 'He'. His death was as our own deaths, and His rebirth a thing to be anxiously sought with prayers and dances. For if He were not re-born, what would happen? Famine, and wholesale death by famine, was a familiar thought, a regularly returning terror in these primitive agricultural villages. Nay, more, why must the cycle of summer and winter tell as it does? Why must 'He' die and men die? Some of the oldest Greek philosophers have no doubt about the answer: there has been 'Hubris' or 'Adikia', Pride or Injustice, and the result thereof must needs be death. Every year, 'He' waxes too strong and commits 'Hubris', and such sin has its proper punishment. 'The sun shall not transgress his measures', says Heraclitus; 'if he does he shall be pursued by Furies, till justice be re-fulfilled.' It is the law of all existing things. 'They all pay retribution for injustice, one to another, according to the Ordinance of Time' (Heraclitus, fr. 94, Anaximander, fr. 9). And the history of each year's bloom was an example of this refluent balance. The Year Daemon - Vegetation Spirit or Corn God or whatever we call him - waxes proud and is slain by his enemy, who thereby becomes a murderer and must in turn

> perish at the hands of the expected avenger, who is at the same time the Wrongod One re-risen. The ritual of this vegetation spirit is extraordinarily widespread in all quarters of the globe, and may best be studied in Frazer's The Goldon Bough, especially in the part entitled, 'The Dying God'. Dionysus, the daemon of tragedy, is one of the Dying Gods, like Attis, Adonis, Osiris.

Although there is at present a tendency among classical scholars to discredit Murray's theory about the origin of tragedy, there remains a weighty body of opinion in his support.[89] Certainly, even if Murrary's view is not literally true it has a metaphorical value which helps us enormously in understanding the spirit of Greek tragedy.

Murray supports the view that "the atmosphere of primitive Greek tragedy must have been strangely similar" to the medieval religious drama in which so many elements of Elizabethan tragedy are rooted.[90] And I have attempted to show that there is at least one important notion which Miller and the Elizabethan tragedians have in common: it is that man is free but fated, fated but free (above, p. 51). Again the spirit of Dionysus is reborn.

In the dramatic work of the Greeks, of the Elizabethans, and of the modern age, the spirit of Dionysus manifests itself through a number of inter-related themes, in which death is seen as a necessary condition of life, destruction as the inevitable corollary of creation, and evil as the only standard of comparison through which we may come to know the good. Of these three themes just mentioned, the first two will now be considered briefly. The third will receive more detailed attention as the basis of much of the argument of the next chapter because it occupies a dominant position in Miller's scale of ideas.

Before showing how tragic paradoxes are embodied in any

particular work one should pause to contemplate the nature of tragic truth. The paradoxes can never be simply resolved into a neat, conclusive answer because guilt and necessity cannot be reconciled. As Sewall says:

> In tragedy, truth is not revealed as one harmonious whole; it is many-faceted, ambiguous, a sum of irreconcilables - and that is one source of its terror.[91]

There is also the danger that one may try to construe a tragic work for plain statements about right and wrong. Again Sewall adds a warning:

> Hubris is not "sin". It is the mysterious dynamic of all tragic action, dangerous because it involves a challenge to the powers that be, but not (in the tragic view) morally good or bad. It may lead to destruction - indeed, it so often has that the folk will have none of it; but without it, no man acts or suffers or learns.[92]

Similarly in a moment of acute perceptiveness, Sir Philip Sidney declares that the figures in great poetry "like Venus (but to better purpose), hath rather be troubled in the net with Mars, than enjoy the homely quiet of Vulcan."[93] As Miller says, "In the tragic view the need of man to wholly realise himself is the only fixed star."[94] Man in his heroic role must act. However, when Miller wrote of man's need to wholly realise himself he declared that "the flaw, or crack in character, is really nothing - and need be nothing - but his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity";[95] only later did he come to realise that when heroic man acts he will inevitably be partly right and partly wrong, justified in one sense, but wrong in another.

The theme which most obviously follows from a Dionysiac understanding of the physical and spiritual universe is that which sees death as a necessary condition of life. It is a theme

understood by Christianity too, for to be re-born man must die, and Christ died that we all might live. In Miller's plays the theme is given occasional mention, but in itself it does not find repeated emphasis. Gay's plea to Roslyn in The Misfits that "nothin' can live unless something dies" is probably the most notable expression of this theme in concise terms.[96]

More important in Miller's work is the extension of this theme into more general terms: destruction is the inevitable corollary of creation. Miller is a realist. He understands that both creation and destruction are as inevitable as the cycle of the seasons. The theme is at work in all his plays of sombre cast.

Much of what there is to be said about the theme has already been stated in other contexts, so that what follows will largely be a recapitulation.

Joe Keller destroys himself and his family through his attempts at preservation. It is only in this play that the issues are so clearly understandable in purely moral terms that a purely moral answer is possible (above, pp. 12-13; p. 24). The weakness of the play, which robs it of tragic possibilities, is that the issues are over-simplified (above, p. 24). Death of a Salesman does not suggest an easy or clear-cut solution. Willy needs to dream, to keep alive and to keep going, but the kind of dream which such a man will create can only lead to one end, destruction (above, pp.24-25). The society which is destroyed in The Crucible is doomed because its existence is based upon a religiously hopeful delusion that will destroy it; the society is guilty in holding its deluded ideas (above, pp. 25-27). but what else could be expected of a society given these particular antecedents and this particular crisis? Humanity is to blame, but so is the fate which forces boundary situations upon

humanity. Miller and Sewall agree that man can be "on the way" but that he has in no sense arrived.[97]

In All My Sons Joe Keller had been faced with a relatively easy choice between right and wrong, a choice which he had freedom enough to make. In A View from the Bridge Eddie Carbone is driven by much more powerful - in that they are more basic and more deeply hidden - forces (above, p. 17; pp. 27-28) "not purely good, but himself purely,"[98] he is compounded of attributes which will lead him to destruction as he gropes towards preservation of himself and all that is dear to him. In the time between the writing of those two plays there has been a refinement and a growing tragic perception in Miller's thought.

However, it has also been suggested that the sense of alienation and the deepening sense of tragedy only comes to fulness in the later plays (above, p. 31). The focus has changed. It is man in his isolation rather than man in society who is now the subject of Miller's enquiry. In The Crucible John Proctor had cried "we are only what we always were, but naked now,"[99] but the nakedness is still the nakedness of the group. There is almost a comfort in numbers. There is no immediate physical death in After the Fall, but Quentin is man unaccommodated and alone upon the blasted heath of his life. One may feel, and probably with justification, that Quentin does not attain the special grandeur of a King Lear, but the hold of reassurance upon the audience is severed once again. (above, pp. 31-32). If there is a hope expressed in After the Fall, it is the hope of a man rising from the rubble after the destruction of a city of ideas, rising to prop old stone upon old stone in a new order.

In Incident at Vichy the prospect for man is at its bleakest. Whatever chance there might have been for meaning has now escaped the understanding of mortal men. As Leduc the

painter says:

> Look at it, don't ask what it means; you're not God, you can't tell what anything means. I'm walking down the street before, a car pulls up beside me, a man gets out and measures my nose, my ears, my mouth, the next thing I'm sitting in a police station - or whatever the hell this is - and in the middle of Europe, the highest peak of civilisation! And you know what it means? After the Romans and the Greeks and the Renaissance, and you know what this means?[100]

When Bayard retorts that he is "talking utter confusion" Lebeau, in terror, turns the retort against the practical electrician: "Because I'm utterly confused!" he cries.[101] Soon after, Lebeau seizes on a new sense of horror in the relationship between creation and destruction:

> Good God, don't you ever read history? Whenever a people starts to work hard, watch out, they're going to kill somebody.[102]

A grim meaning begins to emerge: the greater a man's efforts at constructiveness, the greater is his destructiveness. Because there is much evil in his nature, the more he acts the more evilly will he act. And it is man's nature to act. The only hope lies in his recognition of his own evil; Leduc discerns the heart of the matter when he says to Von Berg:

> 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 kill with a clear conscience.[103]

The only hope lies in the cruel fact that only through the experience of evil can we come to know the good.

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4. Cf. Sewall, p. 46.
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6. Ibid., p. 73.
7. "Brewed in the Crucible."
8. Collected Plays, p. 130.
9. Ibid., p. 132.
10. Ibid., pp. 134-35.
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25. Ibid., p. 314.
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66. Ibid., p. 180. Cf. p. 19.
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69. Ibid., p. 211.
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84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., p. 87.
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87. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 37.
88. Gilbert Murray, Euripides and His Age, pp. 38-39.

89. Throughout his works Greek Tragedy and Form and Meaning in Drama ("University Paperbacks": London: Methuen, 1960) H.D.F. Kitto maintains that the Greek drama is essentially religious, but that it is scarcely tied to vegetation ritual. Murray has the support of G.R. Levy, however (pp. 313-330 of The Gate of Horn give the full context of Levy's view.) These authors represent recent argument in an old controversy.

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91. Sewall, p. 13.

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98. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 439.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The element of mystery which permeates writing of a tragic cast is not a negative attribute. Mystery becomes something more than a simple lack of a complete and satisfactory answer. Whenever man senses that he has been placed in an intolerable dilemma or that justice has not fully been done, and he searches for an answer, he finds himself groping in "the mists that always conceal the causes of human events."[1] Mystery is easily associated with Evil, which can be experienced as a power in itself. One leaves a performance or reading of Macbeth with the uneasy feeling that the best one can hope for is that the universe is indifferent.

The sense of wrongness, that "the time is out of joint", goes as far back as Job's lament and the Greek tragedies. In these works "A way had been found of giving the fullest account of all the forces within and without, that make for man's destruction, all that afflicts, mystifies and bears him down, all that he knows as Evil."[2] From ancient times to the present day many writers who have explored their experience and their minds for the ultimate causes of the most basic and intractable problems of man's existence have suspected that evil may be a powerful force. The suspicion of evil has appeared in many guises. The "ancient, ageless hags" who are the Furies born "for sake of evil;"[3]

blind Fortune; and "guilt residing in Salem which the hysteria merely merely unleashed but did not create;"[4] these are all aspects of the same problem.

Miller began to grapple with the problem of evil very early in his career as a playwright. He has been grappling with it ever since. This chapter sets out to show how Miller's understanding of evil and its implications for man have developed and changed.

Man's secret vision of himself.

In the late 'thirties and early 'forties Miller wrote some radio plays.[5] In "The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber Who Was a Man", one of the few of Miller's radio scripts to have been published, a talking cat blackmails some influential politicians into letting him run for governor.[6] At one point Tom the cat remarks, ". . . . the one thing a man fears most next to death is the loss of his good name. Man is evil in his own eyes, my friends, worthless, and the only way he can find respect for himself is by getting other people to say he's a nice fellow."[7]

This speech suggests "the central preoccupation of Miller's mature work."[8] Man's need to be respected, to have a good name, becomes increasingly important in Miller's writing up to A View from the Bridge. In All My Sons the theme of man's need for self-respect is implied in what Chris says, especially when he recalls the camaraderie of war-time,[9] but to Joe Keller self-respect is relatively unimportant. Until he discovers that he has, in effect, killed his own son and that he has a wider responsibility of relationship than he had formerly recognised, Joe is little concerned with what others think about him; he uses his contention that he has regained the respect of the community simply to prove that he has successfully re-established

himself in business.[10] Willy Loman, however, is different. He is more the kind of man to whom Tom the cat refers. Not only does he desire to be respected vicariously through the sporting feats of Biff, he also requires to be accepted for himself. Willy has a terrible moment of self-recognition when he says:

> Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me.[11]

In this flash of contradiction he is momentarily conscious of what he normally tries to hide even from his inner self.

The theme of man's need for the repsect of others finds fullest expression in The Crucible and A View from the Bridge. In The Crucible there are two notable instanoes. The first occurs in the trial scene; Proctor is trying to protect Mary Warren from intimidation by Abigail Williams, knowing very well that if Abigail succeeds Mary will incriminate Elizabeth Proctor. To protect his wife Proctor reveals the truth about Abigail - and himself - in the hope that Abigail's testimony will then be discounted. Amazed, Francis Nurse exclaims, "John, you cannot say such a --- " Proctor replies:

> Oh, Francis, I wish you have some evil in you that you might know me! (To Danforth): A man will not cast away his good name. You surely know that.[12]

In revealing the truth about himself John Proctor has made a sacrifice for his wife, a sacrifice so great that it ranks second only to the sacrifice of life itself. A few minutes after this Proctor again stresses the extent of his sacrifice when he cries:

> I have made a bell of my honour! I have rung the doom of my good name - you will believe me, Mr. Danforth! My wife is innocent, except she knew a whore when she saw one![13]

Yet in giving away his "good name" Proctor has preserved his integrity. When, at the end of the play, he is called upon to

sacrifice both name and inner integrity for life he chooses death instead. He signs his name to the confession which Danforth has prepared, but when he realises that his name, nailed upon the church door, will "blacken all of them" he retracts his confession.[14] In reply to Danforth's request for an explanation of his behaviour, Proctor "with a cry of his whole soul" reiterates the central theme:

> Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name![15]

John Proctor preserves his good name - what is left of it - and his integrity at the cost of his life.

In a way Eddie Carbone is in a worse plight at the end of A View from the Bridge. Eddie Carbone has no way of recovering his name. When Marco calls to him from outside, Eddie tries vainly to preserve his name as he answers, "Yeah, Marco! Eddie Carbone. Eddie Carbone. Eddie Carbone."[16] All that remains is the hollow sound. Desperately he tries to bargain with Marco and to make Marco feel guilty for "Wipin' the neighbourhood with my name like a dirty rag!"[17] His final plea "I want my name, Marco. Now gimme my name . . . ." is hopeless because no-one can retract his betrayal of Marco and Rodolpho, not even they.[18]

As Tom the cat remarks, man needs the approval of others because he is evil in his own eyes. This idea, and the theme which springs from it, is subjective in that it is concerned with man's view of himself. In the introduction to his Collected Plays Miller indicated that he was beginning to look at evil in a new way. (above, pp. 30-31). The conclusion he came to was that "Evil is not a mistake but a fact in itself."[19] Evil had acquired an objective reality for him. Even if Miller had not

come to the recognition of "absolute evil in men"[20] when he wrote The Crucible he was very well aware of the dangers a man would meet whenever he were too sure of his own good faith.

The perils of innocence.

Miller's growing concern with the power of evil is evident in The Crucible. The evil in this play is terrifying because it appears in the guise of good: something has gone seriously wrong in the community of Salem and Danforth has been sent to quash the evil and put matters right. Instead, Danforth brings to the community a greater evil than had threatened it from within. The Danforth of the play, whatever thoughts Miller may have had about him afterwards, is a man not consciously given to evil - at least, not at first; he is rather a man of principle who intends to see that justice will be done. In fact, Danforth is as frightening as he is because he believes in his own good faith. He is like any other man who, desiring good, formulates principles and puts them into practice in his own life. It is unfortunate that, like any other such man, he is imperfect, and it follows that his formulated principles will be imperfect. Some men of principle will be more or less imperfect, more or less humane, than others; it so happens that Danforth is one of the more imperfect and less humane, but he abides by his principles.

However, as has been pointed out, the disaster which befalls Salem is not entirely of Danforth's making; its citizens are guilty of complicity with the mentality of the Deputy Governor (above, pp.25-27). The evil which falls upon them from without is fostered and encouraged by the evil which proceeds from within. Their delusion is the same as his delusion in that they believe human government on earth can be a reliable expression of the divine will (above, p. 27). In Brave New World Revisited Aldous Huxley sets out the circumstances in which such a delusion can

arise and what the effects are likely to be:

> An ethical system that is based upon a fairly realistic appraisal of the data of experience is likely to do more good than harm. But many ethical systems have been based upon an appraisal of experience, a view of the nature of things, that is hopelessly unrealistic. Such an ethic is likely to do more harm than good. Thus, until quite recent times, it was universally believed that bad weather, diseases of cattle and sexual impotence could be, and in many cases actually were, caused by the malevolent operations of magicians. To catch and kill magicians was therefore a duty - and this duty, moreover, had been divinely ordained in the second Book of Moses: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The systems of ethics and law that were based on this erroneous view of the nature of things were the cause (during the centuries when they were taken most seriously by men in authority) of the most appalling evils. The orgy of spying, lynching and judicial murder, which these wrong views about magic made logical and mandatory, was not matched until our own days, when the Communist ethic, based upon erroneous views about economics, and the Nazi ethic, based upon erroneous views about race, commanded and justified atrocities on an even greater scale.[21]

How closely Huxley's interpretation of the causes of witchhunts of all kinds ties in with what happens in The Crucible!

The ethic which prevailed in the Massachusetts of 1962 was indeed based upon a view of the nature of things that was hopelessly unrealistic. Devoutly religious people, the inhabitants of Massachusetts in general and Salem in particular, had formed their colony in the strength of their religious convictions, and even though the generation which followed the founders had lost much of its religious fervour, the people still believed that God could - and would - take an active role in the daily governance of their lives. In their innocence they gave themselves to theocracy, with appalling results.

In their innocence these people also believed that not only God but also the forces of evil had the power to walk in Salem. When an unusually large number of children died in

infancy[22] at about the same time that a group of young girls worked themselves up into a state of group hysteria[23] it was seen as being entirely logical to look for the devil's work in these things.[24] In rooting out the evil, Danforth could not allow himself to be swayed from his divinely-ordained duty, which was to put those in the Devil's power to death; indeed, he appeared to see himself as being deeply compassionate in his desire for the possessed to repent and save themselves from execution. In a pious reversal of responsibility Danforth saw himself as a benefactor and in the case of John Proctor he undertook personally "to strive with him till dawn,"[25] on the day appointed for Proctor's execution. In his official position as chief justice in a divinely-constituted court, he declared to Proctor that he had to do his duty: "You will give me your honest confession in my hand, or I cannot keep you from the rope."[26]

In the eyes of the audience or reader Danforth is himself immensely guilty and to be condemned. At first he is undoubtedly sincere, if detached from humane standards and values, but towards the end of the play his sincerity is in doubt. When asked by Hale to postpone execution Danforth says:

> I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang. Twleve are already executed; the names of these seven are given out, and the village expects to see them die this morning. Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering.[27]

Danforth's fanatical determination to go through with the exections, and the reasons he gives, combine to indicate that he is not sure any longer of his rightness. One feels that it is pride which is now driving him on and that his claim to be the mouthpiece of divine justice is now but a means of self-justification.

Miller also provides a comparison for Danforth, lest we be too deluded about the issues, in the form of Hale. To begin with Hale is as sincere and as dedicated as Danforth to the task of ousting the Devil from Salem,[28] but the difference between the two men is that Hale is humane. Hale is also the more astute of the two; when Elizabeth Proctor is cross-examined about her husband's relationship with Abigail, Hale is clear-sighted enough to see that "private vengeance is working through this testimony!"[29] Hale declares his faith in Proctor's truthfulness and leaves the court in disgust after Danforth has become infected by the hysteria of the young girls.[30] Hale also has the courage to admit his share of guilt in the orgy of torture and killing which has followed in the wake of the trials;[31] he has learnt through the sufferings of others and the torments of his own conscience a lesson that Danforth can never learn:

> . . . . life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it.[32]

In the midst of evil Hale has come to recognise the good and has affirmed a new allegiance.

By this time Danforth's original "innocence" has become a wilful ignorance, a blind refusal to adapt himself to reality. "Innocence" can so easily lead to evil.

In Incident at Vichy "innocence" is shown to be as dangerous to the life of the victim as it is to the soul of the persecutor. Monceau, the young Jewish actor, cannot believe that all he has heard about German atrocities are true; after all, "Germans are still people."[33] Leduc asserts that it is because they are people that they are so dangerous. Later on Leduc goes so far as to accuse his fellow Jews of complicity in their own destruction, because, he says, they have failed to come to terms with human nature; the Germans have placed only

one man on guard outside the room where the arrested men are being held because they are relying on the Jews' sense of reasonableness:

> MONCEAU: Relying on us!
> LEDUC: Yes. To project our own reasonable ideas into their heads. It is reasonable that a light guard means the thing is not important. They rely on our own logic to immobilise ourselves. . . . you cannot wager your life on a purely rational analysis of this situation.[34]

Earlier, in speaking of German audiences, Monceau had said, "no audience is as sensitive to the smallest nuance of a performance,"[35] and even after Leduc's warning he persists in his "innocence", saying "That audience could not burn up actors in a furnace."[36] The innocence of Monceau and Danforth is not an unsuspecting purity of mind; it amounts to a failure to recognise the truth, which is that man is capable of great evil.

Innocence is not only destructive of physical life. It can also destroy the most valuable human relationships. The marriage between Quentin and Louise in <u>After the Fall</u> breaks up for a number of reasons, but the most important factor in this situation where both parties are partly right and partly wrong is Louise's insistence on her innocence. She tortures Quentin to the point of desperation becauee her failure to recognise his humanity and her own. Louise complains that Quentin never discusses any really personal issues with her,[37] but when he does revcal his inmost self to her in a gesture of great trust her reaction is one of self-righteous horror arising from injured innocence:

> QUENTIN: Maybe I don't speak because the one time I did tell you my feelings you didn't get over it for six months.
> LOUISE; <u>angered</u>: It wasn't six months, it was a few weeks. I did overreact, but it's understandable. You come back from a trip and tell me you'd met a woman you wanted to sleep with.
> QUENTIN: That's not the way I said it.

> LOUISE: That's exactly the way. And we were married a year.
> QUENTIN: It is not the way I said it, Louise. It was an idiotic thing to tell you, but I still say I meant it as a compliment; that I did not touch her because I realised what you meant to me. And for damn near a year you looked at me as though I were some kind of monster who could never be trusted again. Immediately to the Listener: And why do I believe she's right! That's the point! Yes, now, now! It's innocence, isn't it? The innocent are always better, aren't they? Then why can't I be innocent?[38]

The heavy irony of these last lines runs as a theme through the play. Into this context must be fitted the exchange between Quentin and Maggie, when Maggie asks "W - what's moral?" and Quentin replies, "You tell the truth, even against yourself. You're not pretending to be - Turns to the Listener, with a dread joy - innocent! Yes, that suddenly there was someone who - could not club you to death with their innocence" (above, p. 81).[39] However, as has been noted in passing, there is an ambiguity in Maggie's position (above, pp. 80-81). In one sense she is innocent, but in another she is not. Eventually, indeed, innocence gets the better of her and she does, finally, try to club Quentin to death with her innocence. When Maggie threatens to commit suicide she is trying to escape the misery which her belief in her innocence has precipitated. Her career as a singer has fallen apart because she has made herself believe that she is the entirely innocent and injured party in her dealings with others.[40] And even her own impending suicide she tries to pin on someone else's guilt. When she offers her bottle of sleeping pills to Quentin, he says, not to be deceived:

> Do you see it, Maggie? Right now? You're trying to make me the one who does it to you? I grab them; and then we fight, and then I give them up, and you take your death from me. Something in you has been setting me up for a murder. Do you see it? He moves backward. But now I'm going away; so you're not my victim any more. It's just you, and your hand.[41]

Quentin admits that he has shared Maggie's great mistake; they "loved each other's innocence, as though to love enough what was not there would cover up what was."[42] Their common error has now wrought disaster - and the death of Maggie. Quentin survives because he has become honest enough with himself to know that "no pill can make us innocent."[43] And in trying to help Maggie towards the same knowledge he continues, "Throw them in the sea, throw death in the sea and all your innocence."[44] Earnestly he counsels her in the difficult way of survival, "Do the hardest thing of all - see your own hatred and live!"[45]

Quentin's task is hopeless, however. No sooner has he finished than she hurls a fresh accusation at him and then refuses to listen to his explanation.[46] In insisting on her innocence, Maggie has put herself beyond the reach of help, and her death has become inevitable.

After two disastrous marriages Quentin cannot hope for too much in a third, but Holga seems to promise a hope that never was in Louise and that died in Maggie. "How can one ever be sure of one's good faith?" Holga asks Quentin at the beginning of the play. To which he replies "it's wonderful to hear you say that. All my women have been so goddamned sure!"[47] At the end he recalls her words at the site of the concentration camp, "But no-one is innocent they did not kill!"[48]

Miller's theme of the perils of innocence has its corollary. Guilt can be as dangerous as innocence. "Balance is all."[49] One of the most persistent implications in Miller's use of imagery is the necessity for balance. For example, Man suffers when he upsets the balance of nature, which is partly his own balance (above, pp. 63-74). He suffers because "It is still impossible for man to organise his social life without

repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom."[50] Nietzsche was driving at the same idea in The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music.[51]

If absolute innocence is to be deplored, so is absolute guilt. An over-developed sense of guilt can be as destructive as the complacency of innocence. The Crucible provides as clear an exposition of the corollary theme of excessive guilt as it does of innocence.

Miller has declared that the whole structure of The Crucible is based upon the question of guilt; in commenting on how the play took shape he writes:

> For a time it seemed best to approach the town impressionistically, and, by a mosaic of seemingly disconnected scenes, gradually to form a context of cause and effect. This I believe I might well have done had it not been that the central impulse for writing at all was not the social but the interior psychological question, which was the question of that guilt residing in Salem which the hysteria merely unleashed, but did not create. Consequently, the structure reflects that understanding. . . .[52]

Miller goes on to say that the structure "centres in John, Elizabeth, and Abigail", which is true enough, but only Abigail - and her hysterical companions - will be considered in this argument, where the intent is to illustrate the destructive force which resides in excessive guilt. John and Elizabeth Proctor come to terms with their respective shares of guilt.

The play begins in the shadow of guilt. Something is wrong with Betty Parris, the minister's daughter, something for which the doctor "can discover no medicine. . . .in his books."[53] With this message young Susanna Walcott brings the first hint of excitement; the doctor has suggested that Parris "might look to unnatural things for the cause of it."[54] Parris, mindful of the harm which a scandal would do to his already precarious

position in the community, bids Susanna "Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes,"[55] but it is too late even now. Abigail tells him that "the rumour of witchcraft is all about."[56] From this time on fact merges into fiction, and fiction into fact, as the rumour gathers force and is repeated by a diversity of people. The gullible, almost-senile Giles Corey, who is nevertheless "canny, inquisitive and still powerful" is no less to blame than the utterly malicious Putnams.[57] The good sense spoken by Rebecca Nurse and echoed by John Proctor goes unheeded, partly because some will not be robbed of an opportunity to vent their malice, partly because others enjoy titillating their imaginations, and partly because there really is something wrong with Betty Parris and her circle of friends.

When Reverend Hale appears on the scene he insists that he will not proceed with the preliminaries of exorcism unless the community is prepared to believe him if he should find "no bruise of hell upon her."[58] However, Hale himself is too excited about the possibilities to retain an impartial balance. The power of suggestion has already magnified the proportions of the case in the minds of some citizens;[59] as Hale becomes more and more excited by the clues his questioning elicits, his questions lose their impartiality and he too begins to make use of the power of suggestion, asking leading questions which bewilder and terrify the poor Tituba.[60] As the investigation proceeds it becomes plain that Tituba has been indulging in peculiar practices and that she has drawn in the young girls to join her; she has well-grounded feelings of guilt, but once her resistance is broken down she confesses not only to what did happen but also to what her interrogators would like to believe. She over-confesses, partly to escape the battery of questions, and partly because she desires to be cleansed of her guilt. The desire to be cleansed

leads to a frantic scrubbing of the conscience. Not only must the visible stains be removed; there may be invisible ones as well. When she is further threatened with physical torture, and even hanging, she simply babbles what is required of her by her eager questioners, who have driven her to dementia.[61] Once she has been forced to "admit" that she has seen the Devil, and that she has seen others with the Devil,[62] Abigail and Betty cannot escape involvement. The threat of punishment and the desire for purgation break down Abigail's resistance too. Suddenly,

> Abigail rises, staring as though inspired, and cries out.
> ABIGAIL: I want to open myself! (They turn to her, startled. She is enraptured, as though in a pearly light.) I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss his hand.[63]

However, the desire for purgation leads to lies which affect others as well. More than a touch of malice creeps in, too, as she continues her confession:

> I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil[64]

At this moment Betty Parris, overcome by what has happened, and especially by the powerful influence which Abigail has on her, cries out: "I saw George Jacobs with the Devil! I saw Goody Howe with the Devil!"[65]

Thus begins the spate of denunciations which are to decimate the population of Salem.

Abigail is a complex creature, compounded of contrition and continuing spite. It would be a mistake to think her entirely hypocritical, but it would be equally wrong to consider her merely as a victim of the force of guilt. Contrition predominates in her as Act I draws to its frenzied close; in Act III, in the trial, she appears to have escaped the bonds of guilt and

to be manipulating those still bound to it. Her cold-blooded attempt to frame Elizabeth Proctor through the agency of Mary Warren seems about to fail when Mary Warren's admission "I used to faint because I - I thought I saw spirits" leads the judges to question the girls' reliability as witnesses,[66] but Abigail has another resource:

> ABIGAIL: . . . . A wind, a cold wind has come. (Her eyes fall on Mary Warren.)
> MARY WARREN (terrified, pleading): Abby!
> MERCY LEWIS (shivering): Your Honour, I freeze!
> . . . . . .
> (through chattering teeth): Mary do you send this shadow on me?
> MARY WARREN: Lord, save me!
> SUSANNA WALCOTT: I freeze, I freeze!
> ABIGAIL (shivering visibly): It is a wind, a wind!
> MARY WARREN: Abby, don't do that![67]

And yet, despite this blatant manipulation, Abigail's face "is truly frightened" and her hand is cold to the touch.[68]

Abigail's power to induce hysteria in the other girls is what finally counts in her vengeful battle with the Proctors. It is not long before Mary Warren breaks down completely and, pointing at Proctor, shrieks, "You're the Devil's man!"[69] "Praise God!" cry Parris and the chorus of girls. When Proctor, numbed, asks, "Mary, how --- ?" she replies, "I'll not hang with you! I love God, I love God!"[70] Such is the curious power of guilt.

We are still not free from the power of guilt today. The desire to expiate drives Mickey, in After the Fall, to "name the names" before McCarthy's committee and to incriminate Lou, as surely as the same desire had driven Mercy Lewis, Mary Warren and Betty Parris to accuse John Proctor and many others of being seen with the Devil before the special court at Salem.[71]

Innocence and guilt become overwhelming problems when

"the inability of a man to live with the mixture of good and evil in his own nature"[72] numbs the brain in a time of crisis. After the Fall deals explicitly with a theme which Miller had implied in The Crucible; "the human animal's unwillingness or inability to discover in himself the seeds of his own destruction."[73]

When man cannot live with the mixture of good and evil in himself he very frequently projects the unacceptable evil onto some power or person outside himself. When man does so project the evil within him the spirit of the witchhunt is renewed.

In The Golden Bough Frazer describes how the externalisation of evil can lead to witchhunting.[74] He shows how the savage blames "the mishaps that befall him, the losses he sustains, the pains he has to endure" onto evil spirits;"[75] how they think that "if they can only shake off these accursed tormentors, they will make a fresh start in life, happy and innocent; the tales of Eden and the poetic golden age will come true again."[76]

The events of the forty-five years which have passed since Frazer wrote have, however, added a hideous irony to his differentiation between the savage and modern, civilised man. He prefaces the remarks just quoted with the statement that,

> Bred in a philosophy which strips nature of personality and reduces it to the unknown cause of an orderly series of impressions on our senses, we find it hard to put ourselves in the place of the savage, to whom the same impressions appear in the guise of spirits or the handiwork of spirits. For ages the army of spirits, once so near, has been receding farther and farther from us, banished by the magic wand of science from hearth and home. . . .[77]

In the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and in the persecution of American citizens with unorthodox political associations Miller has shown that the primitive mind of the savage is still alive within us;[78] that the attitudes which prevailed in Salem have never been conquered; that as long as man requires a purgation

of guilt to restore innocence and the idyllic state of Eden there can be no end to suffering self-imposed. To avoid that part of man's suffering which springs from what is within himself one can only learn from experience and from the fable of the Fall.

The Fable of the Fall.

Miller's interpretation of the fable of the Fall fits into a widely accepted framework of contemporary thought: The Fall is to be understood metaphorically rather than literally to describe the human condition.[79] Miller understands man as being different from the rest of the animate universe in that man lacks innocence, and that he is pre-disposed towards evil; man has a compensation for what he lacks - what he has "lost" according to the fable of the Fall - and that compensation is to know. The capacity for knowledge enables him to distinguish between good and evil.

The interpretations of scripture in the medieval miracle plays are doctrinally suspect, whatever one's religious affiliations, but the Fall of Man play from the York cycle interprets the Fall in a manner which strongly suggests the theme which Miller comes to emphasis in his later work. In tempting Eve to eat the apple from the tree of knowledge, Satan, disguised as the serpent, says:

> Eat it safely ye may.
> For peril right none therein lies,
> Bur worship and a great winning;
> For right as God ye shall be wise,
> And peer to him in all kin thing:
> Ay, gods shall ye be,
> Of ill and good to have knowing,
> For to be wise as he.[80]

Even if Satan is offering a diabolical half-truth, he is right in saying that man who has eaten the forbidden fruit will have the ability to discern good and evil.

In After the Fall Miller gives a clear statement of the human condition. In this statement the issues are easily recognisable, but the answers are not. Quentin is bewildered by his own capacity to know good and evil and by the insufficiency of this capacity alone to solve man's problems. "Is the knowing all?" he asks at the end of the play.[81] Then he recalls Holga's statement "I think one must finally take one's life in one's arms, Quentin"[82] as he says, "And the wish to kill is never killed, but with some gift of courage one may look into its face when it appears, and with a stroke of love - as to an idiot in the house - forgive it; again and again . . . forever?"[83] The questions are not answered; man must have patience with the paradoxes and contradictions in his own life, he must accept ambiguity and not aspire to be wholly good. If the memories of "burning cities . . . . and the death of love" offer any consolation, it is that from these disasters we can learn the lesson "that we are very dangerous."[84]

Leduc confirms what Quentin knows. Leduc has "learnt the price of idealism."[85] Unfortunately, however, the kind of suffering man encounters almost inevitably precludes him from learning.

> LEDUC: I see it too clearly, perhaps - I know the violence inside these people's heads. It's difficult to listen to amelioration, even if it's well meant.
> VON BERG: I had no intention of ameliorating ----
> LEDUC: I think you do. And you must; you will survive, you will have to ameliorate it; just a little, just enough. It's no reflection on you. Slight pause. But, you see, this is why one gets so furious. 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 for ever.
> VON BERG: Because it cannot be shared?
> LEDUC: Yes. Because it cannot be shared. It is total, absolute waste.[86]

There is yet a glimmer of hope. Even if a man cannot transmit necessary knowledge to all his fellows and stop the follies of the world, he can learn for himself - and convey his knowledge to a few others. Von Berg's ultimate act of self-sacrifice proves this truth, and at the same time refutes Leduc's moments of extreme pessimism.

Von Berg's gesture has another meaning too. In speaking of the understatement of the evil in Danforth in the Introduction to the Collected Plays Miller had said that "unbelief in this depth of evil is concomitant with our belief in good, too."[87] The structure of Incident at Vichy illustrates Miller's point. The point at which Von Berg hands his white card to Leduc comes very shortly after Von Berg has learnt to accept fully the reality of evil. His act is as good as his interrogators' acts are evil. At the darkest moment in the play a light flashes into being. Von Berg discovers his own capacity for active goodness only in the presence of active evil.

A distinction must be drawn between the Major and the Nazi Professor when their involvement in evil is considered. The Professor is wholeheartedly in support of the persecution, but the Major is an unwilling accomplice. The complicity of people like the Major and Ezekial Cheever has already been mentioned (above, p. 73), but there is one further aspect of their complicity which should be mentioned now. A man like the Major believes he can dissociate himself from what he sees as an external malign power; he does not perceive that the evil which drives the Nazis is within him too and that it is not enough to turn one's back on one's complicity. "In whose name", as Quentin says, "do you ever turn your back?"[88] The lesson of the Fall is that the evil within man is real and that it is within all men. As

Leduc says, "Each man has his Jew . . . . And the Jews have their Jews."[89]

The failure to accept, to know, one's complicity in one's humanity allows men like the Major and Cheever to persevere in their "duties", but this failure can have even more horrible results than mere complicity permits. Dissociation from the evil within himself is one of the forces which drives man to witchhunting. As soon as the inner evil is externalised a scapegoat is required. The Beast which the marooned schoolboys try to hunt and kill in The Lord of the Flies is the evil in themselves which they have projected onto something outside themselves. The Lord of the Flies (whose name is the literal translation of the Hebrew "Beelzebub") ironically reveals his truth to the brain-fevered Simon alone:

> Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! . . . You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?[90]

Simon himself is shortly to be killed in a frenzied hunt for the Beast, just as Proctor is to be killed in the hunt for the Devil in Salem and the Jews are to be killed as the source of the evils that have befallen Germany. To externalise the inner evil is to seek an object for one's vengeance.

The darkening vision of the later plays strengthens the light, which shines more brightly in the gathering gloom. Although few can learn through suffering, the doom of death is also the promise of rebirth. Balance is all, but the balance is little understood:

> The concept of unity, in which positive and negative are attributes of the same force, in which good and evil are relative, ever-changing and always joined to the same phenomenon - such a concept is still reserved to the physical sciences and to the few who have grasped the history of ideas.[91]

The only perception of balance which can explain the predicament of man is the perception which created the fable of the Fall: the propensity for evil that lurks in man must be tempered with knowledge.

Nevertheless, there is a sense of external evil too, of "the blight man was born for",[92] in Miller's plays. But for the inexplicable evil that descends from without there is no cure; one can only endure. Finally, it is as true of Miller's plays as it is of William Faulker's novels to say that "The total vision is neither of doom nor redemption, but of something tantalisingly, precariously in between. We have no hope, yet we hope. It is tragic."[93]

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4. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 42.

5. Robert Hogan, Arthur Miller (Pamphlets on American Writers"; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1964), pp. 7-8.

6. Ibid., p. 8.

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9. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 85

10. Ibid., p. 80.

11. Ibid., p. 148.

12. Ibid., p. 304.

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14. Ibid., p. 327.

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16. Ibid., p. 438.

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
20. Ibid., p. 43.
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22. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 244.
23. Ibid., pp. 259-260.
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27. Ibid., p. 318.
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37. Miller, After the Fall, p. 39.
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42. Ibid., p. 121.
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48. Ibid., p. 126.

49. Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods," p. 43.

50. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 229.

51. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music," European Theories of the Drama. pp. 296-303, esp. p. 303.

51. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 42.

53. Ibid., p. 230.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p. 242.

58. Ibid., p. 252.

59. There are many examples throughout Act I. Most notable are the remarks of Mrs. Putnam, esp. at p. 233.

60. Ibid., pp. 256-59.

61. Ibid., p. 257.

62. Ibid., p. 258.

63. Ibid., p. 259.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 302.

67. Ibid., p. 303.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., p. 310.

70. Ibid.

71. Miller, After the Fall, pp. 46-47, p. 114.

72. Arthur Miller, "With Respect for Her Agony - But with Love," Life, 56: (February 7, 1964), p. 66.

73. Ibid.

74. Frazer, pp. 716-56.

75. Ibid., p. 717.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., p. 716.

78. The reference to "unorthodox political associations" is partly to The Crucible, as a parable for our time, but more especially to Miller's article "A Modest Proposal for Pacification of the Public Temper", Nation, 179 (July 3rd., 1954) pp. 5-8.

79. J.S. Whale, Christian Doctrine (Fontana Books; London: Collins, 1957), pp. 39-44. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man I (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 178-186.

80. Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays, p. 21.

81. Miller, After the Fall, p. 127.

82. Ibid., p. 33.

83. Ibid., p. 127.

84. Ibid.

85. Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 81.

86. Ibid., pp. 79-80.

87. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 43.

88. Miller, After the Fall, p. 114; p. 116.

89. Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 85.

90. William Golding, The Lord of the Flies ("Educational Books"; London: Faber & Faber, 1961), p. 177.

91. Miller, Collected Plays, p. 248.

92. Sewall, p. 6.

93. Ibid., p. 147.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The first chapter suggested the grounds on which a definition of tragedy could be made and a definition was then offered. Each of the next three chapters considered a proposition related to the given definition of tragedy - "That literature which pursues the ultimate causes of the most basic and intractable problems of man's existence." (above, p. 4).

The first proposition was that the ultimate causes of the most basic and intractable problems can be glimpsed in man's relationships with his fellow men. In this connection it was shown why, at various times in the past and now in the present, one kind of protagonist rather than another has captured the minds and hearts of audiences, and also why Miller's plays and much of the serious drama of our own day present the common man as protagonist. It was found that the figure of common man has now acquired the symbolic meaning which the great in rank once had, substantiating Miller's claim that "The common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings were". (above, p. 49.)

The second proposition was that there is an interplay between human causation and something from beyond in the shaping of man's destiny. Some of the paradoxes and perplexing ironies which confront our existence were taken to illustrate this proposition and it was shown how these paradoxes and ironies have

found expression in the plays of Arthur Miller as well as in the great drama of the past.

The third proposition was that man senses in his problems a cruelty, and that this cruelty is readily associated with the special problem of evil. It was noted that man identifies with evil "all the forces, within and without, that make for man's destruction, all that afflicts, mystifies, and bears him down." (above p. 92).

I have set out to show that in his plays Arthur Miller grapples constantly with the ideas incorporated into the propositions of this thesis. My conclusion is that Miller's treatment of his themes is sufficiently sustained and effective to endow his plays with tragic significance.

Of course, the quality of a play is not determined by theme alone. Structure, characterisation and the words in which the themes are expressed are obviously of great importance. This study has been concerned with questions of structure, characterisation and expression only incidentally, and therefore does not attempt to draw conclusions as to the worth, as a whole, of all or any of Miller's plays.

Miller has expressed his admiration for Greek tragedy. "From the mists that always conceal the causes of human events," he has said, "the Greek playwright. . . . sought to pluck a plan, a moral and ethical principle mysteriously at work upon human beings and their society."[1] In his plays Miller has struggled towards the same impossible goal. Whether his plays will endure as masterpieces of our time or of all time it is still too early to say, but there can be no doubt that their richness in theme alone has already ensured for them a place of eminence and honour

among the dramatic literature of our time.

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1. Miller, Side 1, Spoken Arts Recording.

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