Suicide in the Plays of Arthur Miller: A View from Glory Mountain

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SUICIDE IN THE PLAYS OF ARTHUR MILLER:
A VIEW FROM GLORY MOUNTAIN

By

Sonia Wandruff Slavensky

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"One sees that there will be no ecstasy," Madame Lhevine said. "And that is when the crisis comes. It comes, you might say, when we see the future too clearly, and we see that it is a plain, an endless plain, and not what we had thought—a mountain with a glory at the top."

--Arthur Miller, "The Prophecy"
I should like to thank the people who helped make this dissertation possible. I am particularly grateful to my advisor, Professor Stanley A. Clayes, through whose guidance and encouragement my somewhat unorthodox approach to an unorthodox subject was allowed to develop. My thanks to my teacher and friend, the late Herbert Abel, Professor of Classics, who made the Ancients live for me, and to Professors Rosemary Harnett and James Rocks, my readers, for their kind cooperation. Thanks also to Dr. John Weiss who sent me Dr. Steiner's work, and Dr. J.F. Prilby, Chicago-Read Mental Health Center whose generous contributions of materials and bibliography were of immense help. To Melvin D. Faber whose fine dissertation "Suicide in Shakespeare," provided the groundwork for my research, but especially to my children, Leah and Rael, without whose love and faith none of this could have been possible. Finally, to the short-sighted English professor who shall go unnamed, but who inspired this dissertation by remarking that he had never met a man like Willy Loman. My undying gratitude.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. ATTITUDES AND REACTIONS TO SUICIDE</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANcient AND MODERN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. SUICIDE IN DRAMA FROM HEROIC SUICIDE</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO HAMARTIC SCRIPT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SUICIDE AS UNITY IN ALL MY SONS</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE HAMARTIC PLAYS</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of a Salesman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crucible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A View From the Bridge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. AFTER THE FALL: THE ENDLESS PLAIN</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Memory of Two Mondays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Misfits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Fall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident At Vichy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To study and understand the use of suicide in the work of a modern dramatist presents special difficulties. For example, it would be foolish to ignore the various psycho-social and cultural influences which have conditioned both the playwright and his audiences to think and feel very negatively about the subject of suicide; on the other hand, it would be just as foolish to ignore influences not easily measured through statistical and psychological analyses which create some positive attitudes toward the same problem. My conviction that both science and mythology must be accounted for led to my discovery of the work of Claude Steiner, whose theory of life scripts synthesizes both scientific and mythological view of suicide and emerges with the concept of a personalized mythology--the Hamartic script--which is acted out by a contemporary hero--the Hamartic hero.

My research on suicide in drama clearly confirmed the presence of a dramatic convention, including a suicidal hero and a stock situation, which is expected to evoke the same response each time it is repeated. Supposedly then, the convention of dramatic suicide should be recognized as an archetypal action which has become an established pattern or "script," and which is recognized by virtually every
known culture. There is no doubt that Arthur Miller, first unconsciously, then consciously, uses this pattern to great advantage. Miller, in fact, has so integrated the idea and convention of suicide into the central texture of his dramaturgy that it has become an indelible stamp of his personal style and thought. It is also an important key to his development.

Though suicides are found in all Miller's best plays but The Price, the entire body of his work is concerned with suicidal individuals and their personal struggles. He does, in effect, use suicide as the metaphorical embodiment of what he believes to be the modern equivalent of the heroic behavior seen in the tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Racine, and of course, Ibsen—all of whom used the convention of dramatic suicide to express heroic defiance in the face of catastrophe. For Miller, as we shall see, the course of his development as a playwright and thinker can be measured by the evolution of his view of suicide.
CHAPTER I

ATTITUDES AND REACTIONS TO SUICIDE

ANCIENT AND MODERN

There is but one philosophical problem and that is suicide.

--Camus

Before suicide could become part of the stage vocabulary it had to take its form and meaning from life. One must then speculate that dramatic suicides had their roots in real events which in time underwent a mythologizing process and were subsequently dramatized in an idealized form. Reactions by the audience became, in turn, very highly stereotyped. Depending on the context, some stage suicides called forth condemnation from the audience while others called forth admiration, or the desired "catharsis" of pity and fear. The point being that heroic suicide became a stage convention and the suicidal hero became a type, which as we all know means that he had to fulfill some of the audience's preconceived expectations. As Warshow explains, it is not


2See Melvin D. Faber, "Suicide in Shakespeare" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1964). Faber theorizes that suicide has always been acceptable in some contexts and inexcusable in others. p. 29ff.
necessary, in the case of such a type, for there to be any correspondence between audience experience and the stage experience: "It is only in an ultimate sense that the type appeals to its audience's experience of reality; much more immediately, it appeals to previous experience of the type itself: it creates its own field of reference."¹

It is this field of reference that will be explored before we turn to the task of exploring suicide in the plays of Arthur Miller. In the next two chapters I will in fact be establishing the principles peculiar to the world of the suicide, principles which seem often to be the inverse of what most of us think of as the normal world.

We shall begin with some history, or rather pre-history. The exact beginnings are somewhat vague but the _Golden Bough_ speaks of early customs which required the king or chief to kill himself when he showed signs of age, disease, wounds or other imperfections. There were in addition some kings who were required to execute themselves before their people at the end of an allotted period of time. The execution took the form of public sacrifice before an idol and consisted of gradual auto-dismemberment until, weak from loss of blood, the king, in mortal agony, cut his own throat. As the ritual is completed, relates Frazer, "whoever desires

to reign another twelve years and undertake this martyrdom for love of the idol, has to be present looking on at this: and from that place they raise him up as king.\textsuperscript{1}

As kings became wiser, they chose substitutes who were allowed the dubious privilege of dying for their kings. Often the king permitted the substitute to reign for a short period to qualify for his role and the victim was royally treated prior to being sacrificed.\textsuperscript{2} Though the next step in the evolution is not discussed by Frazer, it seems logical to surmise that the substitutes, too, had their moments of inspiration during which one or another of them discovered that the sacrifice could be transformed into a symbolic ritual which achieved the same effect without loss of life. Thus the bloody sacrificial rite became, somehow, a benign ritual.

Even so, because suicide had been reserved for the king-god or his substitute, the suicides of slaves or commoners were bound to incur severe penalties for usurpation of the kingly privilege. In fact, there is still an aristocratic aura surrounding the idea of suicide; we still debate the right of the individual to take his own life--


\textsuperscript{2}This is similar to the practice of Samurai warriors who killed themselves in order to serve their leader in the next world. The custom of suttee may also have begun at this time, as may the origins of patriotism or the practice of sending mercenaries or commoners to war instead of aristocrats.
ordinary people are not supposed to commit suicide.¹

Nevertheless, as an old carry over, if one is young, beautiful, wealthy and famous, self-destruction may appear to be an inevitable adjunct to a fabled existence.² Somehow the possession of too much life, too much beauty, too much wealth or fame seems to invite disaster of the sort reserved for special beings whose lives are thought to be fabulous and whose deaths are expected to be fabulous also. These fabled ones, the idealized suicides, account for the aura of romance, the mystical, awesome part of suicide which has become institutionalized in patterns of art and culture. The negative part of suicide, the ugly, lonely, punitive half of the picture, seems to have sprung from prohibitions and taboos invoked to keep the ordinary citizen from abandoning the family, the tribe, or the state to which he owed allegiance.

In dealing with suicide, the early philosophers actually treat three different and sometimes opposing realms of responsibility--the gods, the state, and the individual--in descending order of importance. The individual's own desires are usually counted last and thus the self-destructive individual has always been regarded as rebellious, psychotic or

¹In drama, as far as I know, it was not until Shakespeare's time that commoners commit suicide.

²Edward Arlington Robinson's "Richard Cory" comes to mind, as do Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, Inger Stevens, and Janis Joplin, John and Diana Barrymore, and many others of the "Too much too soon" category.
contemptible—one who shirks responsibility by running away. Such irresponsible behavior has traditionally been punished. Typical is the Athenian law which decreed that the suicide's offending hand be severed and buried away from the victim's body, "since the hand was traitor and enemy to the body."\textsuperscript{1} Theban suicides were deprived of burial rites and their names set down forever in infamy. Early Greeks buried suicides without the important ritual of the funeral pyre and exacted cruel penalties from their families as well. The family, even today, is still subjected to social ostracism and blame if one of their number takes his own life. For however far we believe ourselves removed from a dark irrational past, regarding attitudes and reactions to suicide, there is really nothing new under the sun, nor is there likely to be for a long time to come. The arguments, pro and con, philosophical and legal, can also be traced back to the ancient Greeks.

While Plato was in agreement with Socrates and Aristotle in denying the individual's right to take his own life (\textit{Phaedo}), he still recognized illness or extreme pain to be good cause for suicide (\textit{Laws}, Bk. IX, Ch. 873).\textsuperscript{2} The complex philosophical arguments of the day are characterized by Aristotle's carefully reasoned conclusion that the suicide of one of its citizens is a direct injustice to


\textsuperscript{2}Melvin D. Faber, "Suicide in Shakespeare," p. 41ff.
In the state:

... the suicide commits injustice; but against whom? It seems to be against the state rather than against himself; for he suffers voluntarily, and nobody suffers injustice voluntarily. This is why the state exacts marks of dishonour, as being an offense against the state.\(^1\)

The opposing side of the argument is the glory of self-sacrifice. The citizen who lays down his life for his country has always been considered heroic despite the fact that his death has been, in a sense, suicidal. Thus, while duty to the state has been considered a deterrent to suicide, the very same motives have often been a strong stimulus to self-sacrifice, a type of suicide which elicited strong praise even from Aristotle.

An all-encompassing example of the aristocratic-heroic self-sacrifice is the case of King Codrus of Athens, who slew himself when he learned of the Delphic oracle's forewarning to the Dorian army that they would have to preserve the king's life in order to conquer the city. Codrus died and the Dorians lost the battle. Subsequently both Aristotle and the Roman historians lauded the heroic sacrifice made by Codrus.\(^2\)

Some suicides in Greek tragedy, particularly several in Euripides' dramas, reflect the same altruistic tendencies as the Codrus story, and are perhaps literary manifestations of his legend. Macaria in The Children of Heracles,

\(^1\)Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.4, p. 319.

\(^2\)Faber, *ibid.*, p. 20.
Iphigenia in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and even Alcestes in the *Alcestes*, come to mind as suicides of the type that Durkheim would have classified as "altruistic,"¹ that is, they are undertaken for reasons other than personal despair or revenge. Moreover, it is quite possible that these dramatized suicides inspired many real-life sacrifices by both Greeks and Romans, as, without doubt, the Greek plays themselves were inspired by real-life acts. It is well known that mythological and legendary figures often inspired cults and were, indeed, worshipped as heroes or demi-gods. It is also known that the plays may possibly have been written in celebration of cult heroes;² not only heroes of mythological origin but also those real-life heroes whose acts of self-sacrifice for the state had caused them to become symbols of patriotism and duty.

Two outstanding examples of real and idealized suicides are the real suicide of Mettus Curtius, a young Roman of the 4th century who jumped into an enormous chasm that threatened to swallow up the Forum, and the idealized suicide of Menoeceus in Euripides', *The Phoenician Women*. The resemblance between the two is remarkable: the former jumped to his death to save the Roman populace and the latter jumped to his death to save his country from Creon's


²Macaria, Alcestes, Iphigenia, Ajax, and Oedipus are known to have inspired hero cults. Plays were written to honor their births or deaths in the same way that Miracle plays were written to celebrate saint's days.
tyranny. Still another character in Euripides, Evadne in
The Suppliant Women, is motivated by patriotism to jump upon
her husband's flaming funeral pyre. These people and charac-
ters, however, were all aristocrats and somehow entitled to
decide what to do with their own lives. Even when it comes
to patriotism we find that the common man is punished when
he takes upon himself the privileges of the aristocrat. For
though both history and drama are filled with tales of noble
Roman suicides, the common Roman soldier, if he committed
suicide on the battlefield, was considered a deserter.¹
Nevertheless, the Romans are still renowned for their praise
of suicide and their influence on later ages is well known.²

By intellectualizing the problem of suicide, philo-
sophers were in large part responsible for upgrading its
image. The Cynics, the Stoics, the Epicureans, though they
each arrived at their acceptance of suicide through differ-
ent channels of logic, all believed that suicide was, under
certain circumstances, an appropriate end to life. Epicurus,
for example, since he completely denied the concept of im-
mortality, recommended suicide as a possibility because
"death means nothing to either the living or the dead, for
it has nothing to do with living and the dead do not exist."³

¹ Dublin, ibid., p. 138.

² Shakespeare's Roman plays are obvious examples. Horatio's statement at the end of act V of Hamlet, "I am
more an antique Roman than a Dane," is another instance of
the Roman influence upon Elizabethan thinking.

³ Walter R. Agard, The Greek Mind (Princeton: D. Van
Thus he advised his followers to look fearlessly upon death as merely the end of sensation. Cicero, on the other hand, indicates in section 17 of the Tuscalon Disputations that he believed suicide acceptable only as a last resort—a "vindication of the mind to choose freely and triumph over evils."\(^1\)

It was Seneca, a suicide himself, who believed it foolish to endure pain or suffering of any sort. Declaring that the door was open and that one might pass through the portals to oblivion at will, he said, "Do you like life? Then live on. Do you dislike it? Then you are free to return to the place from whence you came."\(^2\)

But lest it appear that the individual will was gaining greater importance over its rivals, the gods and the state, we must remember Aristotle's civic concerns as well as those of Plato and the Pythagorians, for whom religion was of even greater importance than the state. The latter speak of being released from life only with the approval of "higher powers"; whereas the Stoics, Cicero, and Seneca, far more concerned with human will, believed that man himself had the power of life and death, but urged that suicide was a way to be taken only if and when life becomes intolerable. Though many have mistaken the Stoic propensity for suicide as one of the most important tenets of stoicism, it is simply not true that the Stoics gave their unqualified


\(^2\)Faber, "Suicide in Shakespeare," p. 8.
approval of suicide. Instead, they recommended that hardship be borne with dignity and strength of heart, and that the truly wise man be able to transcend hardship without resorting to self-destruction. It is only the unwise man who has need of that avenue of escape which is suicide.¹

Yet, in ancient times, as both Dublin and Faber observe, there were always some circumstances which were considered legitimate excuses for suicide.² Generally speaking, these excuses appear to be similar in thought to the reasoning behind the King's suicide in pre-historic times. The king, as we have seen, was forced to put an end to his life if he became wounded, ill, or in some way physically imperfect—an act which he performed out of love for the state and its idols. In later ages the concept of self-sacrifice or martyrdom became associated with religion and patriotism, and finally, with the triumph of individual will. We shall see later on how the three ideas still pertain even in our own secular, de-mythologized culture.

One further encouragement toward suicide and a leading factor in many suicides even today is the hope of a better, happier or more dignified existence. Belief or hope in a better world to come may make departure from this world easier than it would ordinarily be. One group that most

¹Faber, ibid., p. 8.

²Both commentators offer substantial documentation throughout their writings. Dublin's comment refers particularly to antiquity (see Suicide, p. 111) and Faber's to Western society in general (see page 12 of this work).
certainly believed that the promised glories of the next world far outshone the realities of this one were the Norsemen, who in their early history believed it necessary to die on the battlefield in order to join Odin in Valhalla. Hence the wounded were allowed to dispatch themselves on the battlefield and the sick were brought to the battlefield to die--standing erect if possible. The Celts, much like their Nordic neighbors, believed that suicide would assure them a happy future in the after life while natural death in old age would only lead to eternal misery.¹

O'Dea points out that until the coming of Christianity the history of suicide in Western culture lacks a religious side,² but the early Christians quickly took care of that oversight by using suicide as the quickest way to attain eternal salvation. When the Church officially condemned suicide, the quest for instant salvation through suicide was relinquished in favor of baiting lions and pagans to achieve the longed-for martyrdom. By the time of the Middle Ages, except for a few mass suicides by Jews trying to escape persecution, the suicide rate had decreased appreciably; the martyr rate, however, had increased proportionately. For example, Saint Augustine reported an epidemic of martyrdom among the fourth-century Circumcelliones during which they purposely baited pagans into martyring them or found ways


²Ibid., p. 30.
to take their own lives in order to secure their places in Heaven. In England in 665, people jumped off cliffs in droves to martyr themselves and to escape the plague.¹ Dublin recalls that in the 1600's whole communities committed suicide in the revivals of religious fanaticism in Russia. Yet, withall, most commentators agree that suicide was extremely rare during the period when the Catholic Church was most powerful,² a fact which would seem to indicate the supportive nature of a fixed social order but which, on the other hand, more likely signifies the inaccuracies, both accidental and intentional, of record-keeping and reportage which persist even today when the records concern suicide. Whatever the case may be, the Renaissance revival of the classics brought Humanism, Protestantism, and renewed interest in the old questions about suicide.

In his impressive essay on suicide in Shakespearean tragedy, M.D. Faber makes the point that "western men have always tolerated suicide in certain contexts while they condemn it in others."³ Suicides committed for altruistic purposes were always viewed favorably, as were their components, patriotism, chastity, love, honor, and friendship. Conversely, notes Faber, suicides motivated by despair were deemed

¹Ibid., p. 83.

²Dublin, Suicide, p. 123. Most studies take their facts from Dublin's historical data, which is apparently quite accurate.

especially sinful by Elizabethans because despair was considered by them to be analogous to sin. However, admiration for some of the suicides of antiquity brought about a gradual change in their attitudes:

With the resusitation of classical materials the age-old stigma of despair was no longer automatically applied by everyone to the act of self-slaughter. Despair and suicide began to drift apart; hence arose the possibility of the latter's attractiveness.¹

But exposure to classical ideas was not entirely responsible for a rise in the suicide rate and it would be nonsense to believe that attitudinal changes come about entirely through such influences. We must understand that the strong tides of social change which took place during the Renaissance, the cataclysmic changes in themselves, influenced a rising suicide rate. Also, many of the changed attitudes reflected subsequently in literature and art do not necessarily speak for the prevailing attitudes of the time. What we find reflected in the arts is always an exaggeration, a symbolization, limited and subjective, of one man's view of his own universe. Even so, we know there were changes, gradually perceptible, in some of the most deeply engrained cultural values of that day.

The Renaissance period, much like our own time, and like the 5th century B.C. was a period of great social flux. A once-stable social structure gave way under the weight of new knowledge, new social mobility, and new emphasis upon the quality of life. There was optimism on one side vying

¹Faber, "Suicide in Shakespeare," p. 176.
with pessimism on the other. As the old feudal system began to crack, the old values came under scrutiny. Once again heroic images of mythical and historical suicides caught the favor of public imagination--this time with an additional emphasis on the individual's defiance of authority. The figure of Cato, who preferred suicide to Caesar's rule, became in the Renaissance, as it had in Roman times, the epitome of honorable conduct. Another adjunct to this flight from authority was the *carpe diem* theme in poetry, which defied time and even death itself by urging that life be lived intensely and fully if only for a brief time. The emphasis here is upon the hopeless defiance of youth and beauty against their tyrannical enemies, age and death.

Sounding strangely like our contemporary youth cult--probably because they both originate from the primitive concept of the unblemished king who must die before being overcome by imperfection--a youthful death at that time was considered highly desirable. To die in the full bloom of youth had a certain beauty and defiance about it that still has currency. In fact, the idea persisted through the Romantic period creating what Alvarez calls "Werther fever," manifestations of which were a "Werther fashion--young men dressed in blue tail coats and yellow waistcoats--Werther caricatures, Werther suicides."¹ Now there was even a uniform for suicide.

Although the attitudes and beliefs we have been discussing may sound strange, conditions surrounding suicide have actually changed very little in the time that separates us from our ancestors. Most of our present reactions to suicide are simply modifications of past responses. From the Romantic period to the present the influences of Byron and Coleridge, combined with that of Goethe's Werther, created a cult of Weltschmertz which revived the waning image of suicide. It is at this point, I believe, that the image must have taken on new dimensions—suicidal behavior such as opium addiction, alcoholism and other self-destructive life styles began to appear almost as glamorous as taking poison or self-immolation. Shelley, Keats, Byron, Chopin, Camille, Van Gogh, Toulous-Lautrec, the "Liebestod" from Wagner's Tristram and Isolde, Madame Butterfly and the Mayerling love suicides are all part of this aura of romance surrounding suicide. As Alvarez, himself an attempted suicide, remarks, "Suicide has permeated Western Culture like a dye that cannot be washed out."  

On the darker side is the development that dates back to Epicurus. Certain attitudes of writers like Hart Crane, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and even Herman Melville,  

1 Ibid., p. 214.  

can only be described as suicidal. In these modern writers we find the mixture of a defiant passion to enjoy life and a despair echoing the disdain for life that we saw in Epicurus. Suicide becomes a denial of the meaning of life, a scoffing at the romantic re-affirmation, albeit brief, painful, intense and dangerous, of the importance of the life principle. Nihilistic suicides sought to prove life a worthless possession, a bauble to be tossed away at whim, having no intrinsic value, no meaning beyond the moment. Closely aligned to nihilism is heroism, and here there exists a strange dichotomy, in American society particularly, in which our admiration for heroics is frowned upon and exploited at one and the same time. The American drama, which promises to put heroism within easy reach of everybody, makes us much more envious of the heroic life than we would ordinarily be—even when that life leads to suicide. In certain other cultures, strangely enough, just the opposite seems true. The active pursuit of honor is reserved for a chosen few, and they are welcome to it. These heirarchical tendencies can be observed in dramatic suicide rituals such as the Japanese seppuku.

In classical Kabuki theatre, which reflects Japanese culture, a ritualized portrayal of seppuku or hara-kiri signifies either great punishment or great courage. In both cases the ritual disembowelment is considered an honorable death in which the individual acquits himself nobly and atones for all of his iniquities. Acceptable reasons for seppuku are similar to acceptable reasons for suicide in
western drama. But the Japanese, unlike ourselves, account suicide rituals in drama as having very specific religious, "cathartic," functions. Bowers speaks of four emotions relieved by the ritual of seppuku:

An admiration at the self-evident courage; a horror at the tragic spectacle; sorrow at the destruction of a human life, likewise the spectator's only real possession; and relief that the problems producing this tragedy do not confront the common spectator in his life.

The oriental concept of honor, as we understand it, is a passive one which, unless misfortune occurs, allows the individual to exist in a natural state of honor. The western concept, conversely, demands unsparing aggressiveness both in the pursuit of honor and in the avoidance of dishonor. Those who do not wish to pay for honor are without it; those who desire honor often purchase it with their lives.

Of those societies which have regarded suicide with favor, the most prominent are those in which fear of ridicule is the strongest social motive. Honor and prestige are held as primary values and the loss of these qualities constitute irreparable damage to the whole personality, damage that can be corrected "only in so far as there is some change in the whole self." Whereas guilt involves specific and discrete acts, easily dissociated from the essence of the individual, shame involves the individual as an entity:


2Ibid., p. 157.
"its focus is not a separable act, but revelation of the whole self. The thing that has been exposed is what I am." Thus shame may be altered or transcended only by re-acquiring the lost honor through an act such as the suicide ritual. As Helen Merrill Lynd concludes, "In shame there is no comfort, but to be beyond all bounds of shame."

Ruth Benedict has designated certain cultures as "shame cultures" and others, like our own, "guilt cultures." The oriental tradition of hara-kiri is usually cited as an example of shame culture suicide, but its application was so narrow that it could not be said to apply to the general culture. Only for the aristocratic subculture of the Samurai did ritual suicide have validity and even there it was applied in two specific ways; one voluntary--committed as protest to tyranny and/or at the death of a beloved leader--and the other obligatory--ordered by the state in lieu of public execution.

Once again we see that suicide was reserved as an upper-class privilege, and that the prescribed ritual had meaning only when it was practiced by a particular group. In a shame culture where the individual is so deeply integrated in his society that he identifies completely with the


3 Dublin, Suicide, p. 99.
state, the family, or the tribe, such suicides are committed
to preserve family and personal honor which, in such case,
are inseparable. Hence, the society itself provides, for
its leading citizens at least, a means by which the indi-
vidual is able to avoid shame to the group with which he is
so closely intertwined.

Though western culture aligns itself more closely
with guilt than with shame—that is we think more in terms
of sin and redemption than of shame and transcendence—we
are not by any means bereft of a shame tradition in our
culture. With one significant difference, our own "heroic"
tradition, both in life and in literature, is quite similar
to the oriental shame culture—the main point of divergence
being the emphasis in our tradition upon activity rather than
passivity. In tradition-bound western societies where the
individual regards what Shneidman calls the "post-self"\(^1\) as
extremely important, the concern with after-death reputation
is frequently as absorbing as the concern with pre-death
existence. Our literature is filled with examples of heroic
action expended in pursuit of honor, just as our drama—the
early tragedies particularly—is filled with heroic suicide.
And while we may look upon these examples (Ajax, Antigone,
Deianira, Phaedra, Othello, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, Cleo-
patra—the list seems endless) as purely literary, they have
played a great part in molding our personal perceptions of

\(^1\) Edwin S. Shneidman, "Suicide, Sleep and Death," in
Psychology of Suicide, p. 59.
life. What is more, there is evidence enough in existence to prove that the cult of personal honor which is so closely connected to heroic suicide is actually a viable cultural pattern which persists even today.

Eugene Campbell's fascinating study of a modern-day Greek mountain community provides a living example of Homeric values coexisting within a Christianized community's religious framework with apparently little recognition by the community of the dichotomies involved. The study is filled with striking descriptions of the Sarakatsanis, a semi-nomadic people whose populations are spread throughout Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace, southern Greece, Euboea and the northern Peloponnese. These people live a code of honor which requires the most exacting standards of self-discipline along with a constant pursuit of honor in the form of acts of physical courage. And again there is a hierarchy or aristocracy: not all families possess honor, but those that do must guard it zealously with appropriate displays of pride—"a man must behave in such a way as to show he believes himself to be superior to other persons."¹ The Sarakatsanis identify with an ideal based on the superhuman feats of past heroes and they seriously believe that honorable men have the ability to reproduce the glorious feats of the past. The possessor of honor is anxious to exhibit his personal resemblance to his image ideal and thus patterns his

behavior as closely as possible to that image, taking the
same pain to avoid shame as he takes to pursue honor.\textsuperscript{1}
Campbell, in describing the life style of the pallikari, the
young men of that society, emphasizes the tragic nature of
the great stress upon manly perfection which drives so many
young men to abandon their lives to the cause of honor.
Much like the young man in Housman's "To an Athlete Dying
Young," many "will not swell the rout/Of lads that wore their
honors out"; instead, they die at the height of their per­
fection, striving to bring additional honor to the family
name. Though this kind of life seems to us barbaric, it is
not so terribly far removed from our own stereotyped mascu­
line codes as to be unrecognizable. We, perhaps, do not
wish to think of the extreme consequences of our own rigid
codes as suicidal; nevertheless, it is difficult to describe
them as other than suicidal. For the pallikari, at any rate,
life is tragically oriented toward the attainment of glory;
and death, believes Campbell, comes not only as a relief but
as the achievement of a sought-for goal:

\textit{... if death destroys the individual in the pallikari it
leaves untouched his 'persona', that part of his person­
ality which, shed of individual traits and circumstances,
relates him to the ideal type of manliness that he has
realized in dying for his honour. Dishonour can no
longer threaten the dead pallikari. He is free.}\textsuperscript{2}

Thus, in this remote mountain people, practicing

\textsuperscript{1}Note the similarity to our own "hero" cults: the
Hemingway cult, the Bogart cult, the Elvis Presley and Mick
Jagger "machismo" cults, to name just a few.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 282.
Christians, pious in their devotions, but unrelenting in their fierce social codes, is displayed the confusing paradox of the so-called heroic life style which both in life and in literature courses through the bloodstream of western civilization.

Now let us look for a moment at some of the strange practices our own so-called enlightened society still endorses. First of all, our religious beliefs have undergone little change. Suicide is still a sign of despair and despair is still considered sinful. One innovation has been added—the question of sanity. If Ophelia were in need of Christian burial today, there would be no question that she could be buried in hallowed ground because her submission to death took place when she was not in her right mind. Judaism uses similar arguments: since life is known to be good and good is desirable to all men, no human being in his sound mind would take his own life. Therefore, unless sane suicidal intent can be proven, no wrong has been committed and the victim is allowed to rest with his ancestors. As far as the law is concerned, suicidal intent must be ascertained beyond a doubt before the death certificate can read "suicide."

Shneidman notes that in certain cities in the United States only those cases which are confirmed by suicide notes are actually recorded as suicides; in cases which appeared to be suicide but in which no note was left "the case was not reported as suicide, but as 'self-inflicted violent deaths [sic]' and reported as accident."¹ This euphemistic tendency

¹Ibid., p. 546.
is, in a way, a modern method of avenging ourselves upon those who dare to abandon the state, the family, the church, and all viable connections with society. The substitution of "self-inflicted violent death" for the "dirty word" suicide—a word which some languages do not even include in their vocabularies—does not at all change the various meanings which have attached themselves to the act. But dirty word or not, try as we may to fancy it out of existence, rationalize it, or even outlaw it as Mussolini did; by whatever name we call it, suicide persists, and for many of the same reasons it has always persisted. The same controversies, with some modifications, are still being carried on over the subject of suicide; however, controversy is not its only effect.

According to sociologists, suicide, even today, is one of our most taboo subjects. Ranking equally with the subject of sex and the subject of homosexuality in the hierarchy of forbidden subjects, suicide touches every area of taboo: we do not want to talk about it; we do not want to think about it; we most assuredly do not want to commit it. Yet, as Mead points out, in any culture where suicide is one of the ways in which anger or violent feelings are vented, "a few or many may commit suicide." In short, as long as

1Shneidman, "Suicide as a Taboo Subject," in Psychology of Suicide, p. 546.
2Ibid., p. 541.
the act of suicide has a recognized form and meaning in a particular culture, the act will be repeated whenever the situation needs it. Yet, contrary to what has been popularly thought, most suicides are more concerned with living than with dying; indeed, one has only to recall Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy to realize that those who contemplate "that undiscovered bourne" are far more concerned with life both before and after death than they are with death itself. Shneidman suggests that suicides in general are really seeking peace or resolution of conflict and kill themselves in order to achieve an "idealized version of life."\(^1\) Certainly this is true of the heroic characters in drama who commit suicide, and it is true most assuredly of those who commit the institutionalized forms of suicide provided for them by their cultures. The similarities between dramatized suicides which have been considered symbolic, mythical, or "idealized," and the real suicide which has been thought cowardly, atypical and immoral are astonishing. Patterns of behavior can be perceived which have serious implications for the drama and which will be explored in a later chapter. But for now, the task at hand is to understand suicide as goal-oriented behavior in which the goal being sought is not necessarily death but is, instead, an elevated form of life, devoid of pain, relieved of unhappiness. Transcendence and relief—both are important because many interpreters see

\(^1\) Shneidman, "Orientations Toward Death," in *Psychology of Suicide*, p. 35.
suicide solely in terms of Menninger's definition of suicide as "the wish to kill, the wish to be killed and the wish to die,"\(^1\) three terms which describe the realistic side of self-homicide, neglecting the other side—the wish to be reborn—the idealistic side, which is just as strong a force as violence in the stream of human history.

Thus suicide can be seen as either total rejection or total affirmation of the life principle. It can become an assertion of free will even in the face of tyranny—either of the gods or of men—or it can speak for a sickly-sweet weariness of the world and of its vanities. Finally, most profound and most tragic, it can signify the dreadful alienation or moral aloneness which separates one tormented human being from his fellows. This condition of isolation, which Erich Fromm likens to physical starvation, is without doubt one of the major components of suicide in societies which are undergoing transition. For most people a breaking down of cultural values and social patterns which give security and structure to life is an experience of traumatic proportions; for a few, depending upon the degree of social indoctrination, it may prove fatal. In times of crisis a human being who is able to fall back on past experiences for his solutions can probably endure any hardship. But, on the other hand, if old solutions and patterns prove untenable, a state of confusion or disconnectedness may become

inevitable. As Fromm explains, the problem is not necessarily physical aloneness:

... an individual may be alone in a physical sense for many years and yet he may be related to ideas, values, or at least social patterns that give him a feeling of communion and 'belonging.' On the other hand he may live among people and yet be overcome with an utter feeling of isolation, ... This lack of relatedness to values, symbols, patterns, we may call moral aloneness and state that moral aloneness is as intolerable as physical aloneness, or rather that physical aloneness becomes unbearable only if it implies also moral aloneness.¹

Hence, once again we return to the original philosophical colloquies on suicide, and find that despite all that has gone before, the concept of heroic suicide still persists in our own culture and in our life patterns. Furthermore, if what most of us identify as self-destruction can be, for particular individuals, goal-seeking behavior in which the ultimate goal is death, a death which they themselves desire to bring about, we have clearly not yet closed the discussion on suicide. There is still a great deal more to understand before we can attempt to investigate suicide in Miller's plays and as Karl Menninger noted in Man Against Himself, there are actually two literatures on suicide, a literature of fantasy and a literature of science.² Though when he made this statement there was very little in the way of scientific literature on suicide, these days thanks to people like Menninger, a great deal of scientific writing


²Menninger, p. 13.
does exist on the subject. In the next chapter I will utilize some of the literature of psychology to compare the real experience of suicide with the fantasy experience we witness on the stage. I will also try to develop some idea of how the tragic pattern of the heroic suicide of Greek tragedy evolved to become the Hamartic scripts of modern tragedy.
CHAPTER II
SUICIDE IN DRAMA
FROM HEROIC SUICIDE TO HAMARTIC SCRIPT

... I'm in the process of believing that maybe men do live by images more than one suspected before, that despite themselves, and unknowingly, they behave according to some artistic or esthetic ideas which they are not even aware they have digested.

--Arthur Miller

In the preceding chapter I suggested a number of influences may be working upon any member of a given audience viewing a dramatized suicide. Implicit in my suggestion is a conviction that certain patterns of human behavior elicit essentially the same responses each time they are repeated; and suicide, because it possesses many characteristics which reinforce its accurate repetition, is one of these patterns. In other words, suicide requires a particular kind of action, and it has a form, which can be abstracted and ritualized. Susanne K. Langer determines such acts soon acquire unusual importance in human experience because they become symbolic:

... someone sees a secondary meaning in an act which has attained such a formal unity and style. It seems to have a symbolic as well as a practical function; a new, emotional importance to it.2


For drama, whose "direct prototype is action,"¹ says Langer, suicide provides a unified, symbolic action in which actor and act become one. Hence, a union, an "identity," is established which carries certain meanings and provokes responses appropriate to those acknowledged meanings. A type, ideal for drama, emerges from the suicide pattern—the heroic suicide of tragic drama destined to become the Hamartic hero of modern drama.

The suicidal protagonist is an ideal dramatic type for many reasons, not the least of which is the structure of suicide itself. The crisis-tension-resolution pattern which characterizes suicide can be, with very small effort, elaborated and extended into the entire dramatic structure of a play, or it can become a minor structure within the larger drama. In either case, elaborated or contained, suicide is a discrete, symbolic, and highly structured dramatic action, a natural script for the playwright. Thus, if the character is interesting enough and convincing enough, his life pattern will provide not only the story of the drama, but the structure as well. And always the inevitability of disaster will provide suspense along the way. For, consciously or unconsciously, tragic suicides, by choosing each time to do the one thing which is forbidden and impossible for them to do, always bring about their own destruction. Their tragic flaw, the quality Aristotle calls "hamartia," is precisely that characteristic which causes them to abandon all

¹Ibid., p. 206.
instinct for self-preservation and affirm their unique and tragic identities. The list of self-destructives and their victims extends backward in time to Oedipus and Ajax whose self-destructive propensities were deemed heroic in their own time and whose misguided, fatal illusions were attributed to ill-tempered gods whose vindictiveness out-Heroded the most terrible deeds of the old heroes. That even Euripides, who often smirks beneath the tragic mask at traditional heroic license, is very serious about the suicidal consequences of illusion is demonstrated in the Bacchae when Agave murders her own son believing him to be a lion, or when in Iphigenia at Aulis, Agamemnon is actually convinced that only the sacrifice of his beloved daughter will cause the winds to blow. One could point to almost any of Shakespeare's tragic heroes as examples of the self-destructiveness of illusion and distorted perception. Macbeth, Brutus, Cassius, Othello and Lear are just a few who are outstanding in their self-deception. Interestingly, Shakespeare, unlike his Greek predecessors, does not allow his characters to place their blame on malicious gods. Though it is true some characters never recognize completely that their faults lie not in their stars, but in themselves, the audience is

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1 I am referring to the abduction of Iphigenia by Artemis. Just as the knife is being lowered to the girl's throat, a deer is substituted for the sacrifice (just as with Abraham and Isaac), but this does not change the fact that Agamemnon consented to and went on with the sacrifice. Euripides' Helen is, I believe, the best example we have of his levity.

2 Cassius, who makes this statement, is one of those most guilty of self-deception.
always made to see the truth very clearly.

Parallels between self-destructive scripts in real life and in drama become apparent enough to see in the life and death of an individual a resonant archetype of such power that it influences lives for centuries to come. An equivalent effect is true for drama. A single character well made can be etched forever upon the memory of the race. Such a phenomenon does occur, in fact, at many different levels.

Some such pattern, according to Transactional Analysis, determines the life scripts of many self-destructive individuals. The scripts, which are called tragic or "Hamartic," are similar both to the pallikari life style and the life styles of archetypal tragic heroes, the only difference being that the archetypal model may be a parent or grandparent or almost any self-destructive model the individual chooses to emulate. Much like the other archetypal patterns in human history, the Hamartic script archetype begins early in the individual's personal history and is initially shaped by parental influences. An original drama, one which Eric Berne calls the Protocol, is completed in the early years of childhood and is subsequently enacted in adult terms with specific adaptations allowed for the individual, his domestic and social situations, and his personal cast of characters. The Hamartic hero, as the leading character in a tragic

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drama, selects the experiences and the supporting characters necessary to play out the drama according the directions of his tragic script. Claude Steiner, the author of script theory, proposes that:

... in all tragic scripts, and in the Oedipus Rex cycle in particular, a hero, well known to all, does something that is known to all beforehand, and does it in a relentless, predictable, fatal way. From the outset, the audience knows of the hero's eventual demise or change of fortune, yet is fascinated not only by the similarity between events in their own lives, but also by the manner in which the script unfolds in a predictable and relentless manner.¹

The Hamartic script, as defined by Steiner, possesses all the characteristics of good tragedy--including the hero with a tragic flaw, Hamartia. Alcoholism is one type of tragic flaw, says Steiner, but "self-destructive behavior like drug addiction, obesity, excessive smoking, suicide, 'mental illness,' and certain self-destructive sexual deviations may all be part of hamartic scripts as well."² He further qualifies his definition by cautioning that not all alcoholics are hamartic, but all "seriously suicidal people" are. Most important, Steiner emphasizes the fact that script psychology believes "self-destructive behavior does not imply defective functioning of the ego, but an effective or adaptive mode of ego functioning."³ Thus the ancient "Heroic" concept of self-destruction still persists in modern life

²Ibid., p. 23.
³Ibid., p. 129.
in our culture and in our life patterns. Furthermore, what most of us think of as self-destructive can be, for some individuals, their most effective method of handling their life adjustment. At least for some it is a method by which they are able to gain the recognition they so desperately require for successful ego functioning.

Berne describes the process of internalization as a compromise which takes place when the child is removed from physical intimacy with the mother. What was originally a biological "stimulus hunger" is, at this time, transformed into "recognition hunger,"¹ a craving so basic, indeed so insatiable it may be satisfied only through pain. Thus, the individual will suffer any pain to satisfy recognition needs, even the pain of self-mutilation, mental illness, or suicide. The normal self-protective instincts of the child are defeated by his need for parental approval and thus, in Steiner's terms, an uncomfortable prince becomes a comfortable frog who derives pleasure from self-destruction.² In late childhood an increased need for approval from the now-internalized parental figures--the Witch Mother, the Ogre or the Hangman--results in an individual's adoption of a Hamartic script for his life plan. "Don't Live!" injunctions from the Witch Mother or Ogre internalized by the growing child later cause the adult following a self-destructive script to

²Steiner, p. 37.
complete a number of "gallows transactions"\textsuperscript{1} to gain approval from the internalized fairy tale parents. And the demands of these goblin parents can eventually amount for orders for suicide.

Of course, not all self-destructives become overtly suicidal. Some become only mildly masochistic, while others choose a variety of self-destruction which will gain social recognition and/or social approval. The ranks of several high risk professions have included such types during all periods of history. The military, for instance, has represented the epitome of opportunity for enthusiastic self-destructives through the ages. Surely in no other place has it been easier and more rewarding to play the hero's role, except perhaps in the police force.

Still another variety of self-destructive is the risk taker whose occupation involves constant gambles with death. Living dangerously in their emotional relationships as well as their professional ones, the lives of these people are constantly filled with chaos. This list includes such professionals as test pilots, stunt men, race car drivers, bull fighters, big game hunters, firefighters, sword swallowers, and these days especially, politicians, teachers and even movie stars. Along with those who seek risk as a way to satisfy their self-destructive urges, there are the seriously suicidal alcoholics and the hard drug users. Like many hamartic personalities these individuals seek to destroy

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 62.
themselves physically--through hard tissue destruction, though they can be temporarily assuaged by semi-injurious levels of poisonous intake. But sooner or later some incident occurs which increases and heightens their self-destructive needs and they are allowed to surrender to the death dealing enemy within themselves. Suicide experts explain that this occurs when former problem-solving mechanisms prove inadequate to the problems at hand, thus creating a need for renewed self-destructive activity for the purpose of achieving homeostasis.¹

Knowing as we do the pervasive influence of Greek tragedy on the dramatists of later ages, it should not astound any of us to recognize the offspring of many Greek heroes in our own drama and sometimes in our own lives. It is not unusual to find them among our friends, colleagues or family, or perhaps, even in ourselves, for we are all far more influenced by ancient images than we can imagine. Our basic perceptions from childhood to adulthood are directed by what previous experience has taught us is reality, and previous experience may go all the way back to the ancients. Moreover, reality is more than likely established by sources outside ourselves which cause us to choose whatever it is we choose for self-images. The self-image definitely depends upon how we are viewed by others and how others respond to us. If early experience tells us we are failures or

"odd-balls" or tragic heroes, we begin to see ourselves as such and behaving accordingly, may seek experiences and identifications which confirm the self-image. When we identify with someone, we see in him the same characteristics which make up our own identities, and in confirming our identities we adopt certain images of ourselves which are projected through behavior patterns and through choices we consider appropriate or inappropriate to ourselves. Thus, if early in life, we are rewarded for self-destructive behavior--and the reward can be negative attention or punishment--a self-destructive identity is set down and internalized.

Oddly enough, the suicide process in life does have all the characteristics of a good script. Psychologists, in fact, always use dramatic terminology to describe the suicide crisis. Robert E. Litman, a leading expert on suicidology, describes suicides as an acting out of "attempts to resolve an internal conflict by translating the unverbalized statement into action."

So Aristotle might have described it also. Suicide as described in a crisis prevention bulletin reads like an analysis of a dramatized heroic suicide--the process of suicide is initiated by a "precipitating event" of recent onset causing feelings of upset or urgency and leading to disturbed behavior on the part of the individual.


2 Chicago-Read Mental Health Center, Subzone V, "Grief and Mourning," bulletin by L. Pecaut, 11/4/70.
The precipitating event, which in real life is something which throws the person off balance and makes him seek new avenues of adjustment when the old ones fail, in drama is the event the playwright invents to set off a chain reaction of emotions leading to a crisis in the life of his character. A small event will do, nothing more is needed: someone dies, a letter arrives, a tree blows down, the character loses his job or his money or his girl, or all three. Bad luck or good, it matters not in the least. Any change in the habitual patterns may set off a chain of circumstances which, if the individual or character has been previously set upon a self-destructive course, will accelerate the action of the script and lead the actor to his doom. Whatever the stimulus, the self-destructive must respond in an almost Pavlovian way to his own brand of self-destruction, and the tragedy will be played out to its resolution. The stages marking the progress of the suicide crisis, both on stage and in real life, help to "dramatize" the internal conflict Dr. Litman refers to.

The precipitating event being whatever stimulus starts the response and disturbs the equilibrium is some unpredictable, intangible, "unknown" quantity which should have been known all along, but was not. But, most assuredly, that we should have known but didn't, becomes one of the most exciting elements of the drama--the unexpected twist of fate. As Anouilh describes it:

... anything can set it going; a glance at a girl who happens to be lifting her arms to her hair as you go
by; a feeling when you wake up on a fine morning that
you'd like a little respect paid to you today, as if
it were as easy to order as a second cup of coffee; one
question too many, idly thrown out over a friendly
drink--and the tragedy is on.¹

And so the time comes for the tax collector; the Devil
comes round for his dues; we face at last the fate we thought
to have escaped--the appointment in Samarra and the nine of
spades all rolled into one. This is tragedy.

The pattern transformed from life represents in a
somewhat exaggerated manner the four stages of crisis de-
scribed here by Caplan:

The first is the rise in tension, unpleasant affect and
disorganization of behavior stemming from the impact of
the stimulus and calling forth the habitual problem sol-
v ing techniques in attempt to return to the state of
previous equilibrium. Second, a lack of success along
with the continuation of stimulus impact exacerbates the
state of tension. The third stage is characterized by
tension reaching a point where it mobilizes additional
internal and external resources ... In the fourth
phase, if the problem continues and can neither be
solved by need satisfaction nor avoided through giving
up goals or perceptual distortion, major disorganization
of the individual occurs.² (italics mine)

Let us now compare T.R. Henn's hypothetical tragic
structure of gradually diminishing concentric circles with
Caplan's real crisis structure:

For the outer ring we may postulate the First Cause,
under whatever name it may be recognized: imperceptible,
stable, within the awareness of the spectators and pro-
tagonists; ... Within it there is the ring of Present
Action, shifting and changing in its points of pressure,

¹Jean Anouilh, "Antigone," in Five Plays, I (New

²Gerald Caplan, An Approach to Community Mental
Health (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1961), quoted from
(Mimeographed)
yet linked to a ring immediately outside it, between it and the First Cause, which is the Determining Past. (Perhaps the gods in Homer, themselves symbolizing man's dilemma, lie between the two rings; and there also Irony has its first growth.) ... Within the third circle, yielding perpetually to their struggles, yet doubly constricted by the two outer circles, the protagonists of tragedy may be thought to move ...

He goes on to say "once the final ring has narrowed on the protagonists and crushed them, it expands again and becomes in its turn part of the Determining Past." Herein lies the basic difference between what seems at first to be a striking similarity: psychology, as we see, ceases with the disorganization of the individual who is unable to adjust; tragedy, on the other hand, calmly awaits the inevitable defeat of the individual by the Determining Past from which flows not disorganization nor cessation, but equilibrium. While psychology looks upon the crisis situation as a period of potential growth—depending upon whether or not the individual is willing to sacrifice his goals and illusions—tragedy allows no such solution because of the existence of the First Cause, which makes all problem-solving mobilization futile. Whereas psychology places its faith in man's ability to adapt to necessary changes, tragedy admits no such flexibility. The third stage of Caplan's analysis—the calling up of "additional internal and external resources"—would in tragedy result in an ironic reversal, recognition,

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2 Ibid., p. 39.
or both; negating thereby the possibility of drastic character change. Finally, while psychology recognizes in suffering a positive impetus to change, it believes the suffering will disappear once change occurs. Tragedy looks upon suffering as a fact which must be faced without hope of alleviation; its only promise, if it can be termed promise, is that somehow the sufferer becomes ennobled through his pain.

Between psychology and tragedy there are many similarities, but there are also many differences. These lie mainly in point of view and purpose. As to which is most optimistic, that is for the onlooker to decide.

The many psychological theories which treat crisis as an opportunity to demonstrate infinite human flexibility do not, however, ignore the possibility of defeat. When Erik Erikson, speaking of the identity crises as a "necessary turning point," adds also "when development must move one way or another,"¹ he is acknowledging the possibility of a defeat which may have tragic potential. Morley, for example, recognizing the vulnerability of the individual who is "ripe for a great change in a relatively short time," describes crisis as an experience which "repeats important features of a person's emotional struggles."² For the playwright it is the time to invent something that will touch a vulnerable spot—something unexpected, vital, tripping off the action

²Morley, ibid., p. 6.
which brings forth the Determining Past--touching off crisis.

Actually, the difference between the addicts and the risk takers boils down to the fact that the former destroy themselves in anti-social ways and the latter do so with full endorsement and admiration from society.

If the characters I have been describing seem more at home in the spheres of abnormal psychology than in the universe of tragic drama it is because there are, indeed, vast differences between the way science looks at man and the way art views him, and these differences are not simply a matter of differing focus: there are some very basic differences in philosophy.

Though comparisons are unavoidable, the way psychology treats self-destructive behavior as an ailment which has a cure is almost antithetical to the way the tragic dramatist treats it--as a doom which must be lived out. Now, the conflict arises in this dichotomy of views when the man of science tries to deal with someone whose patterns of self-destruction are so deeply engrained that he is, without question, doomed.¹ This is precisely what happens to the Hamartic hero who is raised in a family of hamartic game players whose mutual habits of self-destruction reinforce the habits of the other members of the group. The child born into a hamartic family group is just as surely doomed to live out the family curse as were Orestes and Electra.

¹I mean doomed in the sense that the medical profession can find no means of forcing the individual to adjust and live.
In modern drama the same patterns can be seen in a play such as O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which offers several vivid portraits of chronic Hamartic heroes—an entire family of them in fact. Their fragile, tenuous equilibrium is destroyed when the youngest son, Edmund, contracts tuberculosis thereby precipitating a family crisis. The Tyrones play at the illusion of family life until Edmund's illness shatters the make-believe equilibrium—then all facades crumble. We learn then that each of these people is isolated in his own hell; yet, as Edmund observes, there is a unity amongst them: they are all "fog people," lost in the illusions which keep them from reality. As Edmund's illness obscures, for an instant at least, the unreal sicknesses of the fog world, there is a heightening of pretensions between Mary and the family. This is followed by the total collapse of any illusions the audience may have held about the seeming normalcy of the fog-bound family. Mary recedes into her protective drug-induced fog, departing willingly, hopefully, to a place too distant for reality to touch ever again. And it becomes obvious that the other family members, James Sr., Edmund, and James Jr., by seeking the solace of alcohol and self-hatred, are merely supporting her habit. As the crisis over Edmund's illness ends with some loses and some gains, Edmund resolves to live despite the Witch Mother's and the Ogre's self-destructive demands. The others, however, are not so fortunate. Mary, for one, has returned to her fog forever.
What is fascinating about *Long Day's Journey* is O'Neill's awareness that Mary's alienation from the family circle, her withdrawal from the world in general, is the fulfillment of her deep desire for a return to her girlhood chastity; her longing to play the role of Virgin Mary which is contradicted by the products of her "sin"--her husband and her sons. Thus by blocking the family out she allows herself that return to her virgin state while at the same time wreaking vengeance upon those who have deprived her of it. O'Neill's imagery--the increasing fog, his use of fin de siècle poetry, Mary's disordered hair and arthritic hands--objectify her state of mind and heighten the effect of her growing detachment on the family. Thus drama has added the necessary human emotional dimension which is seldom achieved from the viewpoint of psychology. What is absent from the scientific "autopsy" of the hamartic individual comes forth in the drama--the emotional understanding of "what it feels like to be this hero, caught between gods and men."¹

While psychology may record the pulse rate of the individual in crisis, we would find it difficult to distinguish headache from heartache without the aid of tragic drama. The terrifying struggle which must take place within the human being who decides to die voluntarily is a natural subject for tragedy where the elements of suffering and struggle, of

acquiescence and final capitulation to enemy forces--whoever or whatever they may be--mitigate between the harshness of psychology and the idealization of myth. The Hamartic is thus transformed through tragedy into the Heroic--a clinical study, correct in all its details, becomes greater than its surface and has thus achieved the universe of tragedy.

In western society, where our suicide rituals lack formal sanction, much informal conditioning occurs which causes our reactions to the convention of dramatic suicide to be rather confused. When on the one hand we are taught to look upon suicide as cowardly and sinful, on the other hand we are being trained constantly to admire such things as sacrifice, "total dedication to the cause of righteousness," "truth at any cost," and "honor above life itself"--suicidal virtues all. We are told at one moment about the evil consequences of excessive behavior, but at the next moment we are bombarded with images, heroic, bold, sacrificial and gloriously dead. Heroes who "die with their boots on," "give it all they've got," and so on, color our attitudes to the extent that we are bound to suffer more from the effects of uncertainty than from disapproval when viewing dramatic suicide. Quite obviously, when we sympathize or approve of something we are not supposed to approve of, it is not ambivalence that plagues us so much as guilt and confusion.

For those who imbibe the heroic mystique and find themselves loving honor and glory more than life, the heroic
drama celebrates the inflexibility, the steadfastness, and, if you will, the Flame Eternal in man, and tragedy becomes a celebration of fate and an acceptance of the singular destiny which celebrates one individual above the rest for his resistance to the ministerings of psychology. And if it is true, as Camus believes, that "a fate is not a punishment," then to accept the heroic suicide role is in the end to submit proudly to a unique destiny which the suicide can claim as his alone. His consummate emotion--joy--comes not from death but from hope: the hope that time will forget his imperfections, forgive his iniquities, and recognize, at last, his virtues.

In choosing death over life from the opposing forces of life and death within himself, the suicide establishes his heroic identity. Past and present fall into place and the future is assured--paid for in advance. The crisis has ended on a note of hope.

Thus far we have been discussing the practical aspects of suicide as dramatic stock in trade. We have found that both the suicide and his pattern of behavior (the self-destructive, Hamartic hero and the Hamartic script) are by nature "dramatic" because suicidal behavior is rigid, highly structured, and acted-out behavior which leads to catastrophe. It is also symbolic behavior which conveys emotionally significant meanings which can be responded to in circumscribed ways. In the self-destructive script the individual

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1Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 35.
finds a life plan and an identity that structures his life from early childhood. It is a scenario which ends in suicide in which he plays the starring role. A final adjunct of special value to the dramatist is the fact that the suicide crisis has a definite time span--a beginning, middle and end during which the action must be completed. Unlike stress, which can continue indefinitely, suicide burns for resolution and must be settled posthaste or all is lost. This self-limiting characteristic makes the structure of crisis especially usable to the dramatist in search of a unifying structure with which to convey the tragic experience. The remarkable stability of its basic pattern allows the act of suicide to be regenerated whenever the context calls for its repetition. This is not to say that there cannot be variations in the pattern or in the responses to it, but individual differences do not diminish its effectiveness, rather they serve to revitalize it with the additional images. Therefore, as time goes on, the original theme is given many variations, all of which become part of the repertory of suicide.

Much more should be said about the changing images of suicide in drama during its development. Since one cannot, after all, bridge certain cultural gaps without having been logically prepared, we must delve for a moment into the mysteries of change which are by no means as readily open to us as I would have them be; nevertheless, for want of time and space, let us just conjure some general explanations
which, if not systematic, indicate at least the presence of a series of cause and effect relationships. Without going very far, a quick survey of some of the major characters in literature and drama through the periods we have deemed "classical," "romantic," and "modern," will indicate that the direction of development has always pointed toward versimilitude. Or notably, we have progressed through the long shot to the close up to the x-ray. Always the trend has been from the outward in, and it has been taken for granted that this gradual shift from the god's eye view of Man to the microscopic investigation of his parts, having resulted in a subsequent leveling of dramatic images, has resulted also in the de-heroizing of those images. But is it necessarily true that in seeking to capture whatever each age believed was the ultimate picture of reality, its playwrights merely succeeded in belittling the stature of future heroes? Why is knowing man always considered synonymous with reviling him? In the dramas of Euripides, for example, where we can actually point to the beginnings of the humanizing trend, we see that the dramatist's approach to traditional material focuses attention on individual emotional processes. His Medea, for instance, is much more woman and less monster because he allows us to see her plight—a lone woman in a strange land, forsaken and bereft of loved ones. Even his Clytemnestra becomes almost human when she blames Agamemnon's murder on the sacrifice of Iphigenia for the sake of wanton Helen, but admits that in the end it was jealousy of Cassandra
that drove her to murder her husband. As William Chase Greene points out in his comparison of the "Electra" plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the differences between the three versions reflect the differences in the personal concerns of each dramatist: Aeschylus being interested in the religious aspects, Sophocles in the ethical, and Euripides in the psychological and social.¹ That a humanizing of the tragic figure took place is certain, but that familiarity necessarily breeds contempt is, to my mind, at least, highly questionable. Perhaps now is the time to re-examine all such notions.

By and large, dramatic figures after Shakespeare and Racine become more representative of middle and lower class people that of kings and heroes. Even the stilted heroic tragedies of Dryden exhibit in his characters a middle-class morality which reduces such figures as Antony and Cleopatra to something approximating a down-and-out, bourgeois, ex-general and his once-royal bawd--seedy versions of their former selves. Any resemblance here to Shakespeare's "light of the world" and his "Egypt" is eradicated by Dryden's unfortunate domestication of the formerly magnificent duo. The suicides of Dryden's infamous couple have all the impact one might expect from a middle-aged suicide pact in which both "sinners" receive their just deserts. Dreary fare indeed

for so exciting a subject.

What exactly is the difference between Shakespeare's infinite Cleopatra and Dryden's Restoration Theda Bara? Why Dryden's queen is a bawd and Shakespeare's a hero has something to do with the way each age looked upon morality. Shakespeare's queen sees herself as a hero and has no use for morality—it simply does not concern her. She is noble to the bone; larger than life in conception, abundant with large quantities of good and evil, but with very little of indifference. She transcends her small failings—the willfullness, the jealousies and coquettishness—by the magnitude of her passion. Neither is she intimidated by death nor by Caesar, and if she lusts it is with an intensity appropriate to its object. Shakespeare's Antony, the "Crown of the earth," is a full partner to her passion and yet is undone by it. He is, however, in death restored to glory by the memory of his former deeds and by Cleopatra's magnificent eulogy: "In his livery/Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were/As plates dropp'd from his pocket." (V. ii.90-92)

Dryden's queen, on the other hand, thinks herself a helpless pawn who becomes, through no fault of her own, Caesar's toy and Antony's nemesis, when in truth:

Nature meant me
A wife, a silly, harmless, household dove.
Fond without art, and kind without deceit;
But Fortune, that has made a mistress of me,
Has thrust me out to the wide world, unfurnished.
(IV.i)

To Antony's reminder ("Took you into my bosom, stained by
Caesar" [II]), of her "sordid" past, she replies wistfully:

that Caesar first
Enjoyed my love, though you deserved it better:
I grieve for that, my lord, much more than you.

(II)

Intimating that Caesar almost took her by force and claiming expediency for her excuse, she braves Octavia's taunt that Antony was "not the first/For whom you spread your snares." Shakespeare's queen responds quite differently to Antony's sick accusations. A single question--"O, is't come to this?" (III,xiii.115)--and the subject is closed for all time.

That appearances come first with Dryden's character is made clear by her response to Antony's death: "Short ceremony friends;/But yet it must be decent." (V.1) Clearly the "harmless household dove" was at least furnished with a shrewd native sense of expediency housed in a cash register mentality. Dryden's Antony, another pawn who has seen better days, comes running back to Cleopatra with his wife close behind. Armed with wifely indignation and two children, Octavia manages to coax the errant knave back to sanity for a time, but Cleopatra's charms win out. The rest is history: Antony runs from battle, tries to stab himself to death, ineptly misaims and dies in agony—a bungled job for all concerned, the heroes, the wife and the playwright. The difference in conception, not the close view diminishes the character's stature.

Thus in the playwright's conception of his character lies the answer to the problem of stature. When the
dramatist's view of a character has been lofty enough, neither conditions of birth nor severe misfortune can degrade the hero. The stumbling from the rare heights of tragedy has not everywhere made mockery of heroics. Where there has been admiration for the spirit of the character and respect for the dimensions of his struggle, the audience has always been left with the feeling that it has witnessed an admirable struggle and always it responds with admiration.¹

But how does a playwright come to achieve the uplifting spectacle I have been describing? Part of the answer lies in the artist's manipulation of image patterns. Frederick Hoffman believes there are two ranges of death imagery, each addressing a different spectrum of emotion, through which the writer may gain control:

... one is thoroughly realistic, the other as thoroughly 'idealistic.' In the one case we have the 'memento mori' the conqueror worm, and the other paraphernalia of maggoty. In the other case, the imagination strives to eliminate as much as possible the evidences of physical dissolution by rearranging them in view of eternity and regarding them as a transition to spiritual life.²

It is interesting to see that sometimes both ranges of imagery, the real and the ideal, are utilized in the same work so that the stream of images culminates at last in a particularized "cathartic" emotion of pity and fear, or its

¹Since audience statistics are hard to come by, this statement is, admittedly, a purely subjective one based on immediate reactions to certain plays.

modern equivalent. Let us demonstrate how this works in such vastly different plays as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, both dramas in the tragic mode, one old and the other relatively modern; one a suicide play and the other not.

Surely no other drama is more filled with images of death, both real and ideal, than is *Hamlet*. From the opening scene on the ramparts when the audience beholds the ghost of old King Hamlet emerge with great clanking of chains from the mouth of Hell, there is a steady bombardment of sensual and spiritual paraphenalia fluctuating odors of the grave with glimpses of heaven, and finally terminating with Hamlet's apotheosis. The images are an objectification of Hamlet's spiritual progress in that they allow the audience to view the world through Hamlet's eyes. The vision of blight, superimposed upon what was once Eden, causes Hamlet to perceive all things as rank and gross in nature—himself included. What was once a noble vision of his own destiny suffers a transformation from prince to "rogue and peasant slave," to one who sees himself as a knave "crawling between earth and heaven." (III.1.128) The ensuing struggle—the oft-mentioned indecision—is the crisis during which Hamlet battles with his destiny. Rejecting the heroic role he has come to loathe calls forth his habitual problem-solving techniques, which are passive and contemplative rather than active and spontaneous. But an acceptance of his role comes in spite of his new found knowledge that "we fat ourselves

...
for maggots; your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table; that's the end."

(IV.iii.23-25) His recognition—"There's a divinity that shapes our ends" (V.ii.10)—occurs when he realizes that his thoughtful nature has not necessarily made him powerless to act. After having escaped Claudius's trap, his confidence is somehow restored, or rather resurrected. And all things for Hamlet come together: his learning does him "yeoman's service,"¹ his very sleeplessness causes him to believe his cause is heaven directed. Thus as he reveals himself proudly² at Ophelia's funeral as having loved her, the poet-scholar role which has prevented Hamlet from realizing his true "heroic" identity now merges with the activist who has learned:

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though I am not splentive and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous ...
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(V.i.255-56)

The stream of death imagery has changed course and is, after the Gravediggers' scene, directed toward eternity as Shakespeare allows Hamlet's transgressions to be overshadowed by the sheer nobility of his character. As Hamlet accepts his destined role—going bravely to his death—he is borne with hero's honors into the future. The script is completed. With Hedda Gabler, on the other hand, we are only allowed glimpses of potential nobility through the

¹V.ii.36.

²V.i.250-51. Hamlet announces his presence with pride: "This is I, Hamlet the Dane." I take this to be a sign that he has accepted his hero's role.
facade of her wickedness. If it were not for the juxtaposition of Hedda's view of life with the dreary Victorian bourgeois environment, we could not see her struggle.

Hedda's vision of vine leaves is the antithesis of the world she has been forced to submit to. Her struggle to survive in that world without sacrificing this vision does finally end with self-annihilation, but not before she has made every effort to turn the world to suit her vision. In her aborted struggle for power she fights to avoid her social destiny, which she sees as endless boredom. The house Tesman buys for her "smells of mortality," and, indeed, does become her grave. Slowly the vision of romantic glory is made ridiculous by reality--Løvberg's heroic suicide becomes in truth an accident in which he is shot: "in the bowels"! When she finds herself a captive of Judge Brack, Hedda completes her own destruction--off stage. The final irony is, of course, Brack's closing cry: "Good God!--people don't do such things." Hedda has put herself beyond the reach of common humanity forever, and in her struggle to control life she has surrendered to the forces of death.

The effectiveness of each death as a terminating point in the crisis-suicide structure has depended upon the manner in which each playwright manipulated his death imagery. In Hamlet Shakespeare employed a variety of images ranging from "the conqueror worm" to the angelic to create a heroic end for Hamlet. Ibsen, on the other hand, does no such thing for Hedda. What he does do is allow us to see
the disparities between Hedda's grand view of herself and her society's view of women. That she believes herself "not made for that sort of thing" is enough to doom her in a world which offers no friendly alternative. Thus, though she is shown to us inversely, her refusal to exist in a world without glory transforms her in our eyes--she becomes heroic because she has sacrificed herself to her own vision of life.

Recalling that suicide has symbolic as well as practical functions, Kenneth Burke proposes a grammatical incentive--both reflexive and transformational--as part of that symbology. Says Burke:

Since imagery built about active, reflexive and passive forms of death (killing, self-killing, and being killed) so obviously contributes to dramatic intensity, and since thoughts of death are so basic to human motivation--there is usually a 'grammatical' incentive behind such imagery, since a history's end is a formal way of proclaiming its essence or nature.1

Like Burke, Douglas observes that "suicide reflexively changes the meanings of the person involved"2 by obliterating situational occurrences or acts. By killing the temporal being and leaving only the eternal essence (soul), the transformational properties of this act form the incentive behind sacrifice and honor suicides. As Douglas sees it, individuals and events are seen from a different angle after a suicide is committed because it is our tendency in western culture to


separate the temporal self from the "real" self. Thus in killing the villain (the public, temporal, situational self), the victim (the real, eternal, essential self) is allowed transcendence. All of this through the transformational and reflexive functions of suicide.

Referring to Menninger's threefold definition of suicide (see above), Burke suggests that "the so-called 'desire to kill' a certain person is much more properly analyzable as a desire to transform the principle which that person represents."¹ In killing himself an individual is really killing the quality or trait he hates most in himself. We saw that the young Sarakatsani achieves his ideal persona by sacrificing his temporal existence in order to be transformed by the potent "magical powers" of self-sacrifice. Preservation of youth and beauty, obliteration of the decadent influences of existence, ultimate transcendence to a universe of unblemished heroes is the motivating logic behind this illogical act--from the standpoint of the suicidal hero at any rate.² But Camus proposes an alternative meaning which perhaps best explains the puzzle behind the question of suicide and its pattern. Says he:

Suicide, like the leap, is acceptance at its extreme. Everything is over and man returns to his essential history. His future, his unique and dreadful future--he sees and rushes toward it.³

¹Burke, p. 13.
³Camus, p. 40.
How can it be that suicide becomes a repudiation of rebellion signifying submission to that very thing which stirred the victim to rebel? If it is "acceptance" as Camus suggests, why then, at least in tragedy, is there so much glory in it? The answers, lying somewhere between reality and illusion in the regions of tragic philosophy, are far from simple.

We have previously suggested that the difference between a heroic suicide and a "hamartic" or clinical case study lies in the beholder's view of the human animal. This is not to say that the views of psychology belittle the human aspect; rather it means a reduction of the thing we call "human nature" to an infinitely malleable substance which can be identified as "normal," "common-everyday," "well-adjusted," "regular," "good old," and the like. But, the misfits who refuse to become "adjusted" to their lot, the heroic suicide images of the past become personal symbols which confirm their places in a universe that seems to have rejected them. For here is an identity, a "career" that redeems them from the oblivion they fear and satisfies their recognition hunger. The Hamartic suicide script is, therefore, an individualized interpretation of the Heroic suicides—the personified emulation by an individual of his image ideal. To take this one step farther, every human being must find confirmation of his existence through identification with an image ("mother image," "father image," "male image," "female image," has much greater scope and
versatility than mother or father "role"; we play particular roles according to the image of ourselves in that role. Remember Hedda's saying, "I'm not made for that sort of thing." of what appears to him to be his essential self. According to that image, he then chooses the "roles" he believes appropriate. When an individual finds no identity with any of the images in his culture that celebrate life, he will most likely identify with images of death. Culture and society offer both, after all. And between life and death there is little choice save in living death--alcoholism, drug addiction and other slow forms of annihilation. To commit suicide, then, is to accept death--perhaps on one's own terms, but it is acceptance at its fullest. Society's rejection has been accepted and the human conditions as well. All the rest is stillness.

Thus, those who are unable to fit into one category find their true homes in the other category--the realms of death where the suicide is a native citizen. If he finds himself welcomed there by familiar faces, who will be surprised? And the philosophy here is no different from any other, it is just that here the Janus-faced god commands "Don't Live!" instead of "Live!"--and the company is never dull.

For the most part the ideal suicides emerged from mythological beginnings into drama, and from them generated heroic suicides enough to people dramas until today. Ever changing and renewing themselves, but always the same, their
primary function is to reconcile us to a tedious existence in which they will play no part. As Henn tells us, the hero is a character who stands apart from all others:

From his own point of view the hero may have much in common with the Byronic or anti-social type of hero, ... He is isolated by his very condition: he sees clearly the possibilities of his powers; he is made, at the last, violently aware of their limitations. Basically, he is liable to the suggestions of the Todtentrieb; self-sacrifice, suicide, the last battle against overwhelming odds, present satisfying dramatic solutions to this type of mind. We may suspect that the motives are often highly complex; both the heroic and anti-social qualities may well be associated in the fantasy-world in which he lives, the power which he desires so intensely, and the excesses of deed and word by which he seeks perpetually to reassure himself as to his own stature ... ¹

Of those self-destructive heroes who most perfectly combine Henn's suggested attributes, there are three who are outstanding among the Greeks. More than any others, these heroic suicides can be said to have influenced playwrights from the fifth century until today. Antigone, Phaedra and Ajax, larger than life, tragic, aliens to their own time, and unyielding even to their creators, still live today in our drama. We will not always be able to identify them by name or face, but always we will recognize their struggle against life in favor of death. To learn something of their evolution, we shall look at them now as they were and as they grew to be.

The Greeks of Sophocles' day probably saw Antigone as an example of excessive foolhardiness. As she was disdainful of the laws imposed upon her sex and upon her countrymen, so

¹Henn, p. 85.
the Greeks might perhaps have seen her as being justly punished for her excesses. Overly proud, scornful of those weaker than herself, the hypnotic power of Antigone's own sense of mission draws others (Ismene, Haemon, Eurydice) with her toward the destiny which holds her in thrall. Antigone goes willingly; for, like a clarion call to the blood of the potential suicide, once presented the allure of martyrdom is irresistible. Antigone bleeds willingly; she looks forward to dying. Thus death is approached with elation and a sense of coming home which ordinary mortals could not contemplate. But Antigone, like a bride, half trembling and half ice, plays out the role meant for Oedipus's daughter alone. While her part seems to coincide with the self-destructive image she carries of herself, one could make the same mistake about her that was made by Anouilh's latter-day Creon, and make Antigone entirely responsible for her own death wish. As it is, she finds that death and her main purpose coincide, a fact which Creon is well aware of:

Death was her purpose whether she knew it or not, Poly- nices was a mere pretext. When she had to give up that pretext, she found another--that life and happiness were tawdry things and not worth possessing. She was bent upon only one thing; to reject life and to die.¹

Sophocles, too, was aware of Antigone's death wish; his text from beginning to end shows the heroine to be virtually obsessed with a kind of homesick desire for Hades. But death is desired as an appropriate end to the task which she sees as her singular destiny. The daughter of Oedipus

¹Anouilh, p. 45.
and Jocasta, like her ill-fated parents and brothers, is destined to a strange fate. Creon is a part of it as, indeed, the entire house of Labdacus will be. Her sister, Ismene, chooses not to die violently, but she comes to regret her choice, and she later begs Antigone to be allowed to join with her sister's fate ("I did the deed--if she allows my plea:/I take my share and burden of the blame."\(^1\)) but is told scornfully by Antigone that she has chosen to live and must stick to her choice. Of the two daughters, it is Antigone who feels her dark heritage most strongly.\(^2\) Her recognition is sounded more clearly than ever when she speaks of her family's unhappy past reaching out from death to destroy her:

> My father's sin! Here is the source of all my anguish.  
> Harsh fate that befell my father! Harsh fate that has held  
> Fast in its grip the whole renowned race of Labacus!  
> Ah, the blind madness of my mother's and my father's marriage!  
> Ah, the cruel union of a son with his own mother!  
> From such as those I drew my own unhappy life:  
> And now I go to dwell with them, unwedded and accursed.  
> O brother! through an evil marriage you were slain and I live; but your dead hand destroys me.\(^3\)

But methinks the lady doth protest too much. Antigone, not

\(^1\)H.D.F. Kitto, Form and Meaning in Drama (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960; London: Methuen, 1956), p. 140. Kitto mentions that Rouse believes he has solved the problem of the double burial by taking Ismene at her word. I agree with Kitto that this seems highly unlikely.

\(^2\)Both Agard and Wilson hint that Antigone's feelings for her brother may have been more than sisterly, while Waldock insists that there is no evidence here of a perverted relationship. My own view of their criticism is that Antigone is an excessive person--if she is a person at all--but Wileon and Agard are outdoing her in their own excessive ways.

Ismene, is obsessed with the past, its curses and its laws. Ismene, by not acknowledging the past, can easily fit into the future. For Antigone this adjustment is impossible because the past forms her identity and the future has nothing to hold for her. She knows she will not be a part of tomorrow except as part of an eternal vision. That task which is hers alone to do, she does and is destroyed for it. Eager to seek her fortunes in an ideal world, Antigone dismisses her earthly commitments to Haemon, to Ismene, to the state—accepting her responsibilities in the netherworld: "Longer the time in which to please the dead than that for those up here./There I shall lie forever." (75-77)

Determined to live by her past alone, Antigone makes no effort to conform to social necessity. She thereby stands at opposite poles from Creon, who has chosen to abide by his own decrees rather than by those of the gods. His unhappy fate is to be always bound up in Antigone's fate as they re-appear in dramas from Sophocles to Anouilh, setting the pattern for St. Joan and her persecutors, Thomas Becket and his, and perhaps even for John Proctor and his Salem witch-hunters.

As we have seen, the identity of the hero holds both pride and shame. To retain the former, the latter must be avoided. But shame is brought to Phaedra through no fault of her own. She is dying at the onset of the Euripidean tragedy. Were it not for the hope precipitated by Theseus' alleged death, she would have died quietly without revealing
her shame. Yet because her Cretan ancestry has prepared the path for her disgrace, she is more likely to be trapped in the old patterns than to find new ones. The gods (goddesses in this case) have brought their wrath upon the head of Hippolytus, using his antithesis--Phaedra--as their weapon. Helen Merrill Lynd expresses the crux of Phaedra's experience quite succinctly:

More than other emotions, shame involves a quality of the unexpected; if in any way we feel it coming we are powerless to avert it. This is in part because of the difficulty we have in admitting to ourselves either shame or the circumstances that give rise to shame. Whatever part voluntary action may have in the experience of shame is swallowed up in the sense of something that overwhelms us from without and 'takes us' unawares. We are taken by surprise, caught off guard, or off base, caught unawares, made a fool of. It is as if we were suddenly invaded from the rear where we cannot see, are unprotected, and can be overpowered.¹

And "overpowered" is precisely the word for what happens to Phaedra--a formerly noble lady--when she falls in love with her woman-hating stepson. Most of the horror in the situation involves Phaedra's distaste for her own passion. As chaste as Hippolytus himself, she is shamed by the fever of her terrible lust, terrible to her because she is no longer able to recognize herself as the noble queen she once knew. It is as though something alien has entered her flesh causing it to turn against itself. To make matters worse, Hippolytus, being a follower of Artemis, has nothing but disgust for her passion.

¹Helen Merrill Lynd, On Shame and the Search For Identity, p. 32.
With the Hippolytus, Euripides outlines the psychological dimensions of all future tragedies which have to do with so-called "inappropriate" (incestuous, illicit or perverted) passions. What is most interesting about this play is the fact that it stimulated so many other fine plays while it is actually one of Euripides' poorest works. Euripides' portrayal of Phaedra is virtually undeveloped and she figures in this play as Aphrodite's revenge against Hippolytus, who is the real focal point of the drama. Phaedra's suicide and her trumped up accusation of Hippolytus are all part of Aphrodite's revenge against the youth who has pledged himself to lifelong chastity. It has been said of this play that it is one of the documents which indicates the transition from shame culture to guilt culture.\footnote{Whether or not Euripides was mocking traditions and cults in the play is unknown, but several of Phaedra's speeches reveal a concern over the problems of guilt and shame. It is also one of the pieces of evidence used to document Euripides' alleged misogyny. Though the latter is doubtful, the former has much evidence to support it. Phaedra tells the women of Troezen of a proverb:

The proverb runs: "There is one thing alone that stands the brunt of life throughout its course, a quiet conscience," ... a just and quiet conscience whoever can attain it. Time holds a mirror, as for a young girl,}

and sometimes as occasion falls, he shows us the ugly rogues of the world. I would not wish that I should be seen among them.¹ (426-430)

Phaedra is constantly in dread of bringing shame upon her name, but she is helpless to prevent its onslaught. Thus love to her comes to be the equivalent of disease—a poison in the blood to be purged only by death. What is more, as Phaedra's "shameful" nature is revealed to her and, subsequently, to others, it destroys her honor—the honor she had always believed to be an intrinsic part of her character. This destruction of honor is really the destruction of Phaedra's conception of her essential self. Therefore, to slay the shameful passion which has eroded her former self-esteem, Phaedra hangs herself.

The "Phaedra" plays range from Seneca to Racine, to O'Neill and to several others in modern times. Strangely enough, from Seneca forward, much more interest has been paid to Phaedra than to Hippolytus. Consequently, the character of the youth has remained fairly static while Phaedra's has been elaborated to the extent that she has become the central figure of the drama—as the change in titles indicates.² The transition is particularly relevant in our discussion.


²Seneca changed the title to Phaedra, and thus the focus was changed. Racine's tragedy is called Phèdre also; O'Neill's is Desire Under the Elms; Frank Gilroy's is That Summer That Fall; the Jules Dassin Film, Phaedra, and the ballet also is called Phèdre from the Jean Cocteau text of that name.
because, in the beginning at least, Hippolytus was the actual focus and it was he who was the hero and unwitting suicide. His rigidity, i.e., his fanatical devotion to the cult of Artemis, brings tragedy upon his entire family. Had he not been so untouchably chaste, he would not have tempted Phaedra; for at the root of the whole problem is Phaedra's inability to compromise her image of herself in her own eyes. As it is, his chastity becomes a challenge to her womanhood; she unconsciously chooses an impossible love object in order to preserve her own integrity. Thus by opting for outer disaster, she avoids inner disaster.

Racine's Phèdre is still more a drama about a tragic queen who is driven to suicide by an illicit passion. Racine's conception of the character is one who towers above her ancestry, but is in the end broken by the inherited passion within her. The Phèdre of Racine is both shamed and guilt-ridden (see Monaco's discussion of the confluence of guilt [Christian] and error [pagan] in Phèdre1). O'Neill treats the tragedy from Theseus's point of view in Desire Under the Elms and places the drama in a New England setting. Gilroy, in a dreadful version, has Phaedra (wife of an Italian restaurant owner) and Hippolytus fall in love and drive off to Coney Island in his white convertible. The Dassin film Phaedra is a modernized version of the story in an Onassified setting complete with Theodorakis music and a

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1Marion Monaco, "Racine and the Problem of Suicide," PMLA, LXX,3 (June, 1955), 441-54.
chorus of old Greek women. But from whatever view—even in Miller's View From the Bridge—the story is a powerful reminder of the experience touched off by unleashed passions pitting their strengths against immovable rigidities.

Of Sophocles' Ajax, we will have more to say later on. For the present it is sufficient to note that more than any other tragic figure, Ajax represents the culture based on shame values. His suffering encompasses the entire experience of the shamed self-image: the recognition of his degradation comes when he sees that he has slaughtered innocent cattle instead of his enemies, the Greeks. His wrath at being outsmarted by Odysseus in the contest over Achilles' armor leads him to attack the Greek tents, but Athena casts over him a spell of madness and lifts the spell in time for him to witness the slaughtered cattle. He realizes he is out of favor with the gods,¹ he is faced with social and parental ostracism and with divine alienation. Despite the pleas of Tectumessa, his wife, who reminds him of his responsibilities to

¹Bowra believes that Ajax is still under the spell when he commits suicide and concludes that Ajax was not responsible for his act; however, "the death is what he really desired, the solution to his shame and troubles." C.M. Bowra, Sophoclean Tragedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944; Oxford Paperback, 1965), p. 46. Kitto, on the other hand, concludes that "his lack of wisdom destroyed him," an observation that I believe is much more in line with the general meaning of the play. Furthermore, Ajax kills himself deliberately, calmly, and with dignity. There is nothing in his great mutability speech to indicate anything but an awakening realization of his anachronistic position and his acceptance of defeat: "I shall go there where I have to go," he says (690). Kitto's discussion is in Form and Meaning, pp. 181-197.
her and his son, his pride is his primary consideration. Unwilling to exist in a world which has rejected the life he symbolizes, suicide becomes his only alternative. He is forced to wipe away his dishonor by falling upon his only remaining ally—the sword of his enemy, Hector. With his death passes the era of heroic deeds and invincible men. Ajax' way of dealing with the world—the contest of physical strength—becomes part of the past. Made poorer by the loss of this great hero, the world is left to those who live by wit and diplomacy—to Odysseus.

In Book IX of the Odyssey, Odysseus relates that when he descended into Hades he spoke to all the Dead save one, and that was Ajax, who refused even in Hades to make peace with his enemies:

'The other ghosts of the dead halted in turn, and each asked what was near to his heart; but alone of them all the soul of Aias Telamoniades kept apart, still resentful for my victory over him when there was question about the arms of Achilles ...'¹

The three characters we have discussed seem no longer to be characters in the usual sense. They are instead more in the nature of images which have set patterns that we recognize as "archetypal." Their perennial freshness and relevance has continuously inspired playwrights to translate their dilemmas in terms of modern life, finding them always applicable. We have seen with Antigone the pattern of the heroic martyr who is always struggling to obey commands which

spring from an eternal rather than temporal order. Phaedra's pattern is of inner struggle to preserve an essential integrity from the contamination of situational shame. Ajax, too, kills himself in order to survive, but his struggle is against a changing social order that has lost its need to support people like him. His pattern is perhaps the one most relevant to our own time, but all three Heroic suicides have furnished models for the more individualized "Hamartic" suicides we find in contemporary drama.

As patterns of behavior in drama become more idiosyncratic, dramatic situations become less universal—or at least they seem to be less so. The heroic script very often appears these days in places that were formerly considered out of bounds for the old heroes; and we, in consequence, sometimes fail to recognize the heroic dilemma that lies beneath a contemporary guise. Thus, when we question the meaning of suicide in contemporary drama because we doubt the magnitude of characters like Willy Lohman, Joe Keller, or John Proctor, we must understand before anything that their suicides are, for them, the appropriate end to the lives they have envisioned for themselves. Wishing to be recognized by their fellows as men of honor and integrity, they give up their lives to become the identities life makes impossible for them to achieve. In so doing, they achieve heroism in their own eyes. What we as viewers see and experience is the disparity between their illusion of heroism and the reality they are dying to avoid.
We have now considered suicide in drama from many angles: from its real and ideal meaning; its patterns and their uses, both practical and symbolic, to the evolution of its images in the drama. We will now consider its function and meaning in the plays of Arthur Miller.
CHAPTER III

SUICIDE AS UNITY IN ALL MY SONS

All Miller's plays concern suicide as the result of conflict between self and society ...
   --Eric Mottram

Each person decides in early childhood how he will live and how he will die, and that plan, which he carries in his head wherever he goes, is called his script.
   --Eric Berne

In his essay, "The Family in Modern Drama," Arthur Miller professes his belief in the social destiny of man, and for better or for worse states his intention to reflect this public destiny in his dramas. His proclamation was aimed at anodizing the critical ire aroused by his claim to writing modern tragedy. The Opposition--Joseph Wood Krutch, Mary McCarthy, Eleanor Clark and followers--standing firm


on classical conventions, claim Miller's suicides are the result of social pressures and hence are "forced" or non-tragic.

Kenneth Burke and Stanley Edgar Hyman whose insights show greater depth and foresight coincide with Miller's broader, more objective evaluations of tragedy in essays which fortunately see beyond the usual critical pedantry. Burke's brief essay, for example, dismisses Krutch's lament over the death of tragedy with this pointed observation:

Mr. Krutch himself, had he admitted a distinction between the tragic drama and the tragic script, would not have become involved as he does in the task of disproving his own thesis at the very close of his book. For having said that tragedy is dead, and that it is dead because the new scientific "truths" have destroyed the tragic "illusions," he ends: "Some small part of the tragic fallacy may be said indeed to be still valid for us, ... 1

Burke goes on to say that Krutch has demonstrated for us "the basic machinery for a modern tragedy in a book heralding the death of all tragedy," by proving that the tragic spirit, despite man's loss of "mystic participation," still survives. Hyman answers those who insist that Freudian man cannot be considered tragic because neuroses are curable and because the tenets of Christianity hold man to

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be perfectible. For these views Hyman blames the neo-Freudians who do not believe in the existence of evil,¹ and he declares: "It is my belief that the writings of Sigmund Freud once again make a tragic view possible for the modern mind."²

Freud did not believe man to be perfectible; instead, he believed in man's animal nature, and that his tragic struggle to rise above this nature was doomed to inevitable defeat. Thus Hyman sees that the shame culture values, as exemplified in Attic tragedy, which place honor before all other principles, subsequently change to guilt culture values which internalize principles of good and evil and invest man with conscience, when they are re-stated by Freud as "a newer dialectic statement of the old dualism, truly 'beyond the pleasure principle': destroy others or turn the destruction inward."³

Unquestionably Arthur Miller, like Freud, sees in the psychological problems of modern man an ineluctable tragic destiny which for him finds expression through the self-destructive script and its relationships. This last part is exceedingly important because it provides the basic unity of his plays: the interconnection between the individual, his family, and his society is illuminated by the

²Ibid., p. 201.
³Ibid., p. 291.
script (the way the individual sees himself), the counter-
script (the way the family sees him), and the script anti-
thesis (the way he really is or could be if he were better
adjusted). We have all of these views in an Arthur Miller
play, though the audience, for the most part, is the only
group aware of the script antithesis. As auditors we are
asked by Miller to view and analyze an enactment of a Ham-
artic suicide script, the implications of which may have
some relevance to our own lives. For Miller, the suicide of
the hero, because it encompasses a number of diverse mean-
ings and relationships, becomes the very sum of his charac-
ters' relationships with their families, their societies,
and themselves; and for a short while, for his heroes, sui-
cide becomes the unsigned emblem of their nobility.

Insofar as Miller's development as a playwright and
thinker can be discerned from his changing perspective, the
most revealing insights come from observing the gradual
transformation of his protagonists as they undergo, from
play to play, an evolutionary process which leads them from
passionate suicidal heroics to somewhat cynical geriatric
histrionics. The journey, while it may look something like
an uphill climb to glory from one angle, from another may
be construed as a defeat or slackening of the youthful,
idealistic Miller's formerly rigid heroic posture to more
flexible, even pragmatic positions. Whatever the truth, the
fact that the suicidal heroes of his "glory-bound" days have
resigned themselves to life summarizes Miller's direction
Thus far.

That in his earlier years Miller saw life as an uphill struggle to glory explains the cataclysmic endings chosen for his mediocre heroes. The hero's fall, his suicide, become the ultimate failure for psychoanalyzed man and for his society where the fatal sin is failure to adjust. However like Freud, Miller too sees man as adament, reprobate, blind and doomed to imperfection, forever arrested in infantile dependencies on the female, helpless, alienated, and glorious. In other words, worthy of attention and filled with tragic spirit.

It has been said of Miller's heroes that they are coarse, insensitive, inarticulate, and doltish victims who bear no trace of resemblance to heroes of classical tragedy. Yet, within themselves (as Miller sees them) they have something which makes them long for more than mediocrity and which makes them insistent upon retaining their chosen identities against all odds. Inside themselves they live exalted lives in emulation of their heroes though their outer lives are, in reality, the antitheses of heroism. In consequence, they erect barriers of illusion between themselves and the forces that threaten those inner heroic identities. When these forces of reality become overwhelming, suicide is the only remaining weapon against humiliation and exposure. Thus it is most important that we recognize the eminence of the hero's inner vision of himself if we are to have any understanding of what goes on in Miller's
plays, at least in those plays I wish to deal with first.

Of his produced dramatic works, only two have been box office failures, The Man Who Had All the Luck (1944) and The Creation of the World and Other Business (1972). Between these millstones, Miller has written dramas of remarkable power which have earned his well deserved international acclaim. The plays of his most productive period, All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, A View From the Bridge and A Memory of Two Mondays, are the focus of the discussion that follows; these plays in particular are the dramas in which the Hamartic script figures so importantly. The Misfits (a cinema-novel), After the Fall, Incident At Vichy, and The Price comprise the final chapter and, as we shall see, are somewhat different from the other dramas.

I once called the first group of plays (except for All My Sons) the Heroic group, but a more appropriate name for these modern disaster epics would be "Hamartic," which I take to mean pseudo-heroic in the sense of being an imagined identification by the individual with some real, mythical, or fictitious heroic figure whose life seems to correspond with his own. Without undue tax upon the reader's imagination, the first group of Miller's plays can be looked upon as undiluted portrayals of Hamartic scripts: plots, characters, thought, and dialogue are hamartic imitations.

1The Creation lasted all of two weeks on Broadway, outdoing The Man Who Had All the Luck, which lasted three days.
of tragic pathos. Like the pattern of the true tragic hero's, acting the pattern of the Hamartic hero's action is also the pattern of the suicide crisis and the natural pattern of onset, course, and outcome of an illness.¹ Amazingly, the tragic superstructure is strikingly similar to Henn's concentric circles of tragedy, as one other critic has noticed. Compare Nelson's description of the structure of *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* with Henn's description in Chapter II. Says Nelson:

> Both plays involve the interaction of the inner circle of the family with the outer circle of society. However, in *Death of a Salesman* the action is rooted more concretely in the familial arena; man's social responsibility is an important motif, but it is subordinated to the more dominant theme of a father's conflict with his son.²

Henn's circles, it may be recalled, delineate the influence of the various spheres upon the hero's destiny with the hero initially permitted to move freely between the Present Action and the Immediate Past until forced to confront an immutable Determining Past which is his destiny. The family represents, of course, in both cases, the Determining Past—the past that cannot be eradicated or modified except by the veil of lies which must be ultimately swept aside. The emphasis by Nelson on the father-son conflict brings to mind further similarities between Miller's plays and

¹This was called to my attention by Steiner, p. 23. Here he compares the prologue, climax and catastrophe of tragedy to the course of an illness.

classical tragedies, most of which serve to underline the
preeminence of family relationships in tragedy, both ancient
and modern.

To paraphrase Claude M. Steiner, from Aristotle to
Transactional Analysis, the hamartia-genic family has been
recognized for its profound influence on self-destructive
behavior,\(^1\) particularly in the context of the Hamartic sui-
cide script as depicted in the dramas of Arthur Miller. In
this regard, Freedman's suggestion that the four plays, \textit{All}
\textit{My Sons}, \textit{Death of a Salesman}, \textit{After the Fall} and \textit{The Price},
be treated as "a kind of Galsworthian family tetrology," or
an "integrated saga"\(^2\) of family change, extends the family
theme over a broader range but leaves out other plays that
are so closely linked to the predominating focus of all of
Miller's work: the problem of responsibility. To say that
this problem is an "important motif" is to disregard the
obvious connections between each of Miller's plays beginning
with \textit{The Man Who Had All the Luck}. The whole father-son
issue is encapsulized within this question of responsibility;
a question, by the way, that pervades the scientific world
as well as the literary one and should not be dismissed as

\(^1\)Steiner's statement reads: "The evidence is that
from Sophocles to Erikson scripts have been recognized for
their profound relevance to human behavior." \textit{In Games Alco-
holics Play}, p. 66.

\(^2\)Morris Freedman, "The Jewishness of Arthur Miller:
His Family Epic," in \textit{American Drama in Social Context (Car-
bondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University
Press, 1971)}, p. 43.
Miller's idiosyncracy. In a sense, by applying psycho-social insights to life, he is simply testing the moral validity of scientific doctrine.

For better comprehension of Miller's work as a whole, the plays must be looked upon in relationship to the developing consciousness of the central protagonist who becomes the younger of the dual protagonists. The son's learning experience--what it is like to grow up in this kind of family with these kinds of values--is what we get from a Miller play. And actually, in the plays cited above, there are two scripts, each one inevitably pitted against the other--one played in the heart of the family, the other in society. And the central problem of responsibility is explored through all the years of a man's life in as many ways as possible, in as many environments as are possible for this particular playwright to envision.

Interestingly, Miller's youthful protagonists, David Frieber, Chris Keller, Biff Loman, and John Proctor, all approximate Miller's own youth, just as his aging protagonists of the later plays, Quentin, Von Berg, Gay Langland, Victor and Walter, approximate his middle years. It is then perhaps not too surprising to find that if there is any true "center of consciousness" in his plays, it resides in the younger characters who, unlike the older ones do change in the course of the play's action. Whether or not the process of experience and change is cumulative from play to play remains to be seen.
Whether present or not present, the family has a central position in the consciousness of every Miller protagonist. Where there is not the physical presence of family in the play (as in *A Memory of Two Mondays* or *Incident At Vichy*), the influence of family is a vital motive force within the protagonist; indeed it is so powerful in every play that it cannot be dismissed. With few exceptions, all Miller protagonists are seen in terms of their roles as fathers, sons, wives, mothers, sisters or brothers before anything else.\(^1\) In only one play does he present an orphan—*The Man Who Had All the Luck*, and that play, as we know, was a failure. Lest it be believed that this characteristic of Miller's plays is of negligible importance, we have only to look at the plays of Beckett or Genet for clarification. Miller has not come anywhere near their sense of total estrangement because he always writes in terms of the family.

Why his emphasis on the family is so important is explained in several ways. From the dramatic viewpoint even Aristotle believed the most powerful tragedies were those that involved blood relationships, particularly when one family member causes the death of another family member. Robert W. Corrigan remarks that Miller's best writing issues from the context of family conflict where Miller

\(^1\)Actually, Bert in *A Memory of Two Mondays* is the only one whose family role is not emphasized because the play is a record of his experience in the world outside the family.
seems most comfortable with his material,¹ and social psychiatrists, Steiner and Berne, place family influence far ahead of cultural influences. In fact, Steiner states explicitly that "culture has no effect on an individual's decisions about his life course other than as it is transmitted specifically by one of the parents or parent surrogates."² Most suicidologists agree that suicides almost always have a history of suicide or tragic "death trends" in their families.³ All of which clarifies in reality the observations of dramatists through the ages: the incalculable influence of the past upon the present goes far beyond the immediate past and the immediate parents to an ancestral past from which images come that still exist to haunt us all. Particularly vital to our understanding is the recognition that parental power cannot be underestimated nor underplayed, especially in tragic drama where time and again parental injunction plays such a great part in the hero's action.⁴


²Steiner, Games Alcohols Play, p. 28.


⁴This seems to be true of all the Greek tragedies, though the parents may not be the actual enjoiners since they are frequently part of the tragic action. Teiresius and the Delphic Oracle may act the role.
When it comes to the transmigration and individualization of scripts, we would do well to look for the basic plot lines in the Greek tragedies discussed previously. The script hero, as does any good casting director, selects his cast on the basis of their dramatic potential in his script. Since the script is a set theatrical piece, it calls for stock characters patterned along the lines of the originals—the Hero-Victim, the Rescuer, and the Persecutor—the basic archetypes which Karpman has identified as the essential triad of the tragic script.¹ These roles, as we shall see, are interchangeable and are supported by a cast of secondary roles (also interchangeable) which I will call the Soothsayer, the Messenger, and the Innocent Victim. The roles are the tragic equivalents of Steiner's Therapist, Connection, and Patsy characters. In tragedy the first two are filled respectively by Teiresius and by the Messenger in old Tragedies, and by whoever bears the author's message in modern tragedies. The Innocent Victim or Patsy role might be someone like Creon's wife, Eurydice, or Linda Loman, who (if I may conjecture in the case of Eurydice) unknowingly, help the tragedy along by encouraging the hero's illusions about himself and the ways of the world. One has the feeling, for example, that the whole disaster could have

¹Stephen B. Karpman, "Script Drama Analysis," Transactional Analysis Bulletin, VII, 26 (1968), 39-43. Karpman says there are only three essential roles in tragedy; these are illustrated as a triad.

²See Games Alcoholics Play, pp. 131-138.
been averted if Creon's wife had stirred up a fuss about having her future daughter-in-law entombed in a cave--but then there would have been no tragedy, and the problem is that she did not rebel against her husband's tyranny but let it take its dreadful course. Most supporting roles can be filled by relatives, friends, strangers, oracles, seers, psychiatrists, dope peddlars, or even friendly family priests.¹

The pattern of the self-destructive script closely parallels the so-called "tragic rhythm" with the hamartic protagonist striving for a time to adopt the rhythms of his society as his own (in the counterscript stage of the script), but failing at the turning point (when the Rescuer becomes either the Persecutor or the Innocent Victim) and reverting back to the script (tragic reversal) and its final tragic episode² during which the Hero-Victim tries to assert his true identity (recognition) by meeting his destiny (climax and catastrophe).

The counterscript stage is of particular interest in Miller's plays because it solves so many problems about his youthful characters. Obviously we cannot make up our minds about Chris or Biff having really found themselves because

¹i.e., Reilly in The Cocktail Party, Sportin' Life in Porgy and Bess, and Friar Lawrence in Romeo and Juliet.

²Steiner alerted me to the fact that the tragic end is usually specific as to time, place, and method. (Willy, for example, does not take gas, as he had planned earlier but dies in an auto crash, "with his boots on" so to speak.)
at the end of *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* the sons are both in the counterscript stage of Hamartic scripts. They are making temporary adjustments to the social order, each in a different way, as we shall see; but their adjustments are merely temporary. Steiner calls attention to the "unreal quality" of the counterscript, but sees it as an essential episode in both life and stage scripts, much like a period of remission in a fatal illness. He characterizes this stage by its tension, a tension highly visible in Miller's younger men.¹ And it is this tension which differentiates the counterscript behavior of the Hamartic hero from the script antithesis, which is the reverse of suicidal behavior. The latter, a phenomenon which does not occur in Miller's plays until *After the Fall*, is also characteristic of the later plays of other tragic writers.

To clarify some similarities between the script hero's experience and the tragic hero's development, it is useful to look at the several phases of tragedy proposed by Northrup Frye, who describes the tragic hero's experience as an evolutionary process which goes "from innocence to experience" to irony, through hybris and hamartia.²

For the script hero, Berne identifies three periods of development, each beginning when the script needs

¹Games Alcoholics Play, p. 51.

updating or rewriting to correspond more directly with the Hamartic hero's concept of himself and his reality. Here again script theory parallels the real with the ideal, and the individual who chooses a tragic life course lives out his plan in predictable stages very similar to those of the tragic hero. Berne's script stages, beginning with a magical people period in early childhood, an anthropomorphic period later on, and finally, a longer period during which there is a gradual approximation of reality,¹ are very close to Frye's stages of innocence and romance, tragic victory and fall, and irony. In fact, if we were to combine Berne's and Frye's descriptions, in all probability we would achieve something approximating an accurate description of Miller's dramatic progression.

One very good reason for Arthur Miller's success as a playwright is his ability to convey the script hero's conception of himself and his role. This is especially true, I believe, in his earlier plays where he is trying so hard to understand what goes on in the head of an older man while he is seeing the world through the eyes of a younger man. As we examine the plays more closely, it will be interesting to notice the ways in which he tries, if he is able, to indicate the shifting point of view through the

¹Berne describes the characteristics of the respective periods as 1) a time when all other human beings look like giants or animals; 2) a time when animals appear to have human characteristics; 3) a long period during which other human beings begin to respond in predictable ways to stimuli. In *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*, pp. 39-40.
action of one of the protagonists. The process of enlightenment in *All My Sons*, for example, occurs through Chris, who, though he is very slow to see the truth, is much faster than his father. The blind spots in the play, the forced unfolding of revelations can actually be explained as the blind spots in the minds of both protagonists. Of course, Miller's technique in *Death of a Salesman* is a true masterpiece of acting out the stream of consciousness of the older protagonist and talking out the consciousness of the younger one. Never again in a Miller play is there so much penetration into the mind of a character. Later plays, in fact, concentrate much more on talking things out rather than thinking or acting them out, a phenomenon which makes them seem much more intellectual than they really are. This is true even of *After the Fall*, Miller's "confessional" drama.

Particularly important to the Hamartic hero and to our understanding of him is the part he himself plays in his own fate. While the Hamartic individual may base his role on any real, fictitious, or mythical figure with whom he perceives some meaningful identity or relationship (i.e., Willy's identification with Dave Singleman is based on the fact that they are both salesmen) the relationship is directed by similarities which may not necessarily exist except in the character's mind (i.e., Willy has not been a success as a salesman). The hero always makes a conscious effort to adapt himself to his idol's behavior as far as it
is possible for him to do so. Here again, popular fads inspired by certain charismatic celebrities can be very instructive. However, in trying to analyze script behavior, it is most important to discover the acting hero's conception of the role, which Steiner warns, may be much different than the popular version. If we are able to develop some understanding of how the archetype has been adapted for a particular character or person, we can find a useful approach toward understanding his script.

Informing Miller's plays from *The Man Who Had All the Luck* to *The Price* by way of *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *A View From the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays*, we have an almost complete cycle of the Hamartic-suicide script with counterscript behavior by the youthful protagonists of the first three plays. While script behavior is always true of the elder protagonists, it becomes true of the younger ones in *The Crucible* and *Incident at Vichy*--the later play being a mature counterscript of *The Crucible*--heroism after the Fall. The Hamartic-suicide script, drawing everything together in its wake--the individual, his family, and his society--unites and informs the whole of Miller's work. The plays themselves will serve as illustrations.

For his first Broadway production Arthur Miller used

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1 Steiner, *ibid.*, p. 40.

2 Except Gregory Solomon in *The Price*. One has the feeling though that he had "been there and back"!
a story he had adapted from a real suicide case. The case was a young man, prosperous and happily married, who became so paranoid about his success that he finally took his own life. For some reason or other, perhaps a commercial reason, Miller dropped the suicide ending in favor of an absurdly contrived exorcism, one which was neither funny nor successful. In addition to that error, the play's other flaws seemed so overwhelming that he was never in later years able to go back and re-work it. Years later he perceived the play's lack of unity as its central problem:

... however I tried I could not make the drama continuous 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.¹

Not recognizing the suicide script and, in consequence, failing to provide an appropriate script antithesis is the real reason why Miller could not reach "the secret drama" his instinct told him was present beneath the rambling surface of The Man Who Had All the Luck. His central character, David Frieber, the only one of Miller's characters actively and consciously seeking his identity, is definitely a script character who, though he purports to be in a quest to "discover what exact part a man played in his own fate"² is really undergoing the same conundrum that haunts Miller's other characters. For although the

²Ibid., p. 15.
playwright honestly believes at this period that he is freely finding certain unchangeable truths to exist in the universe ("certain things a man cannot walk away from"), he is, in reality, stating only the truths that Arthur Miller cannot walk away from. His characters, therefore, are doomed by their creator from the beginning of their quests, which by the way they are also doomed to undertake. Their answers at this stage of Miller's career are also doomed to a certain optimism characteristic of the highly moralistic bent of this particular writer. The quest, even here, is for responsibility, not identity and the alternatives to individual responsibility are reduced to two: acceptance of the "jellyfish" philosophy or predestined damnation. The blatant absence of anything approximating social welfare alternatives directly contradict the old accusations that Miller was "soft on communism." Indeed, the dearth of any hint of radical politics or political "mongrelism" in Miller's writing is rather startling. For every utterance he has ever written shows him to be a devout capitalist up to this very day. In fact, viewed from the vantage point of thirty years, the cartoon characters of The Man Who Had All the Luck seem to be testing New Deal politics against Emersonian self-reliance and arriving at an answer that adds up to "do-it-yourself or die."

In this trite, disunified little drama, Miller's worst tendencies are confirmed and exaggerated. For the most part the characters are stiff, stuffy, and flatly drawn
to mouth the author's didactic platitudes. The only reason for its inclusion here is its contrast to the suicide plays, and the fact that the protagonist, David Frieber, is a script character whose script is not played out.

As an almost picaresque, Peers Plowman character, David, an orphan, is questing for his identity. Adventitiously he becomes very successful; hence, guiltridden because he cannot discern that he himself is the source of his good fortune. He believes, very simply, that he is a clay pigeon set up by fate to be shot down at her whim.\(^1\) The success he attains through his own perseverance only serves to confuse him to the point of suicide which, to the great disappointment of disenchanted auditors, he does not commit—one further reason for the play's short journey to obscurity. For all intents and purposes, a well-deserved suicide would have transformed and unified the entire play and handled the fact that the outcome of suicidal behavior is usually suicide. However, evidently Miller had no inkling of the enormous urge toward completion behind the suicide pattern. For although he had prepared the protagonist's suicide in a psychologically valid manner (almost clinically so), he thwarted the well-prepared action with an incredible counteraction—the sacrifice of several dozen ranch mink. Though psychologists say that the suicide pattern can be interrupted by an antithetical action, the mink

\(^1\)Or as they said in the forties: "When his number was up."
sacrifice used in this case was a rather sad substitute for the hard tissue sacrifice demanded by David's script. His demons demand blood but get mink instead.

Throughout the play Miller seems to have been feeling his way along, sometimes doing the right thing almost intuitively, but at other times doing exactly the opposite of what he should have done. First of all, the play is badly burdened by too many disconnected events and characters who have little part in the main action and who appear and disappear without reason. Beneath it all there is the script drama and it is played out in a variety of ways by four sets of parent-child relationships, all of them unfortunate, but only one of them fatal--and no one cares about that one. The self-propelling momentum of the suicide script, however, is powerful enough to send the audience in a direction opposite to what the play's happy ending does and the overall effect is similar to a sharp turn in a speeding vehicle--the car going off in one direction and the passengers in another.

Briefly, the plot follows the good fortune of an orphaned small town youth whose friends are all failures and whose success separates him from the only identity he has ever known--failure. In consequence he creates an imaginary guilt situation and feeds his guilt at every opportunity. In script terms, he actually rewards himself every time he imagines failure or suffers pangs of guilt. As time goes on and he becomes more successful, he grows
progressively more suicidal, inventing tales of impending poverty and doom. Seeking a way to pay for his luck, he actually begins to pay lip service to failure. By the end of the second act, David has grown prosperous, neurotic, and superstitious. He marries his childhood sweetheart, and becomes a local hero. In a town where there seems to be no luck at all, he is known as "the man who has all the luck," a title which makes him very lonely and extremely frightened. For apparently David has been told that "you pay for what you get in this world," but just how payment is made remains a terrifying mystery.

As success and prosperity threaten to remove him forever from the company of his doleful cronies, he begins to invent a tragic identity for himself. Feeling that he has been singled out for special identity and special treatment, he decides that his anxiously awaited child will be born dead and that this will pacify the awful powers of darkness (whoever they may be). After Hester gives birth to a perfectly sound infant, he begins his personal crisis by playing games with the "Evil Eye." However, the demons refuse to be pacified and David's success continues until he is ready to take his own life.

It is interesting that in his flirtation with death, though he denies it, David is merely trying to confirm his worthiness for success. Actually he plays his role to the hilt by castigating himself every time his so-called luck improves. After being harangued with the morbid philosophies
of his cronies, David's viewpoint can hardly be healthy. He is warned by Shory, a bitter, cynical cripple that:

... a man is a jellyfish laying on the beach. A wave comes along and pulls him back into the sea, and he floats a while on a million currents he can't feel, and he's back on the beach again never knowing why.1

His friend and admirer, J.B. Feller, an arrested alcoholic who fears divine retribution for his occasional lapses and blames "luck" for his weakness, gives David the benefit of his experience in somewhat milder, but no less depressing terms:

... When a man is young everything seems possible. But you make a mistake, and you never know it, but all the time it's growing still and quiet until it winds around to meet you like a long snake, and pulls you down. And you somehow never really know why.2

David rejects the dismal philosophies of both Shory and J.B. for an equally dismal philosophy of his own. He decides that "people get what they deserve. ... You end up with what you deserve inside,"3 an ominous observation which should have provided some clue to David's view of himself, but doesn't. Actually, David believes what a satanic old man (who happens to be his future father-in-law) tells him about himself. The old man strongly objects to his daughter's marital choice and when asked why answers mysteriously: "Nobody but me knows what you are." Naively


2 Ibid., p. 528.

3 Ibid.
David asks, "What am I?" and is treated to the following keen insight:

You're a lost soul, you're a lost man. The first time I looked in your eyes I saw it. Other boys knew when it was time to play and time to go home, time for work and time for church. You don't know the nights I've seen you sitting on the river ice fishing through a hole—alone, alone like an old man with a boy's face.¹

Apparently this description is the one that strikes the most responsive chord in David's brain because, contrary to reason, he begins to feel like a "lost soul." Despite continued good fortune and prosperity, David aligns himself with the most destructive of the three pseudo-parental injunctions he receives; he literally adopts the image suggested to him by the Ogre. Though his manifested agitation and aversion to the old man are never explained (he screams, "I don't want to touch him!"), the old monster's evil effect upon him becomes evident as the play moves on. But while old Andrew's witchery seems to do the most damage to David's self-concept, there appears to be more to David's paranoia than simple witchery.² Harold Clurman suggests that beneath it all lies the old American Puritan conscience which causes men to "pay and pay--for everything."³ However,

¹Ibid., p. 499.

²See Steiner, chapters III and IV. He explains that the child may perceive his parents as the "household parallel to witches and ogres" and this may color his view of them forever. An individual may have a witch or "pseudo-parent" for his script and a real parent for his counter-script and his perception of the parent will vary accordingly.

the specter of Oedipal guilt is too close to avoid the suspicion that Miller was toying with something in that vein. Since David does marry one of Miller's mother-wife types and since he is peripherally involved in his wife's father's death, there is enough evidence to send us in either direction; but again, the playwright was not at this time coming to grips with what he really wanted to say, so confusion is rampant throughout.

During most of the first act David is more of an onlooker than a participant. He hovers around acting as though he were waiting for his fortune to be told so that he can start living it. His cronies pass through the service station tendering free advice to the orphaned youth, and finally there is a confrontation with old Andrew who warns David that he must never see Hester again. However, Providence disguised as Dan Dibble, eccentric millionaire, pops up in a fancy new Marmon and when the old man is defiantly pushing his own disabled vehicle home because he refuses to accept David's help, Dibble accidentally kills him--happily with the new Marmon. As Fate would have it, the Marmon needs repair and David's service station is near at hand.

Though by this time coincidence has mounted to the point of ludicrousness, one final wonder remains--for this act at least. When David is unable to fix the Marmon, there comes a stranger and performs a miracle while David sleeps. Elves? No, but close to it--a Germanic young man
named Gus Eberson, who later becomes David's best friend. When the burden of prosperity becomes too overwhelming for David, it is to Gus that he bequeaths his business. In fact, David's relationship with Gus prefigures the ambivalent sibling relationships of Miller's forthcoming plays, as do the father-son relationships of Patterson and Amos Beeves, J.B. Feller and his new-born son, David and his son, and Hester and her ogre father. Old Andrew, of course, dies in the first act, but the others go through their paces in the second act--which incidentally has little to do with anything in the third act.

The Beeves father-son duo most closely adheres to a script relationship with the elder Beeves destroying his son's life by singlemindedly mistraining him to be a baseball star. When it becomes obvious that his hopes are in vain, the boy--just attaining young adulthood--is shattered, lost, left without identity.

The second act could be described as David's counter-script period--the portion of the script during which the hero strives to conform to social norms and life-saving, death avoidance behavior. David seems to be accepting his successful marriage and financial prosperity with calm

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1 In the unpublished stage version David becomes the son of Pat Beeves and neglected in favor of his athletically talented brother. HufTel believes the Pat-Amos relationship is the "secret drama" Miller was trying to write, but the published version used here contradicts her. See Sheila HufTel, The Burning Glass (New York: The Citadel Press, 1965), p. 79.
equilibrium, but this state is conditional. It is based upon his and Hester's childlessness, which David believes is the price of his success. The onset of his crisis comes when Hester announces their impending parenthood. From then on there is mounting tension: David feels the time of reckoning is upon him and prepares himself for the birth of a dead child—the wages of success. When, to his great confusion, Hester gives birth to a healthy infant, he begins to pursue his tragic script with a vengeance.

Having been told by his Persecutor-father-in-law that he was destined to be a lost man, David takes matters in hand and sets out to lose. He turns his business over to Gus, allows a mysterious mink rancher (the Connection) to talk him into buying some very expensive mink, and settles down to await victimization. To his apparent horror, the mink ranch begins to show a profit. By this time David is nearly mad with fright and he goes around shouting: "We're all the same, all of us the same; nobody escapes!" When his wife suggests that there might be some differences, that he might have exceptional business ability, he shouts: "I'm no different from anybody else, I never wanted to be!"

Quickly tiring of David's mania, Hester decides to be his Rescuer and contrives a masterpiece of makeshift exorcism (with appropriate thunder and lightning). Instructing her husband, "I want you to know once and for all that it was you who did it," she forces him to feed a shipload of diseased fish to his mink—providing him with a rather
farfetched script antithesis.

The ending of what Nelson calls this "fabulistic" drama comes about as David kills his mink and his witches all in one fell swoop. Miller's stage directions give some hint of its melodramatic quality:

Staring straight ahead he slowly seems to relax, then an enormous sigh comes out of him. He squints and blinks a little as though coming alive after a long sleep. And then he turns and looks at Hester...

David (With tremendous and quiet astonishment): We got ... nothing! I mean ... it's all ... gone! Can you feel it?2

As difficult as it is to extract any meaning at all from this tangle, at least one reaction is clear—we do not "feel it." What is more, since David never discovers the reason for his success, his problem is never solved and the day of reckoning is merely postponed. Like the boy who had to burn the house down every time he wanted roast pork, David will have to find an innocuous sacrifice every time the ogres inside him start acting up. Though psychologically speaking script demands can be pacified for a time through what Menninger calls "peace offerings,"3 the truce is always a temporary one. Unless a satisfactory, appropriate script antithesis is found, the script hero will return to his prescribed behavior.

1Nelson, p. 52.

2The Man Who Had All the Luck, III, p. 552.

3Menninger, Man Against Himself, p. 289. Menninger calls this "offering of a part for the whole," an investment, reminding us that it "is as well known in American politics and racketeering as in the old Jewish religious rituals."
Happily Miller learned a great deal from the mistakes he had made with *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, for three years later, on January 29, 1947, *All My Sons* began its long successful run. Despite its Scribian attributes, it still remains an interesting and relevant play. This time Miller added a suicide to a story he had heard about a daughter who turned her father in to the police for selling damaged goods to the Army. He changed the daughter into two sons, kept the small town setting, added the suicide, and came up with a successful play.

As he portrays them, the Keller family becomes an almost textbook study of a hamartia-genic family with Joe Keller and his sons making impressive contenders for the Hamartic hero title. Actually, the script calls for very simple roles: Victim-Hero, Persecutor, and Rescuer, supported by the Patsy or Innocent Victim. Their mythical roles are, in the words of one character, the Holy Family—the Father, Son, Mother and Holy Ghost (Larry). The living vie for the Victim-Hero position alternating the Persecutor role with Ann, a kind of Judas who tries to play the Rescuer but ends up being made the Patsy.

The plot calls for Chris to be the unwitting instrument of his father's suicide and for Joe to be the unsuspecting killer of his dead son, Larry. In a compelling and all-encompassing way, the influences of the past are brought to bear upon the family so that they play their destined roles—destined, that is, by the father's evil action in the
past. As an added twist, the influences of the past have caused these men to lay down rigid conditions under which they may or may not permit themselves to live. Unlike scripts that say "Survival Under Any Circumstances," their scripts read: "All or Nothing." Joe Keller, for example, may not live without the unqualified love and respect of his sons. As long as he can convince himself that he has these, he can continue. As does Lear's script, Joe's script demands complete adherence to the code which says, "I'm his father and he's my son and if there's something bigger than that, I'll put a bullet in my head!" He stakes his life on this proposition; thus it is by the same proposition that he commits suicide.

His sons, on the other hand, seeing something more important than their immediate father-son relationship, forsake their father's code for wider relationships. Chris particularly has expanded his idea of fatherhood to include his boys, his country and his universe, and his dead brother obviously shared Chris's extended consciousness enough to sacrifice his life to prove its veracity. Because both father and sons behave with the equal emotional rigidity, it is their mutual fate to become opponents. It is also their fate to be set in conflict with one another because of the cultural changes which have taken place during their lifetimes.

Once again I must emphasize here that the origins of script behavior are familial rather than cultural--a
characteristic which encourages problems for offspring who grow up in a culture which differs from that of their parents. Since the behavioral injunctions of the parents must be adapted to alien cultural patterns, not uncommonly are they a source of friction with the outside world. Steiner suggests the example of an individual whose mythical hero, Al Capone, can be successfully adapted to the home situation but may be exceedingly troublesome in a broader social context.¹ And, as we shall see, most of the roles in Miller's family dramas do have two adaptations—one for the private family situation and one for the social situation. Thus, for the Kellers also, there are two levels or arenas of the play, the one inside and the other outside the boundary of poplar trees fencing the Kellers in and the world out. The Keller script, though adapted to the home, is maladapted to the world. What Miller ultimately says in this drama is that ghetto mentality is suicidal. Characteristically he tries to illustrate his reasoning with examples at the grass roots level—fathers and sons.

With its structure firmly implanted in the suicide-crisis pattern, All My Sons is a striking contrast to the meandering chaos of its predecessor. The structural discipline, undertaken in the interest of achieving a "maximum degree of consciousness" from the audience, Miller credits

¹See Steiner's discussion, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 41. "Adaptiveness" is one of the qualities of the role model chosen for imitation. Some models or "mythical heroes" have very limited adaptiveness, others allow great complexity and broader range.
to the influence of Ibsen. However, that is where the influence stops. *All My Sons* is not an Ibsenite play. Miller can never be as impartial to both sides of a question as was Ibsen; he is, at this stage of his career, still heavily in favor of the struggle that requires heroism, still rigid when it comes to moral decisions. It is still a long descent from glory mountain to endless plain.

Joe Keller's suicide at the end of *All My Sons* presents many problems, none of which are answered by the critical lambastings Miller has received. When critics say Keller's suicide is forced, they are right; but they are speaking in terms of dramatic credibility and are attacking what they consider the unpreparedness of this action. On that basis their reasoning is wrong. Both psychologically and dramatically, Joe's suicide is logical—if suicide can be said to be logical—according to the inverse logic of his suicidal script.

First of all, let us analyze Joe's script. At the beginning of the play he is, so to speak, "between acts." He cannot move and has not moved since his son Larry's death—none of the Kellers have moved except Chris, whose movement has been surreptitious. He has written to his dead brother's fiancee inviting her to visit the Kellers. Through this action he brings the outer world into the enclosed circle of the family, which has hitherto been safe.

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Thus the onset or precipitating event is brought about by Chris, whose mythical role model is Christ while his generic role in the drama begins as Victim and ends as Persecutor.

During the drama each character identifies himself by some characteristic which describes his self-image. Each role has two adaptations, one social and the other familial. Joe's role on the outside is Wise Guy. It is the Wise Guy's pattern to play dumb, so Joe constantly remarks upon his own stupidity. His usual expression is incredulity and he asks a great many questions. Joe's familial role of Good Father requires that he sacrifice everything for his sons and that he do no wrong. Though at the beginning he appears to have the Persecutor role, he ends up as the Victim because his script requires that he sacrifice for his children.

Kate's role is a particularly demanding one. She must appear to be Persecutor while really playing Rescuer. Her social role is Soothsayer or Cassandra (the female counterpart of Teiresius) while her familial role is more like Clytemnestra or Crazy Mother. Both roles are witchy, and both call for some peculiar behavior on her part, behavior that Miller classifies as "intuitive." Her characteristic expressions are hysteria and prophecy. Her favorite phrase is "Be smart!" It is her job to keep the family script going by preventing the truth from being told. Thus she must constantly create wild, noisy distractions to prevent her family from obeying her "Be smart" injunction.
When she orders people to be smart, she really means the opposite.

In *All My Sons*, Kate Keller is an outstanding example of the mother who plays both Witch Mother and real mother roles. It is interesting to notice the contrasting views of Kate before and after she does her psychic act. Just as Willy Loman's refrigerator light signals our entrance into his dream world, Kate's aspirins serve as a clue to the audience that her intuition is ready to start functioning. The real life counterpart of Kate's psychic act is her "know-it-all" pose. From the first the audience is told that Kate has a secret which will be divulged at the proper time, and when the time is ripe she quite innocently dispenses the "fatal slip" which seals Joe's fate—during George's visit she brags that Joe has not been sick in the past fifteen years thereby divulging the fact that he was hiding at home the day the cracked cylinder heads were shipped out of the factory. Inadvertently, therefore, in trying to rescue Joe from his foul deed, she becomes his unintentioned Persecutor.

Joe's social role with its "I don't know nuthin'" slogan is a poor cover-up for his script role. Nevertheless, his dumb act is a perfect complement for Kate's smart act. The following exchange which takes place when they learn that George is on his way to speak to Ann is a fine example of their team work: Kate cautions Joe, "Be smart now, Joe, the boy is coming. Be smart." Joe answers
irritably, "Once and for all, did you hear what I said? I said I'm sure!" But Kate remains unconvinced and can only answer "All right, Joe ... Just ... be smart."

For Kate, of course, being smart means playing dumb, at least where Joe is concerned. But her hypnotic powers of persuasion--her emotional blackmail--are not limited to Joe alone; she uses her Witch tactics on Chris, as we saw, and she tries to use them on Ann when she tells her that she is destined to lead a lonely life unless, by some great stroke of fortune, Larry appears. Using her most powerful witch vocabulary, she promises Ann: "The night he [Chris] gets into your bed, his heart will dry up. Because he knows and you know. To his dying day he'll wait for his brother!"

Initially, the social and familial levels of the play are held together by the changing perception of the Hamartic hero--Chris in this case. We first see his parents through his eyes as ordinary home folk, a bit irritating or eccentric, but lovable and generally well-meaning. But this is their social "counterscript" side. From the more ominous, "script" point of view, Chris sees his parents as Witch Mother and Ogre with himself as the tragic sacrificial Good Son who is forced to give up everything he wants to secure his parents' well-being. (Chris seems to be trying to substitute for Larry also.) The play opens with Chris at the point of deep restlessness when his script demands action. He decides then to end the inertia long imposed by his parents, but he has no idea of the problems he is to
stir up along the way. And what he uncovers is too difficult for anyone, let alone a moralist of Chris's stern convictions, to bear.

One of the interesting characteristics of the hamarttic adult is that the grown-up persists in seeing his parents as he perceived them in early childhood—as witches and ogres or animals perhaps. Thus his perception is so distorted that he perceives his own adult world through the vision of the child he once was and his behavior can be said to be "fixated" at one particular stage of development as far as his familial relationships are concerned. The fixated state need not, however, apply to all of his relationships; only those involved in his script life are seen from this infantile point of view. Thus Transactional Analysis recognizes two sets of parents—a real set and a script set. The Witch Mother and the Ogre are, most naturally, the fairy tale parents of the script. The other set, the "real" parents, are the parents of the counterscript who try to influence their offspring to behave according to social and cultural norms which the parents believe worthwhile.

In All My Sons, the initial suicidal script has been enacted by Larry, but the script calls for other roles—all of which are played by Ann. By coming to visit the Keller's as Chris's Rescuer, Ann becomes her own father's Persecutor after she is made to be a Patsy or Innocent Victim by Kate, who as the Crazy Mother, refuses to allow Ann to rescue
Chris from his safe "Good Son" counterscript role because she intuitively knows his real script role is deadly.

Chris's social role, appropriately, is the Nice Guy; he is playing it when he first appears on the stage to force his father's aid in convincing Kate to accept his brother's death so that he can marry Ann. A great deal of important information is dispensed in the exchange between father and son. The first sign to be noticed is Chris's efforts to divert Joe from the social role he has been playing for the neighbors. In the process we also get some information about Kate's supernatural connections so that when she appears the stage has been set for her Cassandra act. Meanwhile, Chris's goal is to get beneath Joe's social mask to his Good Father image. However, in trying to approach his father, Chris displays some of his own real script signs—he insists that they stop being dishonest about his brother's death, and he accuses Joe of playing dumb when Joe pretends unconcern about his intention to marry Ann:

Chris: Sometimes you infuriate me, you know that? Isn't it your business, too, if I tell this to Mother and she throws a fit about it? You have such a talent for ignoring things.

Keller: I ignore what I gotta ignore.

Properly infuriated by this time, Chris drops his own act and assumes his Victim role:

Chris: I don't know why it is, but every time I reach out for something I want, I have to pull back because other people will suffer. My whole bloody life, time after time after time.
Keller: You're a considerate fella, there's nothing wrong in that.

Chris: To hell with that.

To fit the "considerate fella" classification, Chris must sacrifice everything he personally desires for himself and resume his Good Son role. He cannot, for example, marry his brother's girl, nor can he leave home to get out of the business his father has developed for him. In both his public and private roles he is destined to lose because they both require that he learn the truth about his father and that he act upon that truth. In the process of learning, he must also destroy the Good Son role or turn it into a suicide role as his brother did. What he does, of course, is push his father to the point of suicide by exposing him.

When the action of All My Sons is taken from Chris's point of view we have a play which suddenly becomes more believable and more meaningful as well. The climax of All My Sons must be seen as the turning point in Chris's Hamartic script with his father's suicide being the confirmation of that script. The play is about Chris's tragic struggle to escape his sacrificial role; he is tired of playing the Good Son (one could speculate about his desire to play the Good Father role on a universal scale). He initiates an action which he believes will lead to the termination of his familial role: he invites Ann to visit with the idea of marrying her. Paradoxically, he is, of course, following the dictates of his self-destructive script by stirring up
the situation he predicts at the beginning: by wanting something for himself he is making other people suffer. Significantly, Chris fails to awaken his father's sense of responsibility, for it is actually Larry, the Ghost Son, who gets through to Joe.

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Any number of important nuances are lost if we fail to consider this play from Chris's point of view. One of the most important is the inner workings of the script--
"family dynamics" we might call it.

Larry's suicide establishes the family immediately as Hamartia-genic; their image in the neighborhood further substantiates this definition. Their neighbor, Sue, refers to the Kellers as "the Holy family," whom she, not coincidentally, detests for making her "feel like a bum." When Ann innocently observes that "People like to do things for the Kellers," she finds to her great surprise that this is not true. What is more, people know that "Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail" but he is not resented for it. Chris, on the other hand, is resented for his "phony idealism," which Sue intimates can only be maintained through blindness.

However, Chris's impenetrable shield of honesty begins to dissolve when Ann confronts him with the neighborhood gossip and her brother George (the Connection) supplies the impetus for revelation. When the truth emerges his fury is almost beyond containment. The two men, Joe and Chris, still continue in their roles even as they reach the peak of their emotions:

Keller: For you, a business for you!

Chris, with burning fury: For me!—Where do you live, where have you come from? For me!—I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? ... Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world? What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do? ... What must I do, Jesus God, what must I do?

And Joe responds, characteristically, "Chris ... My
Chris." Both of them are now firmly settled in their hamartic roles as they were destined to be. How they got that way is glimpsed through the facade of affability that appears to be the real family atmosphere, but isn't. Again, Chris has come to Joe for help in convincing Kate that Larry is dead and Chris intends to marry his girl. The Good Son script apparently has not yet included marriage--especially this implausible marital choice--but Chris threatens to leave unless Joe and Kate accept it. Thus a great deal of emotional blackmail goes on within the family:

Keller: You mean--goes to him Tell me something, you mean you'd leave the business?

Chris: Yes. On this I would.

Keller, after a pause: Well ... you don't want to think like that.

Chris: Then help me stay here.

Keller: All right, but--but don't think like that. Because what the hell did I work for? That's only for you, Chris, the whole shootin' match is for you!

Chris: I know that, Dad, just you help me stay here.

While Joe recognizes that he does not really understand his son, Kate comes upon the scene and begins her special witchery. It is fascinating to notice the manner in which she switches in and out of her Witch Mother role. Chris asks her about her dream:

Mother: I was fast asleep, and--raising her arm over the audience Remember the way he used to fly low past the house when he was in training? When we used to see his face in the cockpit going by? That's the way I saw him. Only high up. Way, way up, where the clouds are. He was so real I could reach out and touch him. And suddenly he started to fall. And
crying, crying to me ... Mom, Mom! I could hear him like he was in the room. Mom! ... It was his voice! If only I knew I could stop him, if I could only--breaks off, allowing her outstretched hand to fall. 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 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 realizes something, turns with a reprimanding finger shaking slightly at Keller. See? We never should have planted that tree. I said so in the first place. It was too soon to plant a tree for him.

The exchange that was begun with Chris's considerate suggestion that he get Kate an aspirin, ends with the delivery of the aspirin and Kate's reluctant consent to Chris's request that they all "have some fun." To begin the fun, he tells his mother, "You'll start with this aspirin."

Satisfied that her charms and incantations have properly excited the correct amounts of guilt and pain in Chris and Joe, and certain they have both been made aware of her position on declaring Larry officially dead, Kate dutifully takes the aspirin peace-offering and rewards Chris by allowing the "fun" to proceed. Chris, having been once again restored to his position of obedience--Good Son--gains fun at a deeper level by depriving himself of what he thinks he wants. Thus he is supported at the counterscript, Nice Guy, Good Son, level by his mother's Cassandra--"Know-it-all" act which keeps him safely away from his script--for a short while at least. But when he lapses into his script role, insisting upon getting at the truth
and having his own way, his script, in Transactional Analysis terms, provides for the Payoff—his father's suicide! Kate's acknowledgement of her son's true identity is revealed in her closing injunction: "Don't take it on yourself. Forget now. Live," for Kate has recognized his Christ script and its inevitable tragic direction.

Joe's script, on the other hand, carries a great deal of validity in the practical world—or so he thinks. He truly believes that he has done everything for his family and that he has been a good father. His excuse, in addition to familial devotion, is further upheld by the fact that everybody profited from the war, and he is not required to be different than other men. His answer to Chris's accusations is this rationalization:

Who worked for nothin' in that war? When they work for nothin', I'll work for nothin'. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go!

It is only when Larry's letter is revealed to him that Joe sees his role fully revealed by Ann. Though it may be questioned whether or not he ever recognizes the existence of "something bigger than the family" which Chris believes is so important, his form of recognition is an expansion which finally allows the world to come into the closed premises of his family. He grows as far as his script will permit him when he allows that "they were all my sons." And in sacrificing his life, he is demonstrating his love to the son who believes that his father should
have been better than other fathers. Through his suicide Joe is transformed into the kind of man he never was in life, one who is committed to something outside his own backyard.

The others, as we see, are left with the burden of a suicide, a difficult memory to outgrow. The burden of guilt left behind Joe does not promise a happy future to any of them, despite Kate's ironic injunction at the end: "Live!" her Witch Mother echoes a sound perversely like death—"Don't live!" And it is doubtful that Chris will be able to obey the life injunction, since he in his Christ script, is bound to take his father's death upon himself and not live. Thus the tragic aspect of Joe's Hamartic script is not confined to Joe alone, but is perpetuated like the ancient Greek and biblical curses from father to son unto unending generations until its course is done.

But stronger than anything else of importance in this drama is the playwright's illumination of the kind of mentality which makes war profiteering possible. It is the kind of mental attitude created by fear and want that does not limit itself to wars, but does instead exist within every human being whose survival is threatened and it can be plainly seen in today's American ghettos as it used to be seen in yesterday's European ghettos. It is not at all difficult to understand why Miller, a first generation American, would be concerned about this kind of ghetto,
"Dog eat Dog" mentality. Having grown up with immigrant parents or grandparents whose memories of the European ghettos—the pogroms and the forced conscriptions coloring their growing prosperity, making them retain their fierce loyalty-to-family, beware-of-strangers attitudes even in the midst of growing plenty—Miller and most Jews of his generation were familiar with those tenets which grated so harshly against the larger loyalties called for by nationalism. In All My Sons the two kinds of loyalty are placed side by side and they do not appear to be as different from each other as it would seem at first glance. From Chris's point of view—the view that speaks for patriotism, the Flag, and Mother, his father is a war criminal who must be brought to justice. From Joe's point of view—the survival view which makes it a sacred duty to sacrifice and save for children, his son is carelessly throwing aside the most sacred of all laws, the law of father and son. Neither man can see beneath his script existence to the reality which should govern one's existence in a script-free society. Like Frost's stone age farmer, neither can see behind his father's sayings and they move in darkness beyond hope.

The strange nature of this modern tragedy is to allow the audience to bear witness to the total destruction of its most sacred institution, the family. Though Miller concentrates on the sins of the father, he does not neglect those of the son, even when he is looking at the father through the son's eyes. It would be erroneous, however, to believe
that he does not favor the son's action as being one which, as he says, participates "in a high moral decision of some kind," without which Miller feels would have, for Chris, deadened "that pathos that he felt." The playwright's need to pass judgment is further elaborated in the relationship of Ann and George to their father, who, unjustly imprisoned, suffers added injustice at the hands of his own children. Even when Ann has been enlightened by the facts, she is far more concerned with marital status than with her father's innocence. Though she persists in asking questions about the Kellers' reputation in their neighborhood, she also persists in rationalizing Joe's innocence at the expense of her own father, who languishes in prison! Her last minute revelation of the letter is, in truth, the act which places everybody firmly on the path to total annihilation, herself included. Though it is, dramatically speaking, the most contrived action in the drama, it is, with all, a true action insofar as this script character is concerned. As Sue so shrewdly puts it, Ann is a female version of Chris and like Chris she enters into the family game of emotional blackmail with Larry's letter as her ticket.

Chris at the end laments an ideal time which perhaps...
never really existed when "We used to shoot a man who acted like a dog, but honor was real there, you were protecting something," His dilemma is complicated by the fact that he knows that world is gone and the practical world he believes has made him "yellow" is the only one left to exist in:

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!

But the zoo is not solely his father's creation and Chris, if he is to live, must learn to accept his own responsibility for its continuation. An expression of hope, doubtful, tenuous, emerges in Kate's final, ambiguous, and perhaps pleading, "Live"!

Thus, in All My Sons the sacrificial suicide of the father is an appropriate embodiment of the play's meaning as well as the source of its unity. Just as Oedipus's confidence in his own superiority as king traps him in the net of tragedy, so Joe Keller's faith in the ideology of fatherhood and family becomes his death trap. For like Oedipus, Joe unthinkingly rests his faith upon what he has mistaken for an immutable, unchallenged past. When his illusion, and hence his self-image, is shattered by new truth he is unable to live with what remains. Consequently, when Joes takes his own life he is not abandoning his ideology, he is re-affirming it by replacing a false image of
sacrifice--of Good Fatherhood--with real sacrifice. What is more, that single flash of recognition which involves the entirety of his life from start to finish, demolishes him by exposing his fallacious fatherhood and demanding truth in the place of falsehood. As Miller might describe it, Joe experiences "an illumination that kills," and that illumination goes beyond the ordinary scope of psychological insight "into an area called tragedy, which I don't suppose psychology can deal with because it seems to defeat everything." However, in terms of the Hamartic script and its hero, the illumination which leads to suicide, tragic though suicide may be, is considered victory, not defeat as we shall see in the Hamartic plays.

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1Evans, *Psychology and Arthur Miller*, p. 77.
CHAPTER IV

THE HAMARTIC PLAYS

... I'm in the process of believing that maybe men do live by images more than one suspected before, that despite themselves and unknowingly, they behave according to some artistic or esthetic ideas which they are not even aware they have digested.

--Arthur Miller

Perhaps because the Hamartic suicide image holds both challenge and solution, it becomes in the Hamartic plays the supreme metaphor of defiance, implacable and unforgiving; yet it also stands for surrender, total and unconditional. Miller's Introduction to the Collected Plays holds further evidence of his growing fascination with what the suicide image can do; indeed, so taken is he with this image that his next play is based upon it. As the tangled images for Death of a Salesman began to pour forth memories of a failed life, the portrait emerged of an aging man, battered by his environment but still dreaming hero's dreams and dying by his own hand for those dreams. It was an unforgettable image:

The image of a suicide so mixed in motive as to be unfathomable and yet demanding statement. Revenge was in it and love, a victory in that it would bequeath a fortune to the living and a flight from emptiness. With it an image of peace at the final curtain, the peace that is between wars, the peace leaving the issue above ground and viable yet.

1Evans, Psychology and Arthur Miller, p. 35.
2Miller, Collected Plays, p. 30.
Death of a Salesman

There is a mixture of motive and image in this suicide arranged by the playwright for his character's end: of the man's emotional conflict resolved at one stroke by the single act of self-murder and sacrifice, fulfilling its artistic purpose as well but leaving several questions still to be pondered. *Death of a Salesman* is probably the father of all "script" plays, just as it is almost surely the one which best illustrates the Hamartic script in its principal form.

The most impressive quality of this play is the manner in which so many crafts, literary, theatrical and scientific, are pressed into serving the playwright's conception. To project the different worlds of Willy Loman simultaneously upon the viewer's consciousness so that the green of Willy's script world and the grey of his reality go beyond the scope of either world to form a new and tragic reality, is no easy matter. It is a triumph of one particular moment in history when playwright, actors, and audience, all raised on Freud, cinema, and stream-of-consciousness novels are ready to participate in authentic twentieth-century tragedy—the tragedy of the little man who would be a hero.

Many points of similarity between Greek tragedy and the group of tragedies which follow reside mainly in the formal aspects of the Hamartic suicide script which, as I have demonstrated, is structured along the lines of Greek tragedy. Though formal aspects are interesting, from here on we will need to devote more of our attention to the
Hamartic hero himself in order to learn how his personal vision of his script promotes his tragic end. Because he truly believes himself heroic in a world of scoffers, because he chooses to live disastrously as a tragic being whose appropriate end is both heroic and tragic, he is a close relative to the heroes of ancient Greek tragedy, and thus we shall call him Hamartic. Miller writes in his Introduction:

The play was begun with only one firm piece of knowledge and this was that Loman was to destroy himself. How it would wander before it got to that point I did not know and resolved not to care. I was convinced only that if I could make him remember enough he would kill himself, and the structure of the play was determined by what was needed to draw up his memories like a mass of tangled roots without end or beginning.¹

It may be considered absurd to propose that certain individuals fail purposively; nevertheless, without question, certain people do achieve their aims through failure. Yet it is popular to assume that tragedy and failure are nearly synonymous. However, in the modern tragedies of Arthur Miller, that failure of adjustment which culminates in suicide must be considered the hero's victory over forces which threaten him with extinction. To succumb to those forces, to accept and adjust to identities society forces upon the individual, is the disaster avoided by the hero's suicide. Enforced social adjustment—we may also call it compromise—from which suicide is finally the only effective avenue of escape, is one of the large problems Miller poses time and again; particularly at this point in his career, when he is

¹Miller, ibid., p. 30.
still struggling adamently against the necessity for such adjustment.

The modern moralist who emerges with Death of a Salesman is more mature than the Miller of All My Sons. There is no tangible crime in this play; he has no need for one. Willy's shabby adultery serves the purpose of shattering his son's already feeble innocence. It is difficult to determine who Miller treats most harshly in this play, society or the hero. Confusion is perhaps caused by the fact that his criticism is directed at a kind of nameless, amorphous something that crowds the cities, makes the wrong rules and disregards the rights and dreams of individuals--that mechanized something politely called social progress which in reality is created by groups of self-interested individuals. Miller is, nevertheless, careful to include in his play people who are able to exist happily and prosper in this kind of world, so that the hero can be seen to have some choice in his own destiny. The problem left above ground from All My Sons, the problem of father and son becoming deadly antagonists, each becoming the other's radical opposition with an intensity shared through a mutual heritage developed in the hamartia-genic household, continues to be explored in Death of a Salesman. This time our vantage point is new--the inside of Willy's head.¹

¹Miller's original title for Salesman was "The Inside of His Head," and the play was conceived as the inner life of a suicide which indicates to me his growing fascination with suicide in all of its aspects, especially the heroic.
As with All My Sons, the dual protagonists, father and son, are set against each other with their mutual love turning their fury into self-loathing. They are now each given an alter ego—a more successful brother—and once more the younger of the protagonists, the son, is burdened with his father's suicide. This kind of blood guilt becomes a much more pronounced symbol for Miller in later plays, but in Death of a Salesman he is still using the father's suicide to foreshadow disaster for the son, as he did in All My Sons. By the end of each play, both Chris and Biff are acknowledged the next Hamartic heroes in each of the hamartian-genic family lines; the prophecy of disaster is left indelibly etched upon the viewer's impression of an ongoing situation in which disaster begets disaster. Thus the parting emotion evoked by both All My Sons and Death of a Salesman is not cessation but "what comes next?" furthering the comparison between these plays and the early parts of a Greek trilogy such as the Orestia. Neither in All My Sons nor in Death of a Salesman does one leave the play with the definite feeling that peace will prevail in the lives of Chris or Biff.

In Death of a Salesman, Biff's inheritance, ironically, is not the insurance money that Willy thinks he is

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1I am referring to Ben and Happy. The latter is, relatively speaking, more successful than Biff.

2Since this is the only extant trilogy, the rest is speculation.
leaving (actually he is not worth more dead than alive, as he believes he is). What Biff is left is not an insurance policy but a policy of seeing nothing clearly, of being limited to an image of self which permits only a very narrow range of variation, and hence no hope for the future or for a happier existence. Essentially Biff's inheritance is not wealth but potential tragedy.

But is there really no growth, nothing accomplished or learned by the characters of *Death of a Salesman*? Contrary to the supposition that growth is always favorable to life, death holds sway over life in the kingdom of heroism and the adjustments which must be made to favor life are often felt to be considerably worse than death. Particularly with the individual for whom the heroic image is the ideal, adjustment to life may be considered defeat. Miller explains this paradox to some extent when he attempts to answer Dr. Evans's comment that in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* "the suicide itself almost reflects some growth in each character":

There is some growth that is intolerable, as there is some wisdom that is insufferable ... I don't believe in the necessarily upgoing, ongoing, therapeutic power of wisdom. I think sometimes, at a certain point, one learns something that is true, profound, and intolerable, and which a person cannot support.¹

Miller is speaking of an insight, an epiphany, if you will, which lights the disparity between reality and the script: "an illumination that kills," which identifies the

¹Evans, *Psychology and Arthur Miller*, p. 76.
"area called tragedy" where psychology is rendered powerless to proceed. It is in this zone called tragedy that the Hamartic hero seeks acceptance.

In the following group of plays the hero or heroes strive to assert identities they believe rightfully theirs. They are filled with the fervent characteristic of individuals dedicated to self-righteous sacrifice: they enjoy pain. Convinced that through death they will proclaim themselves heroes in concrete terms, their very bodies are used to make definitive statements about their lives—statements they believe give weight and sincerity to previous behavior—all save that behavior which dishonors them. Their tragedy, unfortunately, is something other than they intend it to be. Rather than gaining attention or honor through supposedly heroic deaths, these men gain nothing, not even adverse attention through death. But alas, such is the fate of the modern tragic hero who, in effect, has no existence because we deny his legitimacy by insisting that he comes by his pretensions in a fundamentally dishonest way. He only imagines he is a tragic hero and such conclusions naturally place him in the psychiatric ward rather than on a pedestal.

Yet none of the characters we are about to encounter are insane; none believe themselves to be any other person, real or fictitious, save themselves. Their problem is not who they think they are but whom they think they resemble, and though they think they resemble their heroes, nobody else agrees with them. To borrow some terminology from
Erikson, their inner environments do not correspond with their outer environments. Please note, he says "environments" not "reality," since for these people reality is a great problem: their "umvelt"\(^1\) is discontinuous in a very tragic way, for who is to say what reality must be and whether it is organized through their own choice or disorganized because their inner and outer realities do not match. However, given another time or place, they may have been all they have dreamed of being. But in America, in the twentieth century, they are anachronisms.

Now, depending upon whether or not we wish to count the individual entirely accountable for his self-image or whether we believe that the self-image is a product of the outer, objective environment, or even perhaps a product of both inner and outer influences, we may or may not go along with the almost unanimous critical opinion that says that Miller's early protagonists are in search of lost identities. There is, on the other hand, the view which I prefer, which says that identities are never lost, nor are they taken away; they simply go unrecognized. And I think this is the problem of Miller's characters in the earlier plays--nobody knows who they really are. I will enlarge upon this directly, but first let us look at a fairly typical, and partially correct analysis of the protagonists in *All My Sons*, *Death*

\(^1\)Erikson, *ibid.*, p. 24. *Umvelt* includes both inner and outer environments of the individual.
of a Salesman, and A View From the Bridge. This quotation is from Professor Corrigan's excellent introduction to a collection of essays on Miller:

Each of the protagonists in these plays is suddenly confronted with a situation which he is incapable of meeting and which eventually puts his 'name' in jeopardy. In the ensuing struggles it becomes clear that he does not know what his name really is; finally, his inability to answer the question 'who am I?' produces calamity and his ultimate downfall.

He concludes that "in every case this blindness is in large measure due to their [the protagonists] failure to have resolved the question of identity at an earlier and more appropriate time in life." However, Corrigan fails to realize that the problem of these characters is that identity was indeed resolved at the appropriate time but the identity resolved was not appropriate to the individual, his life style, or his society. What is more, even Erikson agrees that no one ever really achieves a stable identity because identity is an ongoing, ever-developing phenomenon which does change many times during the lifetime of a single individual, though, in truth, there is a certain core of continuity or "selfness" which we regard as 'I'.

Corrigan, like most critics, includes All My Sons as part of a grouping that has Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, and A View From the Bridge. Admittedly, these are earlier plays, but I think All My Sons is still very new and does not quite measure up to the originality of the other plays, furthermore, it is for my purposes, far less in the tragic mode than the other plays.


Erikson, ibid., p. 24.
case, the problem of these characters we are dealing with is that precise inability to change and develop which differentiates normal from abnormal behavior.

Hence, when one makes the mistake of saying that Miller's protagonists, especially Joe Keller, Willy Loman, John Proctor, and Eddie Carbone, are undergoing "identity problems," let us make very certain to define the type of identity problem being confronted. Miller himself has described the problem time and time again, most clearly in "Tragedy and the Common Man." He is most certainly speaking of Willy Loman when he describes the quality of tragic plays that comes from "the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world."¹

John Doe and William Smith may have some choice between living as well-adjusted men in their societies or dying to preserve the integrity of their chosen self-images, but Willy Loman and Eddie Carbone do not because all of the self-image they have is invested in a single self-destructive fantasy which does not allow them to compromise and live.

To suggest that the characters in the plays that follow are acting through the same kinds of directives as Ajax, Antigone, Phaedra, or even Hamlet and Orestes, may appear

somewhat impertinent; yet, we must realize that there is no need to dismiss this possibility because Miller's characters are contemporary and represent a world we know rather well ourselves. Furthermore, the fact that the characters are not copies of the Greek originals but are themselves originals should make them no less valid as tragic characters. If today we are blase about such matters as honor and glory (or at least, if most of us are) we must realize what a difficult time people like Willy, Joe, and Eddie have in a world not interested in their glory. One thing is certain, Miller has a great deal of affection for his common heroes even though he sees them as destructive personalities; but then so must Shakespeare have admired his Hamlet even though he recognized that his destructiveness could bring a kingdom down around his head.

But where does this leave the problem of identity loss or whatever name we choose to label the puzzling behavior manifested by characters in Miller's plays? Actually what we come to is the choice of what Erikson calls "negative identity" in which the individual selects from the range of identities available to him, as one unacceptable to society. We will see this negative choice very clearly in the case of Biff Loman or Eddie Carbone, but it is also true of all of these characters to some extent since their adaptation to specific emotional environments is some type of suicide. Erikson further supports this point by explaining that "the 'wish to die' is really a suicidal wish only in those rare
cases where 'to be a suicide' becomes an inescapable identity choice in itself."¹

He does, however, speak of the individual's resistance to therapy in what is called "acute identity confusion"--this being the individual's insistence that this so-called negative identity be recognized as real.² By negative, I understand Erikson to mean anti-social, delinquent, and ultimately self-destructive because he is speaking about people, young people for the most part, who have chosen anti-social roles in specific defiance of their parents. But it is on this point that Dr. Erikson and Dr. Steiner come to an impasse. I prefer to accept Steiner's ideas because they deal more directly with reality. He says:

... script theory, again, regards all life 'careers' as the result of ego-mastery and adaptation to the environment, and therefore true identities--whether adaptive or self-destructive, whether or not they are considered to be socially redeeming.

Since somehow the vacuum left by 'negative identity' or lost identity is hard to credit as a human possibility because the human being is always responding, inter-acting or reacting from some frame of reference. Thus, even if we are not happy about the frame of reference he has chosen, we still may not, I think, call his choice a void. Therefore, "whether depression or medicine, suicide or law, a person always has a 'career,' an identity."³ However as Steiner

¹Erikson, ibid., p. 170.
³Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 65.
observes, we tend to acknowledge only what is considered good behavior as part of the established identity, while so-called bad behavior is not allowed to be a recognized part of the identity tag.¹ It would, I think, overburden that kind of logic to propose that Hitler, Caligula or Al Capone were victims of identity confusion or diffusion, or that they had no identities at all. Murderers as well as suicides are real and have real identities. Let us take it for granted that not all identities are socially redeeming, yet those which are not cannot be denied existence.

We have once more returned to script theory, since, for reasons I have just explained, scripts present certain theories about what happens to people when they make the decision at a very young age that they will lead tragic lives or come to tragic ends. Actually what script theory proposes is not at all far-fetched. Script theorists simply say that there are self-fulfilling prophecies² which all of us may carry out, depending upon whether or not we see ourselves as matching the prophecy. The high school year book with its "most likely to . . ." predictions is one good example, but the most influential predictions come in the cradle when the infant is told in no uncertain terms how others react to him and what will be expected of him. Whether the adult will be successful, strong, handsome,

¹Steiner, ibid., p. 65.
²Ibid.
beautiful, "just like his father, mother, grandfather, or his mad uncle on his grandmother's side," is told to him in the first moments of his life. The rest is merely learning the part and playing it with the right cast.

In real life the person who follows a tragic script is usually acting a part created by someone else with whom the actor perceives an affinity. His personal version of the role often makes reference to the way the role model would have done things, but he may have many original variations to add to what he believes his model did. The concept is not far removed from what all of us do every day of our lives when we apply modes of behavior taught or shown to us by parents, peers, teachers and other influencers. It is only when an individual becomes deeply entrenched in inflexible behavior patterns which are destructive to himself, inappropriate to the situation, and injurious to others that his behavior becomes problematical. In other words, if he becomes a criminal or a nuisance, it may be deemed necessary to stop the behavior before it worsens. Up to some point his behavior may have been encouraged by the family, by society if the individual can find the right social situation, and by his own unwillingness to face reality, but when all of this supportive structure collapses, the individual is likely to struggle desperately to regain his position or at least to relinquish it with dignity-- through an appropriate death perhaps.

Then there is a particular role which demands some
kind of test situation in which the hero proves to all concerned that he is the real hero. Fairy tales, Arthurian Romance, and Nordic legend are filled with test situations during which the hero risks life and limb to confirm his identity. Of course there is also the situation in which the hero finds out inadvertently that he is a hero by pulling a sword from a stone or answering a riddle that no one else has been able to answer. Though generally speaking the test situations are encountered later in the life of the hero when he is endeavoring to defend his title, it seems that sooner or later every hero must undergo such a test and must prepare himself to die bravely in defense of his former honor. In this way new heroes rise up to take the place of the vanquished, and it is part of the new hero's glory to have won the title from a worthy foe.

I am pointing out these tendencies because we forget how completely inundated all lives are with mythical influences. Lest we think that script behavior or script thinking is in some way esoteric or only characteristic of extremely abnormal individuals, let us remember that there are any number of good "and-they-all-lived-happily-ever-after" scripts or scripts that are of benefit to society, although they may call for the hero to sacrifice a great deal, even life and limb.

Getting back to Corrigan's "test" situation, which he tells us the hero is "incapable of meeting and which eventually puts his 'name' in jeopardy," the situation as
described by Corrigan is certainly correct—the protagonists do find themselves in situations which require face-saving and in which they fail, or rather their powers fail them, for one reason or another. The magic that once seemed to work loses its potency as it does for all heroes, and like all heroes, Miller's heroes believe they have received the final message or injunction which tells them they must go down (or up) in a blaze of glory which will proclaim their heroism to all. Most heroes do this because they are indomitable; no one is able to kill them but themselves or they die when they get good and ready to die. Dr. Shneidman describes this phenomenon as it occurs in suicidal individuals who have such similar orientations to modern life that one suspects them of being survivors from heroic times. The pattern, Shneidman says, can be seen early in life when the individual quits his work before he is to be fired. When he is hot-headed and action oriented, and if he is threatened with impending death from disease, then he will take matters into his own hands before nature has the opportunity to force death upon him.¹ According to these characters they themselves determine their own destinies. Thus, the experience of not being able to answer the question "who am I?" is not the experience of these characters but is instead an interpretation of their experience which fails to view the

¹Shneidman, "Orientations Toward Death," in *Psychology of Suicide*, p. 16.
characters as they view themselves. This inside view is one which is, as I have said, so important to the understanding of Miller's plays.

Within the range of possible behavior for the heroic role, the tragic range proposes a self-inflicted death as a saving gesture when all else is lost. Phaedra, for example, kills herself to be free of the loathsome passion which degrades her image of herself in her own eyes. Ajax dies by his own hand to avoid compromising what to him are eternal verities. The speech in which he weighs the alternatives between life with dishonor and death without compromise is the prototype of heroic codes. No place in literature is the tragic conflict between the hero's conscious will to power and the necessity for his abdication of that power more movingly expressed:

From now on this will be my rule: Give way
To heaven, and bow before the sons of Atreus.
They are the rulers, they must be obeyed.
I must give way, as all dread strengths give way
In turn and deference. Winter's hard-packed snow
Cedes to the fruitful summer; stubborn night
At last removes, for day's white steeds to shine.
The dread blast of the gale slackens and gives
Peace to the sounding sea; and Sleep, strong jailer,
In time yields up his captive. Shall not I
Learn place and wisdom?1 (667-677)

Like "all dread strengths" Ajax gives way, but not in "turn and deference," at least not in his own eyes. When he compares himself to the dreadful powers in nature that give way to change, "like all dread strengths" becomes the key to

1Sophocles, Ajax, The Complete Greek Tragedies, II, p. 32.
his self-knowledge just as it becomes the key to the hamartic copies of the Ajax script. Ajax is a model for the Caesars and the Antonies as well as for the Willy Lomans of later years. For all men who believe that the world revolves around them and for whom the tragic victory is that growth which comes through "the illumination that kills," which is knowledge, defeat, and victory in one, Ajax stands as a model.

Enough proof has been offered for or against Death of a Salesman to verify its inclusion in the tragic genre one way or another. If the play is regarded as a Hamartic suicide script played within the counterscript setting with Biff looking at Willy and not understanding what is going on within him and the audience looking at both of them and seeing the disparity between objective reality and what these characters believe they know and see, the tragedy will have many elements in common with the Ajax as well as many original elements in its own right.

In Sophoclean tragedy two alternatives are proposed for the tragic hero. These are either suicide or repentance. The repentance emerges from the struggle for dominance between the older generation and the younger. While many critics see the principal motivation behind Miller's plays as social, (Lamb believes that both Willy Loman and Joe Keller are destroyed by social attitudes--i.e., "society's assumption about salesmen."¹), to say this is to ignore the

¹Sidney Lamb, Tragedy (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1965), p. 58.
deeper forces within Willy that drive him to see himself as the center of reality, or that cause Joe Keller to mistake his own business practices as those generally practiced by all men. Miller's purpose is to expose ugliness which results when social ideas and systems malfunction, or rather when they are carried to extremes by malfunctioning human beings. Each man in these plays is following some principle to which he adheres unthinkingly because of his social indoctrination. From the wide range of choices he elects a self-destructive role because it is his only way of obtaining ego satisfaction or recognition. His internalized parent has garbled up the standard "If at first you don't succeed" message into a message which reads in fairy tale gibberish, "If at first you don't fail, you'll get punished till you try again." Rewards and punishments are inversions of the norm, and hard as it may be to succeed in our society, it really requires an unusual expenditure of effort to fail in a spectacular way. This is why Willy Loman is so terribly tired at the opening of Death of a Salesman. He is completely worn out from trying to fail. His problem is that people keep trying to stop him, which causes him great fatigue. On the other hand, his energy level goes up considerably when he is about to succeed at failure and suicide.

Let us look at Death of a Salesman from this point of view: Willy is trying very hard to die the death of a salesman. The lure of death is represented by the haunting flute music (compare the Pied Piper of Hamlin) and the
blissful green world with its promise of diamonds. According to Willy's script he will be a hero in that green world though he is a victim in the grey world. His goal, quite naturally, is to find some way to enter the green world. Unfortunately many foes arise to block his entry into that world. What is more, Willy must find some test or feat which will prove him worthy of the green world. He must find a way to die with honor.

Willy's first words in the opening scene are: "It's all right. I came back." And we learn that he has had to drag himself away from the strange thoughts which have caused him to drive off the road several times before. This time, he tells Linda: "I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I'm going off the road." From the beginning we learn of Willy's attempts at suicide, the going off the road, the rubber tube in the basement, and the strange thoughts which hold him for longer and longer periods. It is becoming difficult for Linda to keep her own bearings. For instance, she later suggests that they drive out into the country, "open the windshield, and take lunch," to which Willy answers: "The windshields don't open on the new cars," and we find that he has been dreaming about his nineteen twenty-eight Chevy. Linda, fortunately, does not let that kind of confusion happen to her again.¹ She is usually fully aware of the

¹This is probably considered an acceptable slip because Linda is the "compleat homebody" but it also seems highly unlikely that anyone with Linda's head for figures would not know that windshields don't open on newer cars.
discrepancies between Willy's script existence and his reality and in trying to keep him happy she constantly encourages his script life by feeding him a line every time he falters or by agreeing with him when he contradicts himself. One of the finest examples of their teamwork is Willy's first memory scene in which he returns after a hard week on the road to be welcomed by his sons and Linda; Linda, as usual, hanging the wash and counting up his commission. She has patiently accepted the realistic reduction of his salary from thousands to "seventy dollars and some cents" and is encouraging about his future prospects:

Linda: Well, next week you'll do better.

Willy: 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.

Linda: Oh, don't be foolish.

Willy: I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me.

Linda: Why? Why would they laugh at you? Don't talk that way, Willy.

Willy moves to the edge of the stage. Linda goes into the kitchen and starts to darn stockings.

Willy: I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me by. I'm not noticed.

Linda: But you're wonderful, dear. You're making seventy to a hundred dollars a week.

As paragon of all mother-wives, Linda is Protector, Rescuer, Innocent Victim, and ultimately, Patsy. She is also the Persecutor in Biff's and Happy's scripts. Her job is to keep the family together, which she does by feeding
their self-destructive needs as well as her own. Though she is not suicidal, she is self-deprecating and self-defeating. She actually helps to break the family apart by encouraging Willy's fantasies. Being much more mother than wife, or much more pal than woman and actually discouraging his opportunity for a happier existence, Linda is in her own way self-destructive.

The other roles are filled by Charley, Bernard, Happy and Ben, who play respectively the Connection, the Messenger, the Innocent Victim and the Soothsayer. Beyond them all stand the ghosts of Willy's father and Dave Singleman: both are euhemerus heroes—men who have been deified by their followers—and they represent the two heroes after whom Biff and Willy have patterned their lives, Biff upon the former and Willy upon the latter.

Several events happen in Death of a Salesman which occur frequently enough in Miller plays to be considered part of his style or point of view. I have already mentioned the father-son antagonism; a similar adjunct is the mother-wife role. Women in this group of Hamartic plays particularly receive very stereotyped treatment. They play either the mother-wife or the temptress roles. In Salesman, as I said, Linda is the model mother-wife and The Woman is the model temptress. The roles are very limited in scope and betray a very limited and stereotyped handling of women characters by Miller. Not until The Crucible is any flicker of interest shown by Miller in a true woman character, but
even then it is just for a brief moment when Elizabeth speaks of her own part in John's adultery and accepts some part of the responsibility for their estrangement.

Linda Loman runs the gamut from Rescuer to Victim in twenty-four hours. She is also Persecutor in Biff's script since she almost forces him to take part in the charade his father insists upon. Her relationship with Willy is an interesting one. She keeps his self-destructiveness at a fairly benign level by feeding him just the right amounts of self-destructive guilt at the right times—that is until he begins to develop a larger appetite for punishment. By darning stockings constantly and by playing instant calculator she reminds him of his infidelity and his dwindling earning power at almost any time he cares to ask for re-enforcement.

Since the character who becomes the star of the Hamartic script is recognized by his narcissism, the narcissism is an essential binding factor between all of the other characters: "his" family, "his" friends, "his" job, home, country, etc. If the life force threatens to annihilate these ties by dissolving or modifying the relationships between the hero and those elements which he believes are reflections or parts of himself, he avoids all temptations to life adjustment, preferring to struggle on the side of death so that his image will remain whole and untarnished. This is actually a very interesting inversion of the classical Dionysian rending of the god in preparation for his
ultimate resurrection, for this type of hero has no resur-
rection, but does instead take his kingdom with him, bind-
ing his survivors in death as he did in life, through their
mutual games of guilt and pain. The mother-wife is there-
fore always entrusted with the task of keeping the whole
works together. As Clurman observes, the mother "supports
the paternal legend of 'kingship,' by being fealty itself,"
though she may in reality be a constricting and harmful in-
fluence. Though Clurman believes mothers are not held
accountable by Miller and that "Woman in Miller's plays is
usually the prop of the male principle without whom man
falters, loses his way,"¹ I suggest that this kind of prop-
ing, since it is injurious, is dangerously insidious and is
certainly to be taken as a unflattering commentary on Ameri-
can motherhood. For one thing, too many of Miller's hus-
bands kill themselves without the slightest concern for
their wives' well-being; for another, most of these husbands
are more interested in their relationships with their sons
than with their wives because their wives have failed them
at everything but being "pals"—or at least the kind of pallid
relationship which more or less describes the husband-wife
pairs in The Man Who Had All the Luck, Death of a Salesman,
and A View From the Bridge. The relationships in All My
Sons and The Crucible are somewhat different, but this is
because these plays are viewed through the eyes of the

¹Harold Clurman, "Arthur Miller's Later Plays," in
Arthur Miller: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by
Corrigan, p. 145.
younger of the two protagonists in *All My Sons*; and in *The Crucible*, John Proctor is, it seems, trying to develop a relationship with Elizabeth that goes beyond the stereotype husband-wife relationship.

Whatever it is in Willy's past that makes him destroy himself also creates his drive for recognition. Thus, when he is made to recall his childhood feelings of inadequacy by his older brother's unwillingness to hear his cry for attention, the facade covering the raw craving for recognition is demolished. The past comes back in a flood of pain: "Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel--kind of temporary about myself."

Oddly enough, Biff, who has never been abandoned, echoes the same feelings in his lament to Linda: "I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of life." A very strange thing happens to both men--each of them adopt new heroes when their fathers abandon them--though of course Willy's betrayal is to Biff more of a betrayal of the family, both mother and son. And though Willy does not in actuality withdraw his affection from either one of them, Biff reacts as though he does, and his reaction is what counts. The main force of the guilt is, however, on Willy's side and it colors his relationship with his son from the moment that Biff discovers his father with the Woman. From then on, Willy is the Judas in Biff's script--he has given Linda's stockings to the Woman! Thereafter Biff follows the example of Willy's own Betrayer-Father:
he leaves for parts unknown. As Bernard describes it, Biff's world shatters; he commits a symbolic suicide; he gives up. Bernard confides to Willy toward the end: "I've often thought of how strange it was that I knew he'd given up his life."

Although Death of a Salesman seems very loosely structured, it is actually much more tightly organized than Miller would have us believe. The tangle of images dredged up from Willy's memory is carefully contrived to guide him to that most painful spot he has harbored within himself for the climax of his script. What happens to Willy can be described from several points of view. Daniel E. Schneider, a practicing psychoanalyst of the Freudian school, describes Willy's dreams in this way:

The past, as in hallucination, comes back to him; not chronologically as in flashback, but dynamically with inner logic of his erupting volcanic unconscious. In psychiatry we call this 'the return of the repressed,' when a mind breaks under the invasion of primitive impulses no longer capable of compromise with reality.

Further, he summarizes Willy's experience as "visualized psychoanalytic interpretation woven into reality,"¹ a description which somehow does not coincide with what is really happening or what the playwright wants us to see is happening. Perhaps in 1950, when Schneider's interpretation was written, he had no other means of explaining Miller's technique. But Miller himself explains Willy's "hallucinations" as a dramatic process through which he objectifies the

"mobile concurrency of past and present" which his character is experiencing. In other words, Willy is "perfectly integrated with his surroundings excepting that unlike other people he can no longer restrain the power of his experience from disrupting the superficial sociality of his behavior."\(^1\) Willy throughout the play becomes less and less able to stay out of the tragic script and in the counterscript which is his social facade.

We may call the social environment the "counterscript" because it is the environment to which Willy and his family must make socially acceptable adaptations. Happy, for example, has a successful counterscript image because he does have a job, a car, and an apartment; nevertheless, philanderer is also part of his success image, though it betrays his fear of real intimacy with a woman, even as it betrays his sad envy of the men who are his superiors, including his father and brother. His "crummy characteristic"--stealing and "ruining" the girls of executives--is similar to Biff's kleptomania. Both men steal what they don't really need or want. Happy's professed desire to find a mate like his mother for whom "they broke the mold" is constantly defeated by his "crummy characteristic" of proving the mold broken by breaking it himself. Happy, however, is not pursuing a Hamartic script which will end in suicide. His script is less dramatic and he seems satisfied with mildly self-destructive satisfactions. Ironically,

his "Stud" social image is a contradiction to his promise to marry, a contradiction which may ultimately lead to the destruction of the Loman line.

Biff's Hamartic script parallels Willy's and begins with his discovery of his father's infidelity in Boston—"the cradle of the Revolution" as Willy says. What Biff does is to become the negative of what Willy would like him to be; instead of being great, he becomes small—a bum, as Linda says. Much has been made of the name "Loman" as Everyman or low man or common man, but Biff's explanation is the most explicit when he tries to convince Willy of his ordinariness. The exchange is a classic defense of identity by Willy:

Biff: Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!

Willy: I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!

Notice that Willy does not use the contraction in his response and notice too that he includes Biff in this identity proclamation. His interpretation of Loman has been "Singleman" after his hero and he will not allow Biff to change to "dime-a-dozen man." The exchange between Willy and Biff takes place after Willy has had his epiphany scene during which he remembers Biff's reaction to his father's infamy; therefore, with his weird script logic, Willy discovers his motive for suicide. He believes his death will restore Biff's name. His role is revealed to him and he believes he can die honorably.

Now let us go back to the beginning of the play and
see how Miller works toward this climax. The first dream sequence (set off by the ache of Willy's arch supports and the refrigerator light) begins with Willy's homecoming and provides some information about the Loman's past: the hammock, the mending of stockings, the wash, the inadequate paycheck and Linda's revelation of Biff's stealing. The memory sequences usually begin pleasantly and end unpleasantly. This particular sequence exposes the script-counterscript game that Linda and Willy play with their sons as supporting players. Willy's script directs him toward failure, while his counterscript is the successful salesman facade combined with the successful parent facade. His anger at Linda for telling him about Biff's faults is actually an urgent gratification to his self-destructive needs: otherwise he would under sensible conditions chastize his son. Instead, he becomes angry at Linda. At any rate, the whole sequence has been initiated by Biff's homecoming, during which he learns of Willy's attempts to commit suicide. At this point Biff consciously decides to "go on the wagon" so to speak; he promises to behave according to the counterscript in a socially acceptable way, thus inhibiting Willy's suicide for another day. The end of act one does, nevertheless, have some interesting suggestive touches. Willy is lulled to sleep by Linda's lullabye while Biff discovers the rubber

1The "inside of his head" sequences are usually set off by kinesthetic and mental stimuli, the refrigerator, Howard's tape recorder, Charley's heartburn and his discussion of tools, all of these bring on the memories for Willy.
tube in the basement. One self-destructive hero is being mothered to death and the other is about to be born!

The second act begins with Willy, Lazarus-like, proclaiming, "I slept like a dead one." From that point on the object will be to prevent another resurrection. Though Linda, Biff, and Happy have joined forces to play Rescuers, they are unable to prevent what is to take place. In fact, Linda actually sends Willy to Howard, who as a supporting Connection provides Willy with added motivation by firing him. It is to Howard that Willy tries to tell the Dave Singleman story which Howard, wrapped up in a more modern mythology, the tape recorder, ignores. Willy, however, is reminded of a decisive moment in his life when he is offered an opportunity to succeed and Linda, true to her role, saves him. Ben has just offered Willy an exciting job in Alaska and Willy is looking for some protection, some way to turn Ben down. Linda enters and helps:

Linda, frightened of Ben and angry with him: Don't say those things to him! Enough to be happy right here, right now. To Willy, while Ben laughs: Why must everybody conquer the world? You're well liked, and the boys love you, and someday--to Ben--why, old man Wagner told him just the other day that if he keeps it up he'll be a member of the firm, didn't he, Willy?

Willy: Sure, sure. I am building something with this firm, Ben, and if a man is building something he must be on the right track, mustn't he?

Ben: What are you building? Lay your hand on it. Where is it?

Willy, hesitantly: That's true, Linda, there's nothing.

Linda: Why? To Ben: There's a man eighty-four years old --
Willy: That's right, Ben, that's right. When I look at that man I say, what is there to worry about?

Ben: Bah!

Linda sustains Willy when his script is threatened and he allows her to retain her mother role by remaining infantile. When Ben tries to intrude with a more grown-up deal, both Baby Willy and Mother Linda are threatened. Now, when we arrive at the initiation scene during which Biff is forced to see through his father's "Good Husband" fantasy, Biff withdraws his support of the Loman Family game--he burns his sneakers--and sets out to actualize his personal self-destructive script by becoming the bum alternative to the college athletic hero. For Willy, the actual "illumination that kills" is his revelation of his own part in Biff's aimless existence. The growth he experiences is a growth in responsibility; he realizes that he is to blame to a certain extent for Biff's symbolic suicide and he tries to relive the experience, this time offering his own life as a substitute for Biff's. That is the deal he makes with Ben, whom he dredges up from the past to help him transact the substitution which he is certain will turn him in the direction of glory. When Ben proclaims it "A perfect proposition all around" and calls "Time, William, time!" Willy makes his final sales pitch crying, "Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I!"

Throughout the play there has been an underlying search for concrete evidence with which to actualize dreams
that have never materialized. The life built on "hot air," mythical heroes, installment plan buying, tape recorded voices and insurance policies that don't pay off is Willy's answer to Ben's question, "What are you building? Lay your hands on it. Where is it?" The answer, of course is in the house that Willy built, in its front stoop, its cellar and its garage, stifled and overpowered by the encroaching buildings. The house and its sons are the beginnings that evaporate with the heroic and self-destructive dream castles which even Willy guesses have been wrong. In the end he has become aware enough to understand that life must hold more than just "another damned-fool appointment," but he is still unable to detect fake diamonds from the real thing. That hard rough diamond he believes he can pick up and touch, that diamond which is his life, he sacrifices for another dream. Despite everything, Willy's suicide when it comes is undertaken with joy and elation, not defeat. With the courage born of his conviction that he has been right all along--the Lomans are not "dime-a-dozen-men"--he readies himself for the seventy-yard boot. But after he has made his great touchdown and Willy and his destiny have become one, we find that he has been playing to an empty field.

At Willy's funeral he is scorned by the Biff who dismisses his sacrifice by proclaiming, "He never knew who he was." For though Willy, in his own mind, died an appropriately heroic death, he remains unappreciated by the son he loved, misunderstood by the woman who was his "pal," and
defended only by Happy and Charley, who says in Willy's defense: "Nobody dast blame this man. Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life." Happy's staunch determination that "Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have--to come out number one man," is another fraudulent view of Willy's life and promises that Happy will continue to delude himself also. But Biff's "I know who I am, kid" is the biggest delusion of all.

Earlier in the play Biff tells Happy that he finds business of one kind or another a "measly manner of existence," when all he wants to do is work out in the open air; yet, in the next breath he tells him, "I know all I've done is to waste my life." Though Biff has grown enough to deny the superiority complex his father tried to instill, he has not really learned to lead a script-free existence. By accepting the "dime-a-dozen" portrait of himself, he is merely pursuing a script which says, "I'm Nobody's Hero Now." In essence, he is doing an anti-hero script. Biff does, nevertheless, show some insights about himself and his father in the restaurant scene after he has accepted his dime-a-dozen image based on his recollection that he was a shipping clerk instead of a salesman. His conversation with Willy is fascinating for its exposure of the father-son duel which leads to Willy's recollection of Biff's Boston visit. Willy's stubborn resistance to facts, indicating his conscious involvement in his script, is especially revealing.
Biff has just tried to tell Willy that he was not a salesman with Oliver's company:

Biff: Let's hold on to the facts tonight, Pop. We're not going to get anywhere bullin' around. I was a shipping clerk.

Willy, angrily: All right now, now listen to me--

Biff: Why don't you let me finish?

Willy: I'm not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today.

Biff, shocked: How could you be?

Willy: I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that I haven't got a story left in my head, Biff. So don't give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested. Now what've you got to say to me?

When Biff is too stunned or too uncooperative to help his father invent a new story, Willy coaches him:

Willy, on the edge of his chair: What kind of welcome did he give you?

Biff: He won't even let you work on commission?

Willy: I'm out! Driving So tell me, he gave you a warm welcome?

Happy: Sure, Pop, sure!

Biff, driven: Well, it was kind of--

Willy: I was wondering if he'd remember you. To Happy Imagine, man doesn't see him for ten, twelve years and gives him that kind of welcome!

Happy: Damn right!

The script game is hard to resist, but Biff does try and his efforts bring Willy to that crucial memory he has
hidden from himself of his disgrace before his son. Everything Willy has built in his green world is going up in the blaze of truth he is experiencing. His wood is indeed on fire, but his efforts to salvage what is left are futile because Biff is experiencing his own fire. But for a moment before he turns Persecutor again, Biff recognizes his father as the tragic hero of the script:

Miss Forsythe: Oh, he isn't really your father!

Biff, at left, turning to her resentfully: Miss Forsythe, you've just seen a prince walk by. A fine, troubled prince. A hard-working, unappreciated prince. . . .

Happy, on the other hand, an unworthy disciple, denies his father in the one self-revealing gesture he has in the play:

Letta: Don't you want to tell your father--

Biff: No, that's not my father. He's just a guy. . . .

The Requiem scene contradicts the positions the two sons have taken in this emotional moment. Biff has finally acknowledged his love for Willy and perhaps his understanding of him, but he also has repudiated him for having never told the truth. Happy is embarrassed by his father, resentful of him and apparently unable to feel any pangs of conscience where Willy is concerned. He has a peculiar kind of armor plating which is impermeable to certain kinds of emotion—not entirely insensitive but shallow, perhaps even incapable of the intensity of passion which characterizes both his father's and his brother's emotions. His character
is, in a sense, closer to Linda's emotionally; for neither Linda nor Happy ever have any true understanding of what happened to Willy and his dreams. Linda at least recognizes the fact that she does not understand what drove Willy to his death; she does not, however, understand her own share in helping him fail.

Charley, whom Miller calls "the most decent man in Death of a Salesman\(^1\), is wrong in saying that "for a salesman there is no rock bottom to the life." To every life there is a rock bottom and that bottom is what Willy strikes when he is fired and finds himself out of stories with no one to turn to for inspiration--that rock bottom is reality.

Both in structure and philosophy Death of a Salesman is a close descendent of Sophocles' Ajax. Particularly striking is the similarity between the second half of the Ajax and the Requiem portion of Death of a Salesman, and not surprisingly both have been the subjects of critical controversy. The final third of the Ajax centers around an argument over the hero's right to burial. Ajax has disgraced his name by slaughtering innocent cattle. His only fault has been that he did not call upon help from the gods when going into battle. Before killing himself he reviews his life, finds himself out of favor with the gods and declares his intention to kill himself. Though his wife, Tecmessa, a slave who will be subject to the abuses of any man

\(^1\)Miller, Collected Plays, p. 37.
who comes along, pleads with him to remember his duty to her and their son, Ajax sees his duty—especially his duty to his son—quite differently than she does. He prefers an honorable death to a dishonorable life, which he feels will expose his son to the shame Ajax feels must be expunged from the family name. Reassuring everyone that he will not take his life, he manages to go off to the sea shore where he falls upon his sword. His final request to the gods is that they allow his brother Teucer to find his body and give him a decent burial before the Atreidae discover his suicide. This request is granted, but Menelaus and Agamemnon arrive very shortly and an argument ensues over the body of the fallen hero—the Greeks desiring that their enemy's body be left without burial. The dispute is finally settled by Odysseus, whom Ajax had intended to kill, but who now becomes the defender of his fallen enemy. His reasoning, like Charley's, is a plea for justice tempered with mercy:

*It would be wrong to do him injury;*
*In acting so, you'd not be injuring him—*
*Rather the god's laws. It's a foul thing to hurt*
*A valient man in death, though he was your enemy.*

(1342-1345) p. 58

The peculiar equation of heroism with self-destructiveness which pervades the plays following *All My Sons* is not exclusively Miller's. Indeed, it is an implicit component of the heroic image and has been since earliest times. It seems, moreover, to be part of the youthful vision of the tragic playwright from Sophocles on. *The Ajax*, after all, is one of the earliest plays of Sophocles and in it he makes
no attempt to gloss over the faults of his hero but does in fact portray him as an imperfect and narcissistic human being who kills himself to avoid dishonor—at the expense of the other members of his family. Yet Sophocles acquits him honorably—or so we are led to believe. The tragedies of Euripides, Shakespeare, Racine, Ibsen, and O'Neill have not failed to glorify the magnanimity of the heroic temper while at the same time exposing its destructiveness. The differences between the heroic and the hamartic are not simply based upon the hero's self-destructiveness of his status, but rather upon the truth or falsity of his position. If the hero is Hamlet or Ajax or Oedipus or Antigone, he must do what his role requires because his past has formed his destiny for him. He has been created for this destiny and no other. But for Miller’s heroes there has been alternative choices and variations that might have applied if the protagonists had not consciously decided to assume certain roles.

For many reasons, scientific, philosophical, moral, the heroic image does not seem to make sense in the modern world, and it is only in modern times that we find heroic self-destructiveness to be a form of insanity. Yet, egalitarian ideas have caused many individuals to feel a loss of purpose, a disconnectedness that is denied by the heroic struggle. Taken to extremes, equality can lead to meaninglessness for many individuals and, as we have seen in the recent past, the hunger for recognition can lead to
destructiveness of self and others as well when the quest for recognition disturbs the patterns of society. But it has always been so; heroes have always been associal beings and have always disturbed the peace. Miller believes that the old heroes were "attempting to reconstruct or to re-create with new latter-day materials" a "once-extant state of bliss unjustly shattered" and that all the "great plays" are about the struggle to regain that lost state. The audience, too, he believes, shares in that feeling of loss and in the need to regain the former bliss:

It is as though both playwright and audience believed that they once had an identity, a being, somewhere in the past which in the present has lost its completeness, its definitiveness, so that the central force making pathos in these large and thrusting plays is the paradox which Time bequeaths to us all: we cannot go home again, and the world we live in is an alien place.¹

But for the old heroes the past they seek to reconstruct, the identity they feel is being threatened, is real in the sense of their own personal histories. Miller's heroes, on the other hand, invent self-destructive images out of their need for meaning and recognition, not out of memories of a paradise lost. For them there has never actually been a blissful state; their identities are created out of an invented state of bliss, an illusory existence which never was. To maintain their dreams they invent images that destroy them, marry people who aid their

self-destruction, and have children who eventually provide impetus to their self-destruction. Eventually even the children destroy themselves. Thus, in a very meaningful way, the suicide image metaphorically envelops the complexity of self-perpetuating, self-destructive actions unraveled in the playing out of a Hamartic script. The details, like the reverse side of an intricate tapestry, reveals the hidden life beneath a sometimes deceptive surface.

The Crucible

Following Death of a Salesman, the trend of Miller's work for a time became more classical. With The Crucible and A View From the Bridge strong cultural forces provide the bases from which the protagonists come to see themselves as tragic heroes. The suicides of John Proctor and Eddie Carbone are really shame-culture, honor suicides motivated by concern for posthumous reputation. Script behavior is, in these two plays, much more a product of religious and cultural influences transmitted and enforced by familial pressures, which actually force the protagonists to choose death rather than life with dishonor.

Each character dies to escape the consequences of a soiled reputation. Having committed a shameful act which he feels has permanently jeopardized his future in the community, he seeks to restore his reputation through sacrifices or valor. Both suicides are of the variety Durkheim classified as "altruistic"—that is, life is renounced for
some value the character considers greater than life. Both individuals have been reared to regard such renunciation as redeeming and praiseworthy under certain circumstances. To make matters more interesting, the suicides are accomplished vicariously; the characters force others to inflict death upon them, thus absolving themselves of suicide.

Behavior in these plays is extremely "scripty" because the social milieu of the two protagonists provides rigid codes or guidelines which dictate human relationships and activity. The roles these characters play actually need little elaboration. Certainly, inventiveness of the quality of Willy Loman's script is uncalled for here where response patterns are quite ritualized. As Miller presents them, both men have led seemingly ordinary and blameless lives until they quite innocently become embroiled in relationships which inspire an unleashing of repressed passions. Only then do they find reason to strive for the re-vitalization and transcendence of their blemished identities; only then do they elect to play heroic roles which end with suicide. It would be erroneous, however, to believe that these men up to the onset of their crises were merely innocuous, non-descript human beings of passive disposition. Indeed, what little we know of them indicates just the opposite, as we shall see.

Up to this point my study has dealt with Hamartic

\[1\] Durkheim, *Suicide*, p. 223.
scripts that are essentially unredeeming or maladaptive to society, but with John Proctor, Miller actually creates a character who embodies the finest ideals of his society, save one—he is not chaste. For an American hero this is an unfortunate, but not entirely unforgivable flaw. The flesh is understood to be weak but redeemable and since Proctor struggles nobly against his basest desires, he comes closest of all Miller's Hamartic heroes to being truly heroic. What prevents him is his deliberate pursuit of martyrdom, which he undertakes to erase his sexual guilt. Not unlike Hawthorne's Arthur Dimmesdale, Proctor suffers such a loss of goodness in his own eyes that he finds it necessary to destroy his physical being in order to attain spiritual perfection.

Miller explains in his notes to the play that Proctor "has come to regard himself as a fraud" because his society offers no cleansing ritual by which he can absolve himself of contamination. Since his society is an exceptionally rigid one, Proctor's choices are very limited. What is more, his own perfectionist rigidities narrow the scope of images he has to identify with. To his own way of thinking he may be either the "Goodman" stereotype set forth by his fundamentalist religion and community, or he may be a sinner and be damned. At the beginning of this play he counts himself among the damned—a sinner by his own decree, hiding under the garb of respectibility and suffering for his sham. The action therefore is directed at
exonerating his guilt and winning back his self-respect. He accomplishes these goals by proving that his sinfulness was the Devil's work and by becoming a martyr.

He has, before the play opens, confessed himself to his wife, Elizabeth, who like all Miller wives helps him to achieve his goals. During the course of the drama he provokes her to resentment and suspicion so that she may feed his guilt, and sadly enough his self-destructiveness not only prevents him from excusing himself of adultery, but it also prevents him from seeing his wife as a loving woman. The uncompromising attitudes he assigns to her are actually a reflection of his own. When, for example, he tells Danforth with assurance that "there are them that cannot sing, and them that cannot weep--my wife cannot lie," he is in reality speaking of his own rigidities. In truth, it is John, not Elizabeth who cannot lie--except to himself. And this he does to the bitter end.

Danforth, Hathorne, and Parris are cast in Persecutor roles similar to the inquisitors in Shaw's St. Joan, some of whom represent the church and others of whom represent the state. All of Joan's judges are self-seeking men, as are the characters in Miller's play. Hale, the intellectual, has certain characteristics of a Creon, but he is also very similar to the Dominican priest, Ladvenu, in St. Joan. The fact that Hale is able to understand the evil that is taking place perhaps makes him the guiltiest of the lot, for his "Believer" script has as its converse the
"Unbeliever." Whereas Elizabeth is kind enough to allow John to go his self-destructive way, Hale's cynical questions at the end would demolish not only John's goodness but his entire reason for trying to attain this goodness. When Hale shouts, "What profit him to bleed? Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth?" John Proctor, mercifully, his faith intact, has passed beyond such queries. Yet, in order to erase the sin which he felt blackened his good name to an unbearable extent, he accepts condemnation as a witch—a crime of which he is completely innocent. Why John is marked for a more serious disaster than one would expect of such a man is explained by his script requirements which point in the direction of doom because of his inability to tolerate imperfections in himself or in others. His total trust in Elizabeth's perfect honesty becomes the point upon which his destiny revolves and it breaks before his very eyes in the name of love!

Elizabeth is a perfect foil for her husband's self-destructiveness and in the annuls of script relationships, the Proctors make one of Miller's best Hamartic couples. They play a game in which Proctor becomes the Victim and Elizabeth the Persecutor—a game satisfying to both of them:

Proctor, with solemn warning: You will not judge me more, Elizabeth. I have good reason to think before I charge fraud on Abigail, and I will think on it. Let you look to your own improvement before you go to judge your husband any more. I have forgot Abigail, and--

Elizabeth: And I.
Proctor: Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven months since she is gone. I have not moved from here to there without I think to please you, and still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak but I am doubted, every moment judged for lies, as though I come into a court when I come into this house!

Elizabeth: John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now you--

Proctor: I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth--now she would justify herself: John, I am only--

Proctor: No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and, like a Christian, I confessed. Confessed! Some dream I must have mistaken you for God that day. But you're not, you're not, and let you remember it! Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not.

Elizabeth: I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John--with a smile--only somewhat bewildered.

Proctor, laughing bitterly: Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer!

Proctor will not allow himself to be forgiven anymore than he will allow his wife to forget her role as judge. When she tries to back away from giving judgment he prompts her with double-meaning commands which say, in essence, "Judge me harshly, judge me coldly."

Actually Elizabeth helps John control what he believes are his animalistic tendencies. Without her he would have no protection against his own sexuality. The two of them play their game with little harm done until Abigail, the Innocent Victim-Patsy, begins to act up. Evil though
she may be, Abigail is sorely abused by both John and Elizabeth, who have not let her in on their game. She believes she is playing Rescuer to John's Victim because he has been dishonest with himself and her. Elizabeth tries to point this out to John when she realizes that Abigail means to have her dead so that she can become Proctor's wife:

Elizabeth, delicately: John—grant me this. You have a faulty understanding of young girls. There is a promise made in any bed—

Proctor, striving against his anger: What promise!

Elizabeth: Spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she may dote on it now—I am sure she does—and thinks to kill me, then to take my place.

As she urges him to set Abigail straight about their relationship ("Then go and tell her she's a whore"), Elizabeth further provokes Proctor's shame and calls forth from him protestations of his true identity ("When will you know me, woman?") which she professes to find good still:

Proctor: Woman, am I so base? Do you really think me base?

Elizabeth: I never called you base.

Proctor: Then how do you charge me with such a promise? The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl!

Elizabeth: Then why do you anger with me when I bid you break it?

Proctor: Because it speaks deceit, and I am honest! But I'll plead no more! I see now your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free.

Elizabeth, crying out: You'll tear it free—when you come to know that I will be your only wife, or no wife at all! She has an arrow in you yet, John Proctor, and you know it well!
The only way John Proctor is able to remove Abigail's "arrow" is to be reborn in his own eyes and in Elizabeth's. Yet he goes on playing his Goodman role though he believes himself a fraud. He also believes, though he denies it, that Elizabeth is god-like, or at least saintly—a fact which could well have intensified her frigidity. Both husband and wife, however, are victims in the sense that they accept the labels their society has for every aspect of emotional lives. Though John admits he has thought "softly" of Abigail, he has no choice but to label her whore and himself lecher. Their relationship is described in stallion and mare terms because those are the only terms available in that culture to describe extramarital sexual relationships. The character of Abigail is necessarily made more evil by the fact that she proclaims to "have seen some reddish work done at night" and has experienced an awakening she attributes to John Proctor's tutelage, though he deplores its memory. While John is constantly begging Elizabeth to know him for his goodness, Abigail is reminding him that he is "no wintery man," and that it was "John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart!" Claiming herself innocent before her experience with John, she reveals her new knowledge to him: "I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men!"

Though Miller assigns her the villain's role, Abigail has been treated rather shabbily by Proctor and his wife and
is not entirely responsible for transforming Proctor from Goodman to Lecher. But the society of the time, like their Devil, is precise and Proctor's soft feelings about Abigail, like her own thwarted love for him, must be converted to terms like whore and lecher, just as Proctor must be forced to admit that their affair took place "in the proper place--where my beasts are bedded." Permitted no alternatives, John must be shamed and Abigail must be turned toward vengeance.

Again, Proctor's character as depicted by Miller, is uncompromising to the point of fanaticism though one does not recognize his rigidity at first because he has been involved with Abigail. His adultery, however, is not symptomatic of his looseness where principles are involved--a fact which leads ultimately to his undoing. Having been virtually overpowered by what he considers his worst instincts, he finds it necessary to search within himself endlessly until he re-discovers his best instincts. For as Miller has it, "Our opposites are always robed in sexual sin," and John Proctor's task is to find in himself the goodness that will counteract the evil forces he allowed to dominate him.

Throughout the play there is a great deal of role changing and interchanging as the clergy, personified by the Reverends Parris and Hale, are mistaken for men of religion when in reality they are found to be in godless pursuit of fame and intellectual achievement. The Law, as represented
by Danforth or Hathorne, becomes interested only in preserving the status quo and perpetuating itself as a system. All of the expected Rescuers of men become men's Persecutors under fire, just as Abigail becomes the Persecutor when she attempts to rescue John from Elizabeth. As in the vision of evil which causes Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown to lose his faith, *The Crucible* too sets out a vision of the evil hidden beneath the masks of the "Goodmen" and their "Goodies," whose diseased imaginations provide the American nightmare with its favorite dreams. The foolhardiness of Proctor's suicidal rejection of his pardon is one of those dreams. Though most of us prefer life, the absence of glory has not escaped our notice. Therefore, when John Proctor's opportunity for heroism arrives, wherein he may exonerate his past and fulfill the finest ideals of his society, the audience is able to accept Elizabeth's words: "He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!"

Some useful comparisons between *The Crucible* and *Antigone* will conclude our discussion of *The Crucible*. I see many similarities between Elizabeth Proctor and the Sophoclean Ismene. Of all the characters in *The Crucible*, Elizabeth, oddly enough, shows the most growth and self-awareness, a fact which is corroborated by her willingness to accept some share of responsibility for John's adultery. I am referring now to Elizabeth's much commented upon "It were a cold house I kept" speech. Elizabeth and Ismene are similar in that both women grow beyond their circumscribed women's
roles when they are put to the test. Neither of them is permitted in the Hero's script to develop fully, nor are they able to respond when first called upon to act beyond their female stereotypes. But they do grow and, especially in Miller's universe, this is an important sign.

That Proctor is persecuted and that he does assume a martyr's role is true only in the context of his society. However, had he behaved so uncompromisingly at other times in other places, he would have been counted rash and suicidal. But in Salem in 1692, in the United States in 1956 and in Europe of the 1400's, men were persecuted and martyred because certain power structures found themselves threatened with a loss of authority. And perhaps it is at times such as these that hysteria arises among the people which allows them to become participants in their own persecution, for surely both persecutors and victims are actively involved in the same madness--the game of "Persecute the Martyr"--with satisfying results all around.

In The Crucible the victims, epitomized by Rebecca Nurse--all cooperate in their own persecution. The tribunal set up to pronounce judgment upon them is a function of their own self-chosen system as is their method of prosecution. The very concept of martyrdom is an outgrowth of this kind of society in which every individual has a narrowly circumscribed identity which labels him either saint or sinner. The roles assigned to saints or sinners are equally limited to Accuser, Persecutor, Judge, or Victim. The object of
their game is to place persecutors and victims in close enough juxtaposition for them to start acting upon one another—a goal readily accomplished by the Accusers, a chorus of bewitched young maidens led by the chief Persecutor, Abigail, who while professing to do God's work is, in reality, in league with the Devil. Miller tries to go beyond the times to generalize Proctor's tragic potentiality, which to a certain extent he does. But what prevents Proctor from achieving heroic status is the extremely personal quality of Proctor's choice of the martyr role in preference to the lecher role without first seeking viable alternatives. Evidently, this problem occurred to Miller also because he wrote about this subject in reviewing a revival of the play in 1958. Though he believes himself "not unaware of psychology or immune to the fascinations of the neurotic hero," he thinks "it is no longer possible to contain the truth of the human situation so totally without a single man's guts as the bulk of our plays presuppose."¹ Clearly Miller tried in The Crucible to universalize "the conflict between a man's raw deeds and his conception of himself." But whether he succeeded or not is another matter. Miller does not believe The Crucible to be a romantic play; he thinks instead that it is a universalization of a problem which confronts modern man:

The vast majority of us know now—not merely as knowledge but as feeling, feeling capable of expression in

art—that we are being formed, that our alternatives in life are not absolutely our own, as the romantic play must inevitably presuppose.¹

In Miller's eyes, then, the problems confronted in The Crucible and Death of a Salesman—indeed, in all of his work—have classical validity not for ancient but for modern man. His conception of what took place in Salem in 1692 attempts to mythologize that part of the American experience by tying to John Proctor's fate to one that has been universal—the martyr's fate.

A View From the Bridge

In Anouilh's Eurydice, a character called Monsieur Henri defines for Orpheus the curious dichotomy that exists between those we call ordinary human beings—"common clay"—and heroes. The ordinary beings are:

... people you can't imagine dead. And then, there are the others—the noble ones, the heroes. The ones you can quite well imagine lying shot, pale and tragic; one minute triumphant with a guard of honor, and the next being marched away between two gendarmes.²

Neither John Proctor nor Eddie Carbone fit into the last category at first glance; yet they do arrive there in the end. Proctor, of course, can be considered a much more acceptable hero than Eddie because he has sacrificed his life for a socially laudable ideal—or so it appears. Carbone, on the other hand, seems another matter entirely. The breach of honor he commits brings serious consequences

¹Ibid.
to people for whom he has professed loyalty and, what is more, he commits this serious breach of honor to compensate for the shame he feels over his illicit desires for his niece. In trying to compensate by sacrificing his life to prevent his name from being dishonored he is not unlike John Proctor; however, the big difference lies in the fact that Eddie covers one anti-social act with another and Proctor looks for an honorable way to clear his conscience of sin, and he succeeds in finding his way, while Eddie only thinks he succeeds. Though Eddie Carbone would seem to be a most unlikely hero, Miller finds something in his spirit which deserves recognition, but which was evidently not apparent to the playwright until, of necessity, he revised the first version of the play. Writes Miller:

In revising the play it became possible to accept for myself the implication I had sought to make clear in the original version which was that however one might dislike this man, who does all sorts of frightful things, he possesses or exemplifies the wondrous and humane fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided, of right, dignity, and justice.

Until the play was revised, says Miller, Eddie "had appeared as a kind of biological sport," but after it fell into correct focus, he was able to understand better the characters of the wife and niece who

... instead of remaining muted counterparts to the march of Eddie's career, became involved forces pressing him forward or holding him back and eventually forming, in part, the nature of his disaster.¹

¹Miller, Collected Plays, p. 51.
The earlier play, a one-acter,\(^1\) was Miller's effort to tell a myth-like story without embellishment or exposition so that nothing could interfere with the fateful enactment of the tale. His first effort, however, did not achieve the desired effect when staged, and so was sent back to be re-worked into the full two-act drama now included in the *Collected Plays*. It is the revised version with its expanded supporting roles and its focus on Eddie's psychological agony that is of interest here.

Even in its two-act version, *A View From the Bridge* is pared down to bare essentials which allow only hints of cause and effect relationships. It is, nevertheless, in keeping with the finest Aristotelian advice that unity is best achieved through the elimination of all inconsequential events, so that *A View From the Bridge*, even in expanded form, may be said to be Miller's most classically fashioned tragedy.

For Miller the story of Eddie Carbone seems to have grown gradually in his mind from the barest outlines of tragic form to the more individualized figures of the three central characters in the two act play. The preparation for this play lies in the Greek tragedies themselves and in the startling truth of their influence on contemporary life. Beyond the forces which led John Proctor to choose the cleansing ministry of the scaffold over the contaminating

agencies of life lies the sexual terror which the Freudians believe is at the root of our most violent acts. In his illuminating article, "Self-Destruction and Sexual Perversion," Dr. Weisman suggests that the only differences between ancient and modern ideas regarding the idealization of death are superficial functions of modern vocabulary. In truth, ... there is a long but strong thread which connects humanity and its heroes with themes of life-in-death-in-life. Tristan, Oedipus, Abelard, and Faust are among the most prominent examples. Triumphant death and idealized self destruction permeate many legends and myths. After all, martyrdom is a strategy as well as a sacrifice.

He talks about the strategy of martyrdom as a formula whose simple notation is "Suffering → death → resurrection," in other words, purposeful suffering and goal-directed death. Says Weisman:

... some people may be willing to undergo almost any hardship, pain, sacrifice, suffering, or martyrdom if they can be assured a final rebirth into glory.

That the motivating factor behind self-destruction can be its direct opposite, self-preservation, has been suggested. Weisman suggests in addition that sexual perversion may have the same function. But by going beyond this point and purposely "choosing self-extinction, along with abrogation of genital relations in order to become reinstated in a more or less idealized world," the persons

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 266.
involved were really trying "to defend themselves against overwhelming forces by using defeat as an instrument of victory."

Without entering more deeply into the psychological complexities of Eddie Carbone's actions, it is fair to say that he approximates the behavior of at least one of the cases discussed in Dr. Weisman's essay. His life, like theirs, is "highly sexualized" despite his renunciation of sexual relationships with his wife, and for him "other people had little independent reality; they were only playing roles determined by the script of an inner drama." Like the other self-destructives, Eddie's mode of suicide is highly significant and appropriate to his inner conflicts. It does, indeed, supply the key to his frenzy and to the classical problem represented in this drama.

Though most interpretations of the play focus upon Eddie's incestuous attraction to his niece, this analysis proves inadequate in the light of Eddie's psychological and cultural self-destructiveness: he commits a breach of the code he most believes in to achieve the death he wishes to attain; he actually forces Marco to inflict death upon him in order to transcend his dishonor.

Until the arrival of the two submarines, Eddie is actually well adjusted to a counterscript situation which successfully keeps his self-destructive tendencies in check.

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1 Ibid., p. 289.
2 Ibid., p. 286.
providing him with an unattainable sex object (Catherine) and a nurturing mother figure to protect him from having to actualize his repressed desires. The adaptation works until two events happen: Catherine reaches sexual maturity, Rudolfo arrives, begins to woo her, and thereby gains the object round unattainable. These events mark the end of Eddie's counterscript and the beginning of his tragic script. As Alfieri tells the audience:

Carbone had never expected to have a destiny. A man works, raises his family, goes bowling, eats, gets old, and then he dies. Now as the weeks passed, there was a future, there was a trouble that would not go away.

Eddie recognizes in Rudolfo a rival of such power that it becomes necessary to destroy either himself or the young man to preserve his own manly identity. His major struggle becomes a conflict between his overpowering desire to be a passive recipient of female nurturing on the one hand, and an aggressive contender in the battle for masculine dominance on the other. Finally, he renders himself impotent to escape these threats to his masculinity.

As the most classically tragic of Miller's plays, this play best reveals the Hamartic script in its most virulent form—a self-conceived tragic drama created to keep the individual from a fate literally worse than death. For Eddie, the Hamartic script becomes protection against the self-knowledge which would be more destructive to his ego-ideal than breaking an incest taboo—the knowledge of his sexual inadequacy. For him "the illumination that kills" is the vision of death as consummation and transcendence. Once freed of
his overwhelming passions he is able to return like a babe to his mother's arms. But quite another problem arises when the effects of his uncontrolled passions are seen in relationship to his family and society. As Nelson points out, Eddie's "inner crisis does not exist in a psychological vacuum but is irrevocably welded to his communal being."¹ This fact does add more weight to the concept that Miller writes "social" plays, yet one could hardly describe A View From the Bridge in the same terms that An Enemy of the People, for example, is described. The Hamartic script, however, does have social ramifications just as the heroic action does. No man exists in a vacuum.

As he did in The Crucible, Miller builds his drama around a trio of characters, one male and two female. This is the trio of the counterscript which represents a socially acceptable triangular arrangement: husband, wife, and daughter. The trouble arises in the counterscript when the wife becomes mother and the daughter (niece) is looked upon as wife. Thus the beginning of Eddie's sexual confusion is his niece's maturity and sudden physical attractiveness: The first indication of Eddie's discomfiture is when he tells Catherine:

Eddie: Listen, you been givin' me the willies the way you walk down the street, I mean it.

Catherine: Why?

Eddie: Catherine, I don't want to be a pest, but I'm tellin' you you're walking wavy.

Catherine: I'm walkin' wavy?

Eddie: Not don't aggravate me, Katie, you are walkin' wavy! I don't like the looks they're givin' you in the candy store. And with them new high heels on the sidewalk--clack, clack, clack. The heads are turnin' like windmills.

Inarticulate as he is, Eddie is able to convey here something of what is happening in his own mind: the "clack, clack, clack" of heels on the sidewalk is haunting him and aggravating his sexual tension. Rudolfo's appearance, Bea's complaints, and Catherine's infatuation with the Italian youth bring him to the point of unbearable frustration until he cannot contain his agony. It is at this point that he seeks help from Alfieri, who is powerless to do anything but suggest Eddie's unhealthy attachment to Catherine. By this time, however, Eddie is so overwhelmed with his confusing emotions toward Rudolfo that he is beyond help. Even Beatrice, the mother-wife, cannot offer him protection. Her own position, in fact, becomes very shaky. She too has an identity which is being threatened by Eddie's disturbance. There is a breaking down of all of the defense mechanisms that have held Eddie in check. For example, he no longer calls Catherine "Madonna." Since he knows that madonnas are virginal and not to be touched, he has been safe and able to experience a forbidden sexual involvement vicariously. Furthermore, his masculinity received strong bolstering from Catherine's dependence upon him for the necessities of
life. In the very first scene he demonstrates his munificence by permitting her to take a job and by allowing Beatrice to smuggle her relatives in from Sicily. Despite these superficially cordial gestures, it soon becomes apparent that all is not well with the couple. When Beatrice finally asks: "When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?" Eddie pleads illness.

**Eddie:** I ain't been feelin' good. They bother me since they came.

**Beatrice:** It's almost three months you don't feel good; they're only here a couple of weeks. It's three months, Eddie.

**Eddie:** I don't know, B. I don't want to talk about it.

**Beatrice:** What's the matter, Eddie, you don't like me, heh?

**Eddie:** What do you mean, I don't like you? I said I don't feel good, that's all.

**Beatrice:** Well, tell me, am I doing something wrong? Talk to me.

**Eddie**--Pause. He can't speak, then: I can't. I can't talk about it.

**Beatrice:** Well tell me what--

**Eddie:** I got nothin' to say about it!

Just as he is unable to explain himself to Beatrice, he is also evasive when he seeks advice from Alfieri. But he ends his inquiry with a most striking description of Rudolfo, who according to Eddie "ain't right" because he has blond hair and a tenor voice and "he looked so sweet there, like an angel--you could kiss him he was so sweet."

With Beatrice as Protector and Rescuer in the
counterscript, Marco becomes Protector and Rescuer in the Hamartic script. Eddie is the Hero-Victim of both script and counterscript and the object of the script is for Eddie to destroy himself in such a way as to attain glory and transcendence. Marco helps him do this. But not before Eddie goes to a great deal of maneuvering to force him into it. Eddie himself struggles for a solution by seeking Alfieri's help and finally by breaking the code of honor of his community. It is this last maneuver that brings him into open conflict with Marco, who obligingly helps him destroy himself completely.

The encounter that might be considered the breaking point for Eddie takes place when he boxes with Rudolfo and deals him a staggering blow. Marco then becomes aware of Eddie's hostility toward Rudolfo and he demonstrates his understanding of the situation through a show of physical strength; he raises a chair with one hand and holds it over the head of Eddie who has been unable to perform this feat. This is the end of the first act and the turning point in the tragic script. From here on Eddie is immersed in script behavior and all hope for a happier solution is abandoned.

At the beginning of the second act, Eddie encounters Catherine and Rudolfo alone and orders Rudolfo from the house. Eddie has been drinking, his defenses have been set aside, and when Catherine tells him she intends to leave with Rudolfo, all hell breaks loose:
Eddie: You ain't goin' nowheres.

Catherine: Eddie, I'm not gonna be a baby any more! You--

_He reaches out suddenly, draws her to him, and as she strives to free herself he kisses her on the mouth._

Rudolfo: Don't! He pulls on Eddie's arm. Stop that! Have respect for her!

Eddie, spun around by Rudolfo: You want something?

Rudolfo: Yes! She'll be my wife. That is what I want. My wife!

Eddie: But what're you gonna be?

Rudolfo: I show you what I be!

Catherine: Wait outside; don't argue with him!

Eddie: Come on, show me! What're you gonna be? Show me!

Rudolfo, with tears of rage: Don't say that to me!

_Rudolfo flies at him in attack. Eddie pins his arms, laughing, and suddenly kisses him._

The scene ends with Catherine breaking in to tear them apart, leaving Eddie "with tears rolling down his face as he laughs mockingly at Rudolfo."

At this point Alfieri relates Eddie's final visit to him when he warns him of the consequences of his actions, saying:

_The law is only a word for what has a right to happen. When the law is wrong it's because it's unnatural, but in this case it is natural and a river will drown you if you buck it now. Let her go. And bless her._

_But Alfieri knows that he is asking the impossible and even as he speaks the phone booth appears from the darkness opposite him. He knows the dye is cast, for Eddie has told him of the fatal kiss, insisting: "I'm tellin' you I_
know--he ain't right. Somebody that don't want it can break it. Even a mouse . . ."

The rest is all very simple. Eddie informs, Marco and Rudolfo are taken into custody then released for Catherine and Rudolfo's wedding. Rudolfo comes to warn Eddie that Marco will seek vengeance and, incidentally, to ask his friendship, which Eddie of course rejects. By this time, however, there is a greater issue at stake--Eddie's honor has been discredited. (Catherine calls him a rat and tells Beatrice, "He bites people when they sleep! He comes when nobody's lookin' and poisons decent people.") The world is tumbling down on Eddie but he must, despite all efforts to save him, live out his destruction. Since he has subdued Rudolfo, he can no longer look to him for destruction:

Beatrice: Only blood is good? He kissed your hand!

Eddie: What he does don't mean nothin' to nobody!

When Beatrice tells Eddie, "You want somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her!" he is horrified:

Eddie, crying in agony: That's what you think of me--that I would have such thoughts?

His entire effort now is redeeming his name, which he accuses Marco of ruining: "Wipin' the neighborhood with my name like a dirty rag! I want my name, Marco . . . Now gimme my name and we go together to the wedding."

The wedding Eddie goes to is between himself and his fate. Unable to live as the man he wishes to be, he elects to die fighting for the name he believes someone else has
blackened. By the end of the play Eddie has forgotten his own part in the betrayal of the submarines--his illegal immigrant guests--forgotten that he has betrayed his neighborhood code of honor as well as the time-honored laws of hospitality and protection owed to guests under his roof. Like his ancient ancestress, Phaedra, Eddie's solution to the all-consuming passions which shame him is to murder the physical being that has been his betrayer--himself. And like the Phaedra of Euripides and Racine, he does not come to that fatal point until he has wreaked destruction upon all who love him. His Hamartic suicide script, "The Tragedy of the Honorable Man Dishonored," has in reality been the history of a man caught in the net of his own destructive passions, consumed by them and, ultimately, seeking and finding what to him seems the honorable way of redeeming his name but in actuality is the least destructive way for him to escape a reality too painful to bear.

From Eddie's view--the Glory Mountain view--he is "saved" and transcendent at the end, and from Alfieri's view--the view from the Bridge--he seems as tragic as the ancient heroes of old Calabria. We ourselves may wonder at the meaning of Alfieri's comment that "he allowed himself to be purely known," for surely in the end only the fury of Eddie's unleashed passions were purely known; yet, that he tried to preserve his own vision of that perverse purity which worked in him--defending it in the only way he knew--makes him eternally human and somewhat admirable after all.
CHAPTER V

AFTER THE FALL: THE ENDLESS PLAIN

The troubles of the mountains lie behind us
Before us lie the troubles of the plains.
--Bertolt Brecht

It was not so easy to return to Ithaca.
--Albert Camus

Asked if his work had grown more or less idealistic over the years, Arthur Miller replied, "It's no less idealistic, but it is less morally apocalyptic." In essence, his response describes the direction the present study has taken. Beginning with the highly controversial play, After the Fall, there is a turning point: Miller's drama does become less "morally apocalyptic," as he puts it, yet it seems surely no less idealistic. The change, most significantly, is marked by the absence of suicides in the plays that follow After the Fall. Though there is the usual martyr script played out by one character in Incident at Vichy--the Prince, Von Berg--his sacrifice does save another human being so it may be considered a solution to finding an honorable way to die, if one is determined to die.

An important change has occurred, then, one which can

1 Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 95.
2 Evans, Ibid., p. 36.
be seen as the antithesis of the earlier script and counter-script solutions to dealing with life. The view from Glory Mountain has been abandoned for the prospectus of the endless plain. It is possible now to see things in a new light, to suggest that life can be lived without benefit of the script. One may allow his own clearer adult perceptions to drown out the witch parents' injunctions by facing reality and learning that no human being is exempt from suffering, from evil, or from downright idiocy. Just as Miller's predecessors came to regard human endurance as a less spectacular but equally heroic alternative to suicide, the now aging playwright appears to have reached a stage in which his answers emerge from the direction of compromise and acceptance of human frailty. Paralleling the Freudian acknowledgement and acceptance of the "radical imperfectibility of man,"¹ he too finds that man may kill and be kind and that everyone is guilty of hurting or murdering the thing he loves.

Symptoms of Miller's diminishing ferocity can be detected as early as _All My Sons_. To be sure, there is irony in Kate's last word, "Live!" but there is also challenge and ambiguity in the mother's attempt to release her son from a self-perpetuating death-dealing environment. Charlie's "Nobody dast blame this man" speech is a plea for understanding and compromise on Biff's part, though admittedly it carries with it the rather hollow ring of funeral oratory.

¹Hyman, _ibid._, p. 201.
Alfieri's choral interludes—the most open endorsements of the new view, the compromise—state the position clearly. His "most of the time now we settle for half and I like it better," marks a turning away from the self-destructive, death-oriented illusion of the Hamartic script toward the self-preserving life in which the less rigid man compromises, strives to be rational, retains some measure of pride, and lives.

**A Memory of Two Mondays**

*A Memory of Two Mondays*, written as a companion to the one act version of *A View From the Bridge*, is also a theatre piece of transitional character. Miller calls the play a tragic-comedy, claiming it as his favorite among the works in his *Collected Plays*. It is autobiographical, low-keyed, grounded in reality, but impressionistic. The characters are seen through the eyes of Bert (young Miller), a young man at his first job, experiencing for the first time life outside the family and neighborhood circles. Bert is employed in an auto parts warehouse where he observes the lives of the other human ants who drag their hours and hopes across an aimless length of Mondays through Fridays in praise of nothing. For the first time Miller, in this play, alternates prose and poetry rendering Bert's soliloquies in verse form:

It's like the subway;
Every day I see the same people getting on
And the same people getting off,
And all that happens is that they get older. God! Sometimes it scares me; like all of us in the World. Were riding back and forth across a great big room. From wall to wall and back again. And no end ever! Just no end!

As the only character to escape the endless ravaging of human spirit in this purposeless depository of miscellaneous auto parts, Bert learns from the hopeless lives which pass before him of the importance of striving for a better way of life. In true Horatio Alger style, Bert gets to leave the warehouse behind him because he has worked toward a worthwhile goal—college. At the close of the play he leaves the warehouse vowing not to forget the people he has worked with who have all but forgotten him before he is out of sight.

The most unforgettable character in A Memory of Two Mondays is Gus, the oldest employee in the warehouse and a Hamartic hero. The sixty-eight year old Greek, vividly drawn by Miller, is a self-destructive par excellence with a cast of down-hearted spirits who abet and torment one another in their self-destruction day after day in the gloomy warehouse. Gus stands out from the rest by virtue of his passion for recognition; he is never silent or inconspicuous but fills the stage with an insistence that marks him from the beginning as doomed for destruction. When Gus's sick wife dies while he is on one of his weekend sprees (during which he has neglected to phone her), he squanders her insurance money on a mad spending, boozing, and carousing spree, suffers a heart attack in a taxi cab, and dies.
surrounded by the girls he has picked up along the way.
Bert observes that Gus had never indicated his great love
for his wife, but takes it for granted that guilt over this
desperate love led Gus to his death.

Surprisingly, though, *A Memory of Two Mondays* is not
altogether the saccarine memory play that one might expect.
It is instead a record of the true bitter-sweet growth of a
young man entering upon the world of harsh reality and adult
confusion. Basically what Bert witnesses is similar to
David Freiber's experience--the pageant of despair, of hopes
ground into hopelessness and dreams into self-destructive
illusions. His friend Kenneth, newly arrived from Ireland
with nothing to sustain him and support his dreams, turns to
alcohol, the poems in his head fading as the alcohol dulls
his once bright memory. A turning point is reached in the
play when Gus, defending Tom Kelly, the office alcoholic,
threatens to quit if Tom is fired. In the midst of his
tirade ("Come on, he gonna fire me now, son-of-a-bitch!")
Gus is called to the phone to be told of his wife's death.
Tom is given another chance and Kenneth, being suddenly
stirred to action by Gus's words to Tom ("Don't let nobody
walk on top you. Be man.'") suggests that he and Bert wash
the warehouse windows:

Kenneth: It'll be nice to watch the seasons pass.
'That pretty up there now, a real summer sky
And a little white cloud goin' over?
I can just see autumn comin' in
And the leaves falling on the gray days.
You've got to have a sky to look at!

The hope is quickly dimmed by the fact that the clean
windows reveal a bawdy house next door, which proves to be a great distraction to the male employees. Kenneth, incensed, complains to the boss, Mr. Eagle:

Kenneth: ... There's got to be somethin' done about this, Mr. Eagle. It's an awful humiliation for the women here. He points and Eagle looks. I mean to say, it's a terrible disorganizing sight starin' a man in the face eight hours a day, sir.

Eagle: Shouldn't have washed the windows, I guess.

Gus begins drinking, goes on his spree and dies; Kenneth, too, starts to drink and to make escuses. Bert finds that Kenneth Has lost several jobs in the past and admonishes him for his drinking. Kenneth's answer, coming from the growing fortress of his defensiveness is reminiscent of Pinter's Caretaker, Davies, who rationalizes that he can't work because he can't get working papers because he can't find shoes comfortable enough to take him to town to get working papers--the vicious cycle of excuses which signify the hamartic personality:

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

He tells other employees that Bert can carry out his dream of going to college because:

... he's just got some strong idea in his mind. That's the thing, y'know. I often conceive them myself, but I'm all the time losin' them, though. It's the holdin' on--that's what does it. You can almost see it in him, y'know? He's holdin' on to somethin'

Bert's leave-taking is spoiled by the news that Gus has flung his life away in a final, hamartic gesture of
defiance. The boy's departure is hardly noticed, but he thinks:

Oh, there ought to be a statue in the park--
"To All the Ones That Stay."
One to Larry, to Agnes, Tom Kelly, Gus ...  

The poetry, punctuated by "Gees" and "Gods," gets a bit sentiment-al at times, but it does reflect the boy's growing awareness of the world, though his self knowledge--why he escapes and others don't--remains beyond his understanding. Miller wrote the play, he says, "to define for myself the value of hope, why it must arise, as well as the heroism of those who know, at least, how to endure its absence."¹ Toward the end Bert dedicates himself to these people:

I know I'll remember them as long as I live,  
As long as I live they'll never die,  
And still I know that in a month or two  
They'll forget my name, and mix me up  
With another boy who worked here once  
And went. Gee, it's a mystery!

Miller explains that

... from this endless environment, a boy emerges who will not accept its defeat or its mood as final, and literally takes himself off on a quest for a higher gratification.²

No great illuminations emerge from this retrospective, yet something else--a new deepening of vision perhaps--seems to be germinating. The absence of a "moral apocalypse" is thoroughly in keeping with the quieter mood of the play and hopelessness, instead of leading to suicide, leads to a conviction on Bert's part that nothing must be final except

¹Collected Plays, p. 49.
²Ibid.
death. The boy emerges to face the future less innocently, but with hope. However, the mystery remains for Bert, as it did for David Freiber, somewhat unsolvable. Whatever it is that gives some men the strength to hold on to something and turns other men to "jellyfish" still represents an enigma beyond the reach of Miller's characters. More and more, however, as they begin to cope with life in less spectacular terms, some tentative solutions begin to appear.

The Misfits

Driving west between Salt Lake City and Reno, the traveler is warned to do the desert at night to avoid the baking sun. What one is not prepared for is the improbable garishness of Reno in the early dawn. In the morning the "Biggest Little City On Earth" has the look of a movie set scheduled to be struck that afternoon—all pasteboard and paint. People looking as if they had never been trapped before by early sunlight and are angry at the indignity scurry for shelter. Later on the streets become suddenly alive: quick marriages, quick divorces, quick fortunes made and lost in a few moments. In the distance the mountains, permanent, intimidating, form an uncomfortable contrast. It is in these mountains that Miller's short story, "The Misfits" (1957), takes place. The cinematic novel—a combination of "The Misfits" and "Please Don't Kill Anything," another short story—is set in both the mountains and the city, as is the film, The Misfits. The film and the novel
are quite different from the short story because they center about the figure of Roslyn, who does not appear in the story except in the thoughts of the three men, Gay Langland, Guido Racanelli, and Perce Howland. The addition of the female role, particularly when it was the female in "Please Don't Kill Anything," presents the conflict which was not present in the story of three down-and-out cowboys enjoying a mustang hunt in the mountains. The situation is somewhat parallel to inviting a member of the S.P.C.A. to a seal hunt. It is difficult to understand exactly why Roslyn joins this expedition to begin with. On the other hand, perhaps the presence of Marilyn Monroe, the inspiration for "Please Don't Kill Anything," is explanation enough for any unlikelihood.

Both the film and the short story treat a very interesting phenomenon in the United States--the vanishing Western hero, the Cowboy in decline. The film asks the question, "What happens to the cowboy when the doggies have all gone along and the West no longer needs to be won?" And the answer seems to be an American version of La Dolce Vita done to the hum of roulette wheels and clicking dice for background music. Booze, women, and, western style circus--the rodeo--are part of the answer. The other part is turning the once-honorable mustang hunt into a travesty in which the last of the wild creatures are hunted for dogfood--at six cents a pound!

Upon this decadent scene comes Roslyn, "a golden girl," with what Guido identifies as "the gift of life." In
truth, she is a love-starved misfit in Reno to divorce the 
husband who wasn't "there" when she needed him: "you could 
touch him but he wasn't there." After telling him, "If I'm 
going to be alone, I want to be alone by myself," Roslyn 
picks up with Guido and Gay. The latter becomes her lover 
and, like the husband in "Please Don't Kill Anything," 
learns to stop killing things. Gay, however, learns the 
lesson in a spectacular manner--in a fight with a wild mus-
tang. He wins and sets the horse free--much to the annoyance 
of Guido, whose concept of life is limited to practicalities.

Perce, the third male in the trio, and the youngest, 
is a rodeo cowboy who specializes in getting his bones broken 
by bucking broncos and bulls, and is also touched by Roslyn 
because, "Nobody ever cried for me. Not for a long time, 
anyway..." Roslyn does cry and worry and mother him when he 
is injured and he, consequently, helps her to free the mus-
tangs the men have captured on their hunt. Each of the 
three men makes a bid for Roslyn's affections but it is Gay 
who ultimately wins out because he is strong enough to re-
capture the stallion and to release it. When Guido ques-
tions his action, he replies: "Just ... done it. Don't 
like nobody makin' up my mind for me, that's all." But his 
action brings Guido's scorn because it is a rejection of the 
last remnants of the life they all considered "better than 
wages." Before he drives off with Roslyn, Guido reminds him 
of the life he is about to embark upon:

Gay starts the engine and turns to Guido, who is on 
his side of the truck. 'See you around, Give you a call
in a couple days.'

Guido, his eyes sharpened with resentment, laughs. 'Where'll you be? Some gas station, polishing windshields?'

'You got me there, Pilot.' Gay turns forward and starts the truck rolling.

Guido jumps onto the running board, laughing and yelling at him: 'Or making change in the supermarket!' Guido jumps off, and makes a megaphone of his hands, furiously calling: 'Try the laundromat--they might need a fella to load the machines!'

Riding back Gay and Roslyn reconcile. She tells him:

... it's crazy!--I suddenly thought, "he must love me, or how would I dare do this?" Because I always just ran away when I couldn't stand it. Gay--for a minute you made me not afraid. And it was like my life flew into my body. For the first time.

To her question, "What is there that stays?" he replies:

God knows. Everything I ever see was comin' or goin' away. Same as you. Maybe the only thing is ... the knowin'. 'Cause I know you now, Roslyn, I do know you. Maybe that's all the peace there is or can be. I never bothered to battle a woman before. And it was peaceful, but a lot like huggin' the air. This time I thought I'd lay my hand on the air again--but it feels like I touched the whole world. I bless you, girl.

And the two of them ride off into the night following a star they hope will lead them back to something they can hold on to. Both have forsaken the script and the games and have shown themselves bare beneath the masks, but the question still hangs in the air--"Where'll you be?"

The role of Roslyn, conceived by Miller for his wife, Marilyn Monroe, is supposedly based on the actress's own personality; that it is not much different than her public image perhaps explains the subsequent break-up of their marriage when the film was completed. There is something in the character of Roslyn that defies knowing, and it is that
intangible, that so-called innocence which is really an inability to cope with reality that sends her into situations which she cannot tolerate. To say, as she does at the rodeo, that she "didn't know it was so dangerous" is to ignore reality, which she does consistently. What she does, actually, is play a four-handed game of what Berne calls, "Let's You and Him Fight"; she sets three men in competition for her favors and the best man wins. Unlike the tragic games, the ending to this game pays off advantageously, which makes it a good game. In life, however, such games don't usually work out that well--at least they don't seem to have worked for the stars of this movie. Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, and Montgomery Clift, all Hamartic heroes in their own right--Gable insistent upon doing his own wrestling with the stallion, Monroe always on the brink of suicide, and Clift addicted to racing cars and devil-may-care living--were all dead within a short time after the film was released, and in a sense, like their film counterparts, were all misfits.

Marilyn Monroe, the second Mrs. Miller, committed suicide in August of 1962, two years after she and Miller were divorced and one year after the film, The Misfits was released. The film was not a great success at the box office--it was too serious, too depressing perhaps, for even stars like Gable and Monroe to carry it off. The actors, larger than life, charismatic beings who led their lives on

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1Berne, Games People Play, p. 123.
the fine edge of doom were appropriately eulogized by the film which pictures the last of a dying breed, the American cowboy who, together with the mustang and the Hollywood star, is vanishing from the contemporary scene.

Diana Trilling's article on Marilyn Monroe's death, written about one year after the suicide, is filled with insight about the actress she had never met. Mrs. Trilling is particularly taken with Monroe's dynamism before the camera. "That she was alive in a way not granted the rest of us" Mrs. Trilling thinks is unquestionable; what is more, this aliveness does not seem to her incompatible with Monroe's suicidal inclinations:

Since her death it has occurred to me that perhaps the reason we were able to keep these two aspects in which we knew Marilyn Monroe--her life affirmation and her impulse to death--in such discreet balance was that they never presented themselves to us as mutually exclusive, but on the contrary, as two intimately related, even expectable facets of her extraordinary endowment. It is as if the world that loved Marilyn Monroe understood that her super-abundant biology had necessarily to provoke its own restraint, that this is the cruel law by which nature, or at least nature within civilization, punishes those of us who ask too much of life or bring too much to life.¹

Those of us who "settle for half and like it better" are perhaps less exciting than the lonely woman who swallowed the fatal dose of drugs on the night of August 4, 1962. Ayn Rand, for example, saw her suicide as a kind of social vengeance caused by envy from those less successful than she

was. Yet, says Ms. Rand,

She preserved her vision of life through a nightmare struggle, fighting her way to the top. What broke her was her discovery, at the top, of as sordid an evil as the one she had left behind—worse perhaps because incomprehensible.\(^1\)

But for Marilyn Monroe, whatever the reasons, the top of the mountain meant death. For others less endowed, those whose vision of life tells them life is to be lived, despite sorrow, despite guilt and shame, despite all, perhaps not on the rarified heights of glory, but on the patient, sinful and tedious bedrock of existence, lies the foundation of heroism. Not the glory mountain, but the endless plain describes the life that must be lived by most human beings.

Perhaps Miller's infatuation with suicidal characters never really ends, but in the plays we are about to examine there is a diminishing involvement with self-destruction and a decided leaning toward some sort of co-existence with society which is achieved painfully through struggle and self-examination. Strangely enough, the period of Miller's writing career we are turning to most closely approximates periods of change and resolution apparent in the works of Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare and Racine—the period which signifies a rejection of the heroic-hamartic ideal for one of endurance. The archetypes of the earlier period—Ajax, Antigone, Phaedra—are foresaken (not without reluc-

tance) for heartier mentors: figures such as Oedipus, old and dying, coming to rest in the sacred grove at Colonus; Odysseus returning to Ithaca after virtually going through Hades; Theseus suffering the losses of both his wife and son but going on to encourage his friend Heracles to survive his sorrows despite all. The most telling scene, perhaps the paradigm of endurance, is, in fact, the Euripides' *Heracles*, which depicts the great hero, Heracles (in strong contrast, by the way, to Ajax), who after having slain his wife and children during a spell of madness visited upon him by a vengeful godess, is persuaded by Theseus to "live and suffer." The hero's psychological progress is interestingly portrayed as an almost Christian resolution which reaches beyond heroic despair. In this play it is Hera who inflicts madness upon the unsuspecting hero, who awakens to find he has slaughtered his children. After contemplating suicide, mulling over the sad situation and speaking to Theseus, Heracles concludes:

Even in my misery I asked myself, would it not be cowardice to die? The man who cannot bear up under fate could never face the weapons of a man. I shall prevail against death ...

(1347-1351)¹

Theseus figures importantly in *Oedipus at Colonus* also, and in much the same way as he did in the *Heracles* play. Just as he offered Heracles a life of honor and a hero's burial, he offers Oedipus sanctuary when the broken old man comes to die in a sacred grove outside of Athens.

Oedipus, forsaken by all save Antigone, concludes in his last moments: "My sufferings/And my long life have taught me to endure."\(^1\)

The Odysseus character has figured in Miller's plays more prominently than one would suspect. Usually, somewhere on the sidelines, there is a model of sanity, compromise, moderation, and if the truth be told, success. Charlie is, after all, a successful business man, a capitalist and from what Miller tells us, "the most decent man in the play."\(^2\)

In *The Man Who Had All the Luck* sanity or compromise reside in such minor characters as the baseball talent scout, who tells Amos the truth about his chances for a career in baseball, and the owner of the mink ranch, who sells David his mink. The sanest person in *All My Sons* is Jim, who though he deplores it obeys necessity and meets his responsibilities. In *The Crucible* the Reverend Hale comes close to being an incipient Theseus figure when he begs Elizabeth to save John, arguing: "Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth?", though here it is more the worm image in combat with the transcendental illusion. In *A View From the Bridge*, Alfieri, a Compromiser, releases the heroic

\(^1\)Bowra translates this "Contentment have I learned from suffering/And my long years and from nobility," but I find the idea of contentment contradictory to Oedipus. Even immediately before he is to die, he is still fighting with his sons and Creon after all, and contrary to what Bowra suggests, he has not undergone a radical change. See Sir Maurice Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 352.

\(^2\)Collected Plays, p. 37
image--with some nostalgia and with reluctance, but it is relinquished at last: "And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be!/And so I mourn him--I admit--with a certain ... alarm." The alarm, the memory of the roll of drums, the dramatic gesture, and the glory at the mountain top are rich promises which come to naught in this world and Theseus has learned well through suffering himself. In the Hippolytus, as he bends over the body of his dying son, he moans, "would that I were a corpse, child, instead of you," but he is told by Artemis that he must endure the suffering he has caused:

Son of old Aegeus, take your son to your embrace. Draw him to you. Unknowing you killed him. It is natural for men to err when they are blinded by the Gods. Do not bear a grudge against your father. It was fate that you should die so.¹ (1431-1437)

Even as he tries to stir Heracles from his grief, Theseus is reminded by his old friend that his own past has not been unblemished by sorrow. Heracles counters Theseus's admonitions by asking: "When Hades held you prisoner, was your courage high?" And Theseus is forced to respond: "No; all my spirit turned to utter weakness then." But the two understand that they have both had weaknesses and grief and they go on together resolved to live, suffer and endure through friendship. Thus the desire for survival becomes all important in these later plays of the Greek tragedians.

The desire to survive, and the will to battle with

¹Hippolytus, p. 220.
the death instinct, is some part of the answer for Miller; what is more, it is the conflict between life and death forces which for him defines man that informs the later plays. Says Miller:

Perhaps a possible definition is that what makes a person human is the conflict in him between the forces of life and death ... I might add that for me as for most writers there is a perpetual mystery cloaking man, this very same question as to what in him so to speak drives him to death-dealing acts and attitudes toward himself, and what decrees his stumbling search for what is life-giving.1

The answer seems to be love, but love does not always give life: sometimes it promotes death. In After the Fall, Quentin, agonizing over Maggie's death, a suicide, questions the time-honored solution to problems of the soul and spirit:

But love, is love enough? What love, what wave of pity will ever reach this knowledge--I know how to kill? ... I know, I know--she was doomed in any case, but what will that cure? Or is it possible--he turns toward the tower, moves toward it as toward a terrible God--that this is not bizarre ... to anyone? And I am not alone, and no man lives who would not rather be the sole survivor of this place than all its finest victims!

After the Fall

The view in After the Fall is, again, very subjective and fairy tale parents are dredged out of the subconscious and conscious memory to be judged before the tribunal of good mental health. The change that has taken place is explained by the title: After the Fall, the question under investigation being, "How does one live in the illusion-free

1Evans, pp. 88-89.
world after the Fall?" Of all Miller's plays this one has caused the most dissension and the most venom from critics, primarily because it appears to be so blatantly autobiographical and confessional. But why confession should cause so much critical unrest is a mystery. It is not as though Miller had lived his life in a closet, after all. His plays, every one of them, have been somewhat autobiographical, and the details of his life have been far from private. But this play, coming as it did after a long period of absence from the theatre (from 1956 to 1964), seems to have given critics the opportunity to employ barbs they had been honing for years. Robert Brustein, for one, by his own admission a perennial anti-Millerite, feigning outrage brought this stiletto out of his arsenal:

Mr. Miller is dancing a spiritual striptease while the band plays mea culpa, a performance which is not concluded until every sequined veil has been snatched away from his sexual and political anatomy.¹

Brustein further accuses Miller of turning the audience into "Peeping Toms" by creating "a shameless piece of tabloid gossip, an act of exhibitionism which makes us all voyeurs."² And finally he concludes that "it is obvious that Arthur Miller's world is disintegrating."³ The blast was answered by Harold Clurman, a Miller devotee, who, on


²Ibid., p. 244.

³Ibid., p. 247.
the other hand commends the play's "auto-criticism" because it "liberates him [Miller] so that he can go free of false legend and heavy halo. Had he not written this play he might never have been able to write another."¹

Brustein's over-fastidious pretensions and Clurman's protective rationalization do little to get beneath the obvious surface of the play to the more interesting possibilities suggested, at last, by Freedman, who, happily, is untainted by the former notoriety and who observes "how remarkably unautobiographical the play tries to be."² His commentary, written in 1971, goes to great lengths to prove that Quentin in After the Fall is merely a typical American Jew of post World War II trying to come to terms with his conscience:

The autobiographical import of After the Fall, then, may be found in the very absence of truly significant autobiographical matter. The mea culpa rings hollow. (The presentation of the hero as a famous lawyer, delighted by the literary effectiveness of his briefs, is so transparent a masking, and so unpersuasive dramatically, that it almost appears as if Miller wanted to make sure that no one could seriously mistake the hero's identity.)³

That most critics have failed to notice the undisguised similarity between Miller's play and Camus' The Fall

¹Clurman, "Arthur Miller's Later Plays," in Corrigan, p. 152. Miller, by the way, recently named Clurman as the only good critic writing today--despite Clurman's resignation as director of The Creation of the World and Other Business (informal lecture at Notre Dame University, April 6, 1973).


³Ibid., pp. 50-51.
is most surprising. Camus' character, like Miller's Quentin, is a famous lawyer who has been responsible for the death of a young woman and is seeking some way to absolve himself and continue in good conscience to live. It will be remembered that Miller said of John Proctor that one of his problems was that his society had no provision for confession and absolution of sin. In this play Miller tries to pattern his sinner after the Frenchman, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the Advocate in Camus' The Fall, who also confesses to a listener of his own "profession" after the Fall.¹

Clamence has taken up residence in Amsterdam where he frequents sailors' bars and practices a double profession—he is a judge-penitent, as he calls it, whose job is somewhat strange. He tells the Listener:

> It consists to begin with, as you know from experience, in indulging in public confession as often as possible. I accuse myself up and down. It's not hard, for I now have acquired a memory. But let me point out that I don't accuse myself crudely, beating my breast... I mingle what concerns me and what concerns others. I choose the features we have in common, the experiences we have endured together, the failings we share—good form, in other words, the man of the hour as he is rife in me and in others. With all that I construct a portrait which is the image of all and of no one. A mask, in short, rather like those carnival masks which are both lifelike and stylized, so that they make people say: 'Why, surely I've met him!' When the portrait is finished, as it is this evening, I show it with great sorrow: 'This, alas, is what I am!' The prosecutor's charge is finished. But at the same time the portrait I hold out to my contemporaries becomes a mirror.²


Clamence states his task—to teach humanity of its vileness, to induce man to accept human nature as he does, so that they too may reside in "the holy innocence of those who forgive themselves."¹ He justifies his task because he has discovered an essential secret: "when we are all guilty, that will be democracy."²

Miller's play is an Americanization of the Camus novel, its experience, and its philosophy. The protagonist, Quentin, is not Arthur Miller but is instead a persona with Miller's characteristics. The device of confession is, like Clamence's ploy, a method of passing "from the 'I' to the 'we,'" in order to arrive at "this is what we are."³ The difference is that Miller makes his characters so familiar that we most naturally attribute them to people involved in Miller's life. Most of Miller's acquaintances are public figures and his own life has been made so public that it is difficult to avoid matching characters to live counterparts and vice versa. Nevertheless, the play is not the political and sexual "strip-tease" that Mr. Brustein would have it be. The strip-tease, like Clamence's confession, is a device which is meant to represent the action of any man living today and undergoing a certain kind of crisis. As Robert Whitehead, producer of After the Fall, points out:

certainly Mr. Miller was aware of the areas in his own life that he drew upon in creating the design of the

¹Ibid., p. 145.
²Ibid., p. 136.
³Ibid., p. 140.
play (particularly in the Maggie-Quentin relationship),
but his over-riding deep emotional concern was in
finally, conclusively, bringing Quentin to an under-
standing of himself, the unhappy world around him and
his complicity in it—and to enable him, thus armed, to
go forward and attempt to cope with it again.¹

The process through which Quentin arms himself to
face his unhappy world is indeed somewhat like a strip-
tease, except that each veil hides some aspect of Quentin's
reality and the shedding of veils is actually a coming to
grips with reality, leaving him stronger than before. Quen-
tin learns at last to be a separate person. After the Fall
may, indeed, be called a crisis play because it does depict
the mental processes by which this particular human being
re-evaluates his problems, renews his perceptions, and finds
new problem-solving mechanisms. In order to survive he is
forced to alter his own perception of himself ("I'm a
stranger to my life") and of the others around him. Maggie,
on the other hand, is looking for some way to destroy her-
self ("If I could only find an honorable way to die") and
Quentin realizes that he has been cast as the Persecutor in
her Hamartic script. As they grapple for the pills she is
threatening him with, he reads her the script:

Maggie, sliding off the bed, holding the pill bottle out
to him: No, I won't give them to Carrie. Only you.
You take them.

Quentin: Why do you want me to have them?

Maggie, extending them: Here.

Quentin, after a pause: Do you see it, Maggie? Right
now? You're trying to make me the one who does it to

¹Evans, Psychology and Arthur Miller, p. xiii.
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.

Trying to rouse Maggie to self-awakening, he tries to teach her a litany of painful truths:

... if you could only say, 'I have been cruel,' this frightening room would open. If you could say, 'I have been kicked around, but I have been just as inexcusably vicious to others, called my husband idiot in public, I have been utterly selfish despite my generosity, I have been hurt by a long line of men but I have cooperated with my persecutors--'

In return Maggie insists that Quentin has been ashamed of her and has lied to himself: "And you're still playing God! That's what killed me, Quentin!"

In order to marry Holga, the woman he has met after the Fall, Quentin must investigate those hidden places within himself which have made it necessary to hate and use other people. Like Holga, he must come to embrace the idiot child that is his life, his reality: "I think one must finally take one's life in one's arms, Quentin," Holga tells him. But he has believed the answer to be love. Thus, as he reviews the events of his life, his two broken marriages, his parents' marriage which he sees as his mother's exploitation of his father, his friendships--particularly his friendship with Mickey and Lou and his own part in Lou's suicide--he asks the Listener: "The innocent are always better, aren't they? Then why can't I be innocent?"

Instead of innocence he finds complicity and no one to blame ("Shall we lay it all to mothers?")
being: "I don't know how to blame with confidence." And at
the root of the problem he finds

... there was a presumption. That I was moving on an
upward path, toward some elevation, where--God knows
what--I would be justified, or even condemned--a verdict
anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when
I looked up one day--and the bench was empty. No judge
in sight. And all that remained was the endless argu­
ment with oneself--this pointless litigation of existence
before an empty bench. Which, of course, is another way
of saying despair. And of course, despair can be a way
of life; but you have to believe in it, pick it up, take
it to heart, and move on again ...

Thus Quentin does find the antithesis to his script--
the judge-penitent script perhaps; but Maggie does not. For
Maggie there are second chances in this play, but she re­
fuses to take them. Clearly, Quentin is right when he tells
her she is determined to die and she wants to kill him as
well. When he shouts, "A suicide kills two people, Maggie,
that's what it's for!" he has reached the point of leaving
her in order to protect himself. However, becoming separate
means stepping out of the well-defined grooves of past
behavior, perhaps disobeying the self-destructive parental
injunction which says, "Don't Live!" and beginning from bare
bones to construct a life free of masks and scripts--a game-
less life. As Miller sees it, the cure for self-destructive­
ness is not necessarily love--though love may grow out of
it--but it is self-knowledge and acceptance of the human
condition of guilt and unblessedness. As Quentin blesses
himself and Holga for the fact "that we meet unblessed," he
concludes: "What burning cities taught her and the love of
death taught me: we are very dangerous!" Only his loss of
innocence can allow him to accept his own goodness as well as his evil, his ability to love as well as to kill. Knowing he has loved Maggie and yet been guilty of her death; knowing he loved Lou and yet had a part in his suicide; recognizing that he was in large part responsible for the alienation and separation from his first wife, Louise; understanding also that his motives for marrying Maggie were somewhat suspect--based perhaps on his desire for power over another human being--knowing all this and accepting his part in his personal fate, he has, by the end of the play, prepared himself to start life anew--to live instead of to die.

**Incident At Vichy**

*Incident At Vichy* was written as an extension of the thought that underlies *After the Fall*: we are all guilty of wanting another's death in preference to our own; everyone must share responsibility for the murderous world we live in. In this play Miller says, "A man is faced with his own complicity with what he despises."¹ The drama offers the Hero-Victim, Persecutor, Rescuer game on a larger scale than before. The roles, as usual, are reversible or interchangeable, and the script is familiar--the Martyr-Hero. This time there is true purpose in the sacrifice, for it saves the life of another human being, though like all such sacrifices it involves the rescued in the death of the Rescuer.

¹Evans, *Psychology and Arthur Miller*, p. 74.
The drama takes place in "a place of detention" in Vichy, France. A number of men are rounded up and herded in to await some unknown fate if they are found to be Jews. Among them is an Austrian prince who believes himself to be a highly civilized, humanitarian being and considers Nazism to be "an outburst of vulgarity" from the working class. When he discovers that his relative, a Nazi, has done harm to others, he sacrifices his own liberty to the Jewish psychiatrist, who tells him: "I have never analyzed a gentile who did not have, somewhere hidden in his mind, a dislike if not a hatred for the Jews."

Actually the rather Sartrean play is about stereotypes—an appropriate theme for a post-Nazi retrospective—and the "we are all guilty" conclusion still holds. None of the men caged up in this room waiting for their doom to be read are very happy about being there; none are particularly brave. They discuss the possibility of attacking the guard, but realize it is a futile plan. They begin to bicker among themselves and to give advice. The most interesting suggestions come from the actor:

Monceau: The important thing is not to look like a victim. Or even to feel like one. They can be very stupid, but they do have a sense for victims; they know when someone has nothing to hide.

Leduc: But how does one avoid feeling like a victim?

Monceau: One must create one's own reality in this world. I'm an actor, we do this all the time. The audience, you know, is very sadistic; it looks for your first sign of weakness. So you must try to think of something that makes you feel self-assured; anything at all. Like the day, perhaps, when your father gave you
a compliment, or a teacher was amazed at your cleverness ... Any thought—to Bayard—that makes you feel ... valuable. After all, you are trying to create an illusion; to make them believe you are who your papers say you are.

Leduc: That's true, we must not play the part they have written for us. That's very wise. You must have great courage.

Monceau: I'm afraid not. But I have talent instead.
To Bayard: One must show them the face of a man who is right, not a man who is suspect and wrong. They sense the difference.

Bayard: My friend, you're in a bad way if you have to put on an act to feel your rightness ...

Von Berg, who admits he has contemplated suicide before because the Nazis killed his musicians and because "They can make death seductive," reveals that he has had strange dreams: "Hitler in a great flowing cloak, almost like a gown, almost like a woman. He was beautiful." This is why he has left Vienna and this, apparently, is why in the end he surrenders his safe conduct pass to Leduc, a Jew, a stranger who has become his destiny and who is used as an excuse to die a martyr's death.

The difference between Von Berg's sacrifice and John Proctor's noble defiance is Von Berg's realization that he was as much involved in the Nazi terror as any of the soldiers who guarded the prisoners in their place of detention. By believing himself above the ordinary masses of the people and immune from their vulgarity, he has ignored reality, knowing that facing it would surely mean his death--yet he is lured and attracted to the martyr's death as Hamartic heroes always are.
The culmination of Quentin's revelation occurs in The Price, Miller's next play. Here we might recognize how skillfully he manipulates an essentially undramatic situation—two brothers disposing of their old family furniture—into a highly charged dramatic piece. With few twists and turns in the plot and with a perfectly realistic situation, the four relatively bland characters without any stage gimmicks become interesting. In this play Miller has created one of his most absorbing dramas and one of his most interesting characters—Gregory Solomon, the old junk dealer. This time the script hero is equally divided between the two brothers, Victor and Walter, policeman and surgeon respectively, who must bury the past in order to live their script-free lives. The father role has dissolved into an enlarged, expanded, Theseus-Odysseus-Job role for Solomon, the survivor. Almost ninety, he is ready to begin again to sell the furniture the two brothers find it necessary to discard. In his experience, all is vanity and he is right—he laughs and survives.

The two brothers meet to sell the furniture and end up trying to rid themselves of the other guilty burdens they have been nursing for many years. Solomon, both catalyst and confessor, perhaps even Christ, accepts their burdens withholding condemnation and allows them to go forth stripped of impediments and illusions. Though Solomon himself has suffered a great deal in life—including a daughter's
suicide—he has endured, married three wives and come to the knowledge that "it's impossible to know what's important."

Answering a question posed in Incident At Vichy: "What do we do without our ideals?" Solomon encourages the brothers in the knowledge that survival is the only worthwhile ideal.

The situation between the two brothers is clarified by a review of past events and by Walter's admission that he has had a nervous breakdown and has been afraid:

... there's one virtue in going nuts—provided you survive, of course. You get to see the terror—not the screaming kind, but the slow, daily fear you call ambition, and cautiousness, and piling up the money ...

He tells Victor of his new life in which "For the first time I do medicine and that's it." But Victor is not impressed, so he continues in order to make his point:

I never had friends—you probably know that. But I do now, I have good friends. He moves, sitting nearer to Victor, his enthusiasm flowing. It all happens so gradually. You start out wanting to be the best, and there's no question that you do need a certain fanaticism; there's so much to know and so little time.

Until you've eliminated everything extraneous—he smiles—including people. And of course the time comes when you realize that you haven't merely been specializing in something—something has been specializing in you. You become a kind of instrument, an instrument that cuts money out of people, or fame out of the world. And finally it makes you stupid. Power can do that. You get to think that because you can frighten people they love you. Even that you love them. And the whole thing comes down to fear.

The two discuss their parents—their mother's betrayal of their father when he lost their fortune in the stock market crash:

... he told us it was all gone. And she vomited.

Slight pause. His horror and pity twist in his voice. All over his arms. His hands. Just kept on vomiting
like thirty-five years coming up. And he sat there. Stinking like a sewer. And a look came into his face. I'd never seen a man look like that. He was sitting there, letting it dry on his hands. Pause. He turns to Esther. What's the difference what you know? Do you do everything you know?

Walter has accused Victor of forsaking his schooling without cause. Though he knew that his father hid funds from him, he insisted upon supporting the old man, blaming Walter for forsaking them for his career. Both brothers struggle with their individual interpretations of what really happened in their lives, Walter being the most defensive and protective of what he feels is his new-found self. He tells Victor: "I've struggled so long for a concept of myself and I'm not sure I can make it believable to you. But I'd like to." He admits to being terrified of failing the way their father did and speaks of his admiration for Victor, whom he believes "wanted a real life." To assuage his guilt, Walter offers Victor a job which requires education far beyond Victor's and which Victor naturally refuses. When he voices suspicions about Walter's generosity, Walter becomes angry and hurt:

Walter: I don't accept this resentment, Victor. It simply baffles me. I don't understand it ...

Esther: It's not resentment, Walter.

Victor: The whole thing is a little fantastic to me, that's all. I haven't cracked a book in twenty-five years. How could I walk into a research laboratory?

The truth emerges when Victor flatly refuses to go along with Walter's game, saying: "Just because you want things a certain way doesn't make them that way." Walter
asks, "All right, then how do you see it?"

The two brothers arrive at the crux of their argument—their association with their father—when Victor finally admits, "We do what we want to do, don't we?" and Walter completely denies that he has been trying to bribe Victor with "emotional hush money." As the stronger of the two, Victor refuses his brother's offer and his rationalization for the offer:

Victor: Walter, I haven't got the education, what are you talking about? You can't walk in with one splash and wash out twenty-eight years. There's a price people pay. I've paid it, it's all gone. I haven't got it any more. Just like you've paid, didn't you? You've got no wife, you've lost your family, you're rattle in around all over the place? Can you go home and start all over again from scratch? This is where we are; now, right here, now. And as long as we're talking, I have to tell you that this is not what you say in front of a man's wife.

Walter, glancing at Esther, certainly shattered: What have I said ...?

Victor, trying to laugh: We don't need to be saved, Walter.

Walter, sounding much like Willy Loman, turns to leave, crying to Esther: "Vengeance. Down to the end ... He is sacrificing his life to vengeance." His final words to his brother are: "You will never, never again make me ashamed!" But this vow is questionable. For what is he if not ashamed? He has, however, learned to live with shame and survive. He is not a suicide.

Victor and his wife, stripped of their illusions, are made stronger by the encounter with Walter. They leave the furniture to wise Solomon, who knows that such things endure
past the needs of their owners. And Esther inquires of him before they leave, "When do you stop being so ... foolish?"

Solomon in answer, tells of his daughter:

I had a daughter, should rest in peace, she took her own life. That's nearly fifty years. And every night I lay down to sleep, she's sitting there. I see her clear like I see you. But it was a miracle and she came to life, what would I say to her?

For Solomon, however, the sale of the furniture, purchased at a fair price, represents the start of a new adventure. Among the relics is an old laughing record which he places on the phonograph, delighted to find that like himself, it still works and endures.

The same may be said of Arthur Miller. Having settled into the comfortable position of playwright "laureate" of the United States, his work has become part of the national literature though the man himself is still occasionally controversial. Eric Mottram, in fact, tells the story of Miller's refusal to attend a White House function in protest of the President's Viet Nam policy. That evening, nevertheless, Death of a Salesman was enacted in part as the evening's entertainment. The playwright, in his latest work, The Creation of the World and Other Business, has reached the stage where he would like to write comedy. The play, however, was very poorly received and ran for only two

weeks on Broadway--attended only by Miller devotees apparently. If he has exchanged the view from Glory Mountain for the prospect of the endless plain, it is not without regret. In *The Creation*, God, echoing Alfieri's sentiments, says of the Devil after he has been relegated to Hell, "Why do I miss him?" Knowing there can be no equal partnership where God and the Devil are concerned, Miller apparently has elected to strive in the direction of life. For as Gregory Solomon says, "It's not that you can't believe nothing, that's not so hard--it's that you still got to believe it. That's hard."

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An important part of understanding any playwright comes from the critical interpretation of his work. For Arthur Miller, the critics, except for a few, have tended to obscure some of the important issues in his plays by setting up standards for judgment which do not correspond with the reality at hand. Miller, in his own turn has written reams of apologetic explanation defending, justifying, guarding his position as a craftsman of theatre. All of this argumentative activity is, I suppose, somewhat necessary to the understanding and interpretation of particular works of creativity, but at a certain point the initial furor must cool and, if the work is still of interest as Miller's works are, a second look is necessary.

Twenty-eight years have passed since Miller's first play, the disaster which showed promise, The Man Who Had All the Luck, had its brief sojourn on Broadway. The '72-'73 season has brought another failure, this time a comedy. But between the two plays stand the products of a major international literary figure: nine plays, several excellent short stories, numerous works of reportage and criticism, one semi-successful film, a well-received novel, and
some poetry. In all of his works Miller has remained a scrupulously honest writer, a sensitive reporter of human behavior, and a believer who holds the "brightest opinions of the human animal." Always he has been his own man, and by his own admission, a moralist. One of his assumptions has been that life has meaning, and that the artist's task is to give form to this meaning. For Miller, oddly enough, his search for dramatic form led him time and again to the crisis structure and its suicidal conclusion, the tragic ending for modern man. The alternative conclusion--adjustment, acceptance, the dispelling of illusion--has been implicit in the script antithesis, which in the Hamartic plays was the province of the audience. Miller's use of the self-destructive script and its relationships has been his characteristic method of expressing what he understands is the inevitable result of particularly lethal family and societal relationships. In other words, suicide functions importantly in Miller's work as an all-encompassing metaphor involving self, society, and family in an on-going "hamartia-genic" myth--the mythology of heroism--the "view from glory mountain." As long as men persist in sacrificing their lives to illusion, to lie, to "glory," the end will inevitably be suicide. Nevertheless, for some men, Miller seems to say, suicide represents their highest achievement--

1 He has said that his plays are attempts "to make the moral world as real and evident as the immoral one so splendidly is." Collected Plays, p. 19.
their assertion of identity, love and commitment. And because they hold within them ideals they believe are worth dying for, these men, Miller thinks, are worthy of tragic recognition.

Miller began to depend upon the suicide structure after the success of All My Sons, when he apparently discovered that suicide could encompass the total psycho-social and cultural predicament of his protagonists. Thus, from All My Sons to Incident at Vichy, unity of action is achieved by the crisis-suicide pattern of the Hamartic script. Joe Keller is Miller's first real Hamartic hero, and he is abetted in his self-destructive by the self-chosen, illusion-oriented family cast--the "Holy family"--which supports the self-destructive Hero-Victim by assuming the proper supportive roles of Persecutor, Rescuer, and Innocent Victim or Patsy. Chris Keller, at the end of All My Sons inherits the Hamartic hero role from his father.

Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, A View From the Bridge, and Incident at Vichy are Hamartic plays which form a grouping within the body of Miller's work by virtue of their sustained reference to codes which have the same kind of rigidity seen in early heroic shame culture, honor codes. The protagonists in these plays are all seeking a way to die with honor because they have shamed themselves in their own eyes. Willy Loman, for example, can be considered analogous to Sophocles' great shame culture figure, Ajax, just as John Proctor and Count Von Berg can be compared to
Antigone, Joan of Arc and Thomas Becket, and Eddie Carbone to Phaedra. Miller's plays, however, are not modernized versions of Greek tragedies, nor are their protagonists pseudo-Greek heroes; these are plays about men who live according to codes which have the same rigidity that created tragic situations for the heroes of Greek tragedy. Only in this sense can they be considered analogous to the old tragic heroes and their epic disasters.

The Hamartic plays are the work of Miller's younger years when he appears to have believed in heroic extremes. In recent plays, particularly since the advent of After the Fall, there has been a turning away from the arbitrary election of suicide as a solution to new solutions which suggest a growing flexibility on the part of Miller and his characters. His treatment of suicide begins to change in A Memory of Two Mondays, where death-seeking behavior, both Gus's and Kenneth's, is witnessed by Bert as futile and unnecessary. Bert, because he has the will to live, emerges from the deadening situation of his first job with an appreciation for endurance and a determination to succeed at life.

In the cinema-novel, The Misfits, there are no suicides but Roslyn and Gay face a future fraught with danger. Guido, the most unrelenting character of the quartet, is also potentially the most suicidal. He flatly refuses to give up his aimless "better than wages" existence for reality. Roslyn and Gay, on the other hand, are willing to try
a new life, free of scripts and masks, though their chances of success seem very limited.

The protagonist in *After the Fall* is one of Miller's most interesting. The play is the process of his confession and revelation. Many have thought Quentin is Miller himself, and they are correct to a very limited extent. Actually, Quentin is representative of men living out the crisis of middle life when they must embrace the "idiot child" of their lives, accept themselves, and go on. The two suicides in this play, Lou's and Maggie's, are finally understood to have occurred as part of the Hamartic script Quentin refuses to follow. Even so, when Maggie is told by Quentin that he cannot be forced to be her Persecutor, she commits suicide without his help, and he realizes that he will never be entirely innocent of her death.

The Count Von Berg in *Incident at Vichy*, unlike the other script heroes, does find a way to die honorably. Nevertheless, Von Berg clearly wishes to die and is fulfilling his suicidal inclinations by giving his safe conduct pass to Leduc, thereby accomplishing his death with honor—assuming the martyr's role. His action clearly relates back to John Proctor's senseless martyrdom in *The Crucible*. In both cases, the Hero-Victims cooperate with their Persecutors, but in *Incident at Vichy*, Von Berg's cooperation allows Leduc to go free, though Leduc then becomes guilty of another man's death. The structure of *Incident at Vichy* is quite different from earlier "Hamartic" plays because
there is a static, almost Sartrean, quality about the situation which indicates the author's descent from the "glory mountain" structure of previous plays.

Up to this point the hero's view has always been that life is an uphill struggle to glory. In *The Price*, another play in which the crisis structure has resolved itself into stasis--the "endless plain" view of life is presented. Here the concept of heroic endurance is embodied in the figure of Gregory Solomon, the eighty-nine year old junk dealer, who has suffered and endured, even through a daughter's suicide. Miller's new view, the script free, maskless, endless plain summarizes his direction so far.

Miller uses suicide in several ways, but his interest in the moral and psychological aspects of suicide takes precedence over technical considerations. This becomes increasingly evident after *All My Sons*. Then what comes to the fore is his concern with the heroic.

In sum, the plays that follow *All My Sons* have such close affinities that they form what we shall call the Hamartic group. *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953), *A View From the Bridge* (1955), and *Incident at Vichy* (1964) all have protagonists who base their lives on a variation of the heroic code which derives from Greek tragedy. They also end their lives with suicide which they consider consistent with their view of life. In each of these plays, Miller employs a form of suicide which has been defined by Durkheim as "altruistic" or heroic. Though
the plays cannot be said to be modernized versions of Greek tragedy, they are about men who pursue the same self-destructive lives as did the heroes of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy. Their suicides imply their ultimate commitment to the rigid code of the heroes of long ago. Likewise, they are equally unfitted to the society they are forced to submit to, hence their suicides also imply a rejection of one kind of life and confirmation of another.

Lastly, suicide in these plays is always contingent upon some kind of recognition, either by the character or by the audience. Thus it becomes the means by which experience is summarized. That the protagonist always plays the most important part in his own undoing is more than fitting for Miller's suicides and for the Greek heroes as well since it is for both of them the only way they know to preserve their integrity.

The method of script analysis suggested by Steiner's work has proven to be an appropriate and illuminating way to treat some of the problems created in Miller's work through his use of suicide. It is a method which holds promise for better understanding other playwrights as well. For Miller's work, script analysis revealed that both the presence of the Hamartic script as well as its absence has significance. The putting aside of heroic and suicidal life-styles indicates a higher level of maturity for the author and perhaps a clearer view of heroism--the heroism of the endless plain--survival.
Visiting Russia with his photographer wife, Inge Morath, Miller is struck by the change in an artist friend who is not allowed to exhibit his paintings publicly, but has come to some adjustment with life. Writes Miller:

Compared to the last time we saw him he seems to have cast off his cares about government disapproval, not because it is no longer serious to him but because he has, perhaps, made his peace with the life he must lead—he will point what is inside his spirit, and enjoy his food and his girl, and tomorrow will be what tomorrow will be.

As they fly out of Russia some lines from Chekov occur to Miller: "... to endure. To be able to bear one's cross and have faith. I have faith. I'm not afraid of life."¹

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The dissertation submitted by Sonia Wandruff Slavensky has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

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